



# Kol Haverim

**The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism**

Affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

Newsletter #26

Spring 2007

Dear Friends,

This winter has been a time of reflection and I hope this spring will be a time of involvement.

As a community, we laughed with mirth at our Jewish humor dinner, reflected with sadness on the Holocaust, and were thoughtful at Darwin Day. So it went...we laughed, we cried, and then we ate cake. While we anticipate upcoming holiday celebrations, unfortunately "relaxation" is probably not a word that comes to mind. We each face busy lives, often overscheduled and lacking in "down time." However, none of us have idle minds or hands because we know that we create our own meaning in life, and understand that much of this meaning is built upon our relations with others and striving toward common visions.

In the popular book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam reviewed a myriad of reasons (such as television, Internet, suburban life), as to why Americans have become disconnected from friends, family, neighbors, and community. Putnam focused on why this is bad for our democracy and it turns out that it is also bad for our personal well-being.

A growing body of evidence supports the conclusion that civic engagement is important to one's mental and physical health. For example, recent research by Margaret Ensminger at Johns Hopkins University, showed that people who have social ties (to family, friends, *or* organizations) are physically and mentally healthier than those who are isolated. We all benefit when we tighten the weave of our social fabric.

Unfortunately, we have time (and energy) constraints as excuses for isolation. However, putting time toward your community can ignite a positive feedback loop, with benefits from supportive networks that ultimately enrich, reduce overall stress, and increase optimism. When you are budgeting your time, I hope you weigh in your longer term well-being and consider the benefits of being involved, connected, and helping in your Kol Haverim community.

If you are still reading after my no-so-subtle and unabashed call for help, then please consider some of the many ways you can perform a mitzvah for yourself and this community (see list at very end of the newsletter). Options span a wide spectrum in level of commitment. Some responsibilities are prescribed and I can provide you with instructions, while others require you to take complete initiative and apply creativity, and most fall in between those two extremes. If a task seems too big, then consider sharing responsibilities with a friend. Our cumulative actions can make our community strong, which can, in turn, make each of us stronger.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caren Cooper".

Caren Cooper, Chair

Kol Haverim: The Finger Lakes Community of Humanistic Judaism

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Kol Haverim publishes a bi-annual newsletter in print and electronic form in September and March. The electronic version is free. The print version is free to members. To receive the electronic version send an email message to newsletter@kolhaverim.net, asking to be put on the email list. For more information, email the editor at newsletter@kolhaverim.net. Our mailing address is Kol Haverim, P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852-4972.

You can find information about joining Kol Haverim at www.kolhaverim.net, or you can call 607- 257-4231 and ask to have a membership form mailed to you.

**SIGN UP FOR SUMMER CAMP!!**

Kol Haverim in cooperation with Earth Arts presents....

**CAMP IMAGINE**  
"Above us only sky"

A memorable week  
of nature, creativity, and adventure  
August 27<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> 9:00-3:00  
(with extended care options)  
Kids entering grades 1-5  
Earth Arts nature preserve, 689 Coddington Road

camp@kolhaverim.net  
607-272-6486  
www.kolhaverim.net

Kol Haverim is Ithaca's Humanistic Jewish Community

***Kol Haverim members can register children  
NOW for summer camp, before registration  
opens to the public on April 1.***

Kol Haverim is excited to offer Camp Imagine during the last week of summer vacation. This is a chance for the kids of our community to tighten their friendships as well as help our parents juggle responsibilities just prior to the start of the new academic year. We give a BIG THANKS to Carole Schiffman for leading the camp committee, to Sharon Kaplan for helping, and to Earth Arts for making this possible (and we are hoping for some financial assistance from the Society for Humanistic Judaism).

## *Program Committee News*

The Program Committee has been very active this year planning a range of both family-oriented and adult-oriented programs. The committee has been working closely with the Social Action Committee and also has supported KH's new initiative to join and support the Family Reading Partnership.

The first program of the year was a Havdalah program to make your own humanistic mezuzah, led by Teresa Galloway. We all had the opportunity to make mezuzot for our homes, catch up with new friends after the summer and make new friends.

In October, we had a very exciting visit from Lori Lipman Brown, the Executive Director of the Secular Coalition for America. Thanks to Caren Cooper, Brian Eden and David Levitsky, she spoke to several groups throughout the day, including a large group in the evening at Lifelong. She shared with us the goals of the coalition as well as the current top agenda items. In November, seven-term New York State Assembly member Marty Luster explored a series of strategic alternatives to oppose and reverse the recent erosion of our constitutional rights by restraining the Bush Administration. Later in November, at another Havdalah program, we were treated to a very interesting presentation on the history of the book and bookmaking by John Dean, Preservation Librarian, at Cornell University Library. In addition to hearing about the history, we got to handle some materials.

In January, we started the New Year with a Jewish Humor Night in January, which was well attended and where a lot of funny jokes and stories were shared.

New for KH was our participation in Darwin Day in February, as part of an international movement to celebrate science and humanities in Darwin's memory. Professor Will Provine, Cornell University, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, led a discussion on whether or not there is a coherent theistic interpretation of Darwin's work.

Still to come this spring is a program being organized by the working group on end of life issues, Friday March 16, 7:30, a visit to Ithaca Hospicare (at Hospicare, 172 E. King Rd). This will be followed in April by a program on April 20, where Professor Emerita Joan Brumberg, Cornell, History, Human Development and Gender Studies, will talk about "Jewish Women and their Body Image".

There is also a series of informal social gatherings to be hosted at members' homes, being organized by Jane Segelken, where long time and more recent members will have an opportunity to get to know each other.

The program committee has worked together with Dee Thaler to support our involvement in the Family Reading Partnership. We did a "gently" used book drive in the fall that reaped three boxes of donations. (These books are added to the red bookshelves that you see around town.) April will again be a book drive month, where we will collect gently used books at our April program, Passover, and at Sunday school.

There will be a Spring meeting of the Kol Haverim Discussion Group. First meeting April 1, 10-12 at Juna's Cafe  
Please join us to discuss:

Dawkins, R. (2006) *The God Delusion*. Boston & NY: Houghton Mifflin  
Harris, S. (2006) *Letter to a Christian Nation*. NY: Knopf

Come having read the books and with questions and thoughts to share.

The program committee welcomes your involvement. Suggest a specific program you would be interested in seeing take place or lend a hand in planning and carrying out future programs. Let me know if you're interested! ([acc4@cornell.edu](mailto:acc4@cornell.edu)).

~Abby Cohn, Program Committee Chair

***Passover Seder***  
***April 7, 2007***

Kol Haverim is hosting a humanistic family Passover seder, followed by a fully catered dinner, on Saturday April 7, 2007 in the Auditorium at Kendal in Ithaca. The seder will start promptly at 3:00pm. Since this seder also includes a catered dinner, we need you to help us plan ahead *so reserve your spot today!*

The Passover Committee has prepared a great celebration that includes a participatory family service with both traditional and non-traditional songs accompanied by live music by David Frumkin & Will Fudeman. We will have all the traditional foods of the Passover seder as well as a buffet dinner (with vegetarian options).

Fees

	Adult	Children (ages 4-18)	Student
Members	\$30	\$15	\$15
Non-members	\$40	\$15	\$20
Kendal	\$30		

Free for children under 4, but please let us know if they will require a high chair, booster chair or regular chair.

To **RESERVE** your place at the seder table, contact Jonathan Joseph at [holidays@kolhaverim.net](mailto:holidays@kolhaverim.net) or (607)277-9744 AND send your check to Kol Haverim at P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852 (please indicate the number of adults and children attending). **Since this is a catered dinner, only pre-payment will confirm your reservation.**

**Please respond to reserve your spot by Wednesday, March 29 so that we may provide an estimate for the caterer. To confirm you reservation and ensure your place at the table, we must receive a check by Wednesday, April 4.**

Humanistic  
Passover  
Seder 

★ KOL HAVERIM ★  
The Project Lila Community for Humanistic Judaism

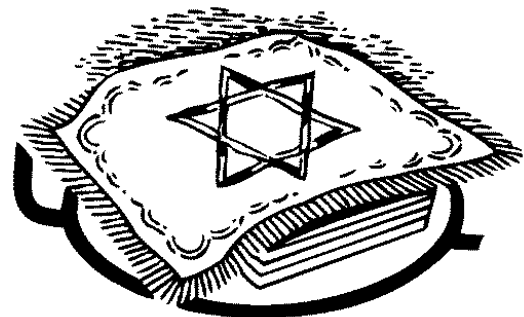
WWW.KOLHAVERIM.NET

**Saturday, April 7**  
8:00pm at Kendal at Ithaca

**Catered Meal**  
(reservations required)

Contact Jonathan Joseph:  
[holidays@kolhaverim.net](mailto:holidays@kolhaverim.net) | 277-9744

There is a charge for this meal.



## *Holiday News*

Greetings from your friendly Holiday Chair. I've been in this position for almost two years now, and with the imminent addition of our second daughter, I'm planning to take a break for a while and hope to be passing the torch to someone else this year. If you're interested, don't be afraid to speak up.

Once again Kol Haverim has had a full calendar of holiday celebrations. Autumn brought the return of the students and Fall colors to Ithaca as well as the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashana is a time for us to reflect on the past year and look forward to the new one. It's also the first chance many of us get to see each other since the beginning of the summer. Carl led the ceremony again and Elias reprised his performance on the shofar. We also enlisted the help of musician Will Fudeman, who we'll hear at future events. Two days later, we held our children's service in the large pavilion at Stewart Park with a Tashlik ceremony at the lake. I can't decide if the highlight of the children's ceremony was the plastic shofar chorus or the chocolate velvet honey cake – yum.

The more solemn Yom Kippur concluded the "days of awe". This year we maintained the intimate atmosphere of our Yom Kippur service while making it accessible to more families in our community. Instead of just one, we held two separate Yom Kippur services (and break-the-fast potluck dinners) at members' homes. Thank you Dee, Caren, and Greg.

I've seen snow in Ithaca on October 8. And while I haven't seen snow on one of our Sukkot celebrations yet, we have had some pretty miserable weather for this outdoor event in the past. This year however, in a reversal of our usual Sukkot fortunes, October 8 dawned bright and cool. By mid-day it was a glorious sunny 70 degrees. The location, at Mark and Deirdre's home with beautiful views into the nearby valley, was even more spectacular. We erected a sukka, a first for KH, and decorated it with branches and flowers from the fields and artwork and paper chains made by some of the children. Some of our members got a tour of Mark and

Deirdre's wind turbine, and after the service, we all lounged around in the grass or on blankets near the sukka and enjoyed a picnic lunch. The sukka is now stored away in the barn awaiting next year's harvest.

Our Chanukah celebration was held at Lifelong with Will Fudeman and Sophia Smith-Savedoff providing the music. Last year we had a run on the latkes, so we were prepared this year. Big, big, BIG thanks to our members who made and brought latkes: Ruth, Phillip, Diana, Becky, Harry, Carl (I apologize if I've forgotten anyone). It was lots of fun, and no one lost their shirt playing dreidl this year.

In January, we observed International Holocaust Remembrance Day with a service and viewing of the film "Saved by Deportation: An Unknown Odyssey of Polish Jews". The film's main editor, Christopher Julian, and music composer, Robby Aceto, were on hand to answer questions after the film. This event was also a fund raiser for humanitarian relief efforts in Darfur. We collected over \$400 that we sent directly to Save Darfur Coalition.

David led our Tu B'Shevat seder in February as we celebrated the New Year of the trees. In honor of the holiday, we resurrected our Kapok tree from the fall book festival and it stood majestically in the front of the room as we enjoyed the seder of fruits, nuts, wine and juice followed by a pot-luck dinner.

Our Purim celebration featured a theatrical adventure produced by Mark with some of our younger members (Emily and Elias) featured in the shpiel. Brian, forever typecast as food, appeared as a large Hamantashen. The dinner of pizza, salad, fruit, and Hamantashen was enjoyed.

Happy holidays. ☺

~Jonathan Joseph, Holiday Chair

## PURIM IN PICTURES

### The Seat-of-the-Pants Players at Purim

#### The Handsome King



The Beautiful Queen Esther confused over what to do as the evil Hamen plots against the Jews, as narrated by our favorite pastry.



#### The crowd groggs over Haman



#### The Wise Mordecai advises Queen Ester and she saves the Jews!



# CHANUKAH HIGHLIGHTS

## Candle lighting



## With Singing

## And Dancing



## *Sunday School News*

The class of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders is focusing on early Jewish history. Here are some of the highlights from Sarah.

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### **Chapter 3: The Roman domination of Judea**

The Destruction of the Second Temple marked the last time Jews were in control of their homeland and ruling themselves until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The kids were enthralled with this - we spent a few minutes talking about how Israel became a state and why there is so much fighting in Israel today. We talked about the civil war in Judea during the time of the Roman conquest, and how much easier it was for the Romans to conquer Judea because the Jews were not united. We talked about having someone else control your land and indirectly, your lives, and how the Jews must have felt about that.

### **Chapter 4: Rabbinic Judaism**

We talked a lot about how Judaism changed after the Roman conquest and how some things were better and some things were worse. We also talked about how acts of loving-kindness became an important way for the Jews to be close to God.

### **Chapter 5: Judaism and Christianity.**

We talked about John the Baptist and how Baptism is similar to the mikveh. The kids connected this to tashlicht which I thought was a really good observation. Then we talked about Jesus and what he was like in his life. We discussed how after he died his followers started saying he was the Messiah, but that Christianity and Judaism were kind of the same thing for several generations. I reiterated the fact that people then could be Jews and Christians, and emphasized how similar the religions were in the beginning. We talked about what might make someone want to be Christian or Jewish. From here we got into a very interesting discussion that I was really impressed with, about whether Judaism is a culture or a religion, and whether Christianity is a religion or a culture. We also talked a little bit

about the resurrection, the Gospels, and the New Testament. Once again, the kids had great questions that were complex and difficult to answer, many of them questioning the legitimacy of the idea of resurrection and someone being the son of God. We discussed how people started writing that the Jews were responsible for Jesus' death and how this did not make for good relations between Jews and Christians. We talked about how Jews and Christians started out very much the same, with similar traditions and beliefs, and then gradually, over the course of several centuries, split into two very separate religions. We also discussed how Christianity and Judaism came to be organized - Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire with popes, bishops, and dioceses, and Judaism more locally organized but with a central focus around synagogues.

### **Chapter 6: Babylonia**

It was becoming increasingly difficult for the Jews to live in Israel under Roman rule. We talked about the Mishnah, the Gemara, and the Talmud, and the importance of writing down what used to be oral tradition so it wouldn't be forgotten as the Jews spread out into Babylonia. We highlighted how Judaism changed from a biblical focus to a rabbinic focus, and how Judaism was/is continually changing with new interpretations and discussions of the original texts. I emphasized that the Jews living in the Diaspora were involved in this constant struggle of trying to assimilate while at the same time trying to maintain their Jewish identity. We talked about differentiation of the Jewish political and religious worlds, and how that is similar to the situation in America today. I asked briefly if any of them knew any stories related to their families coming to America, and a few kids had some things to say about why their family members came to America that fit in nicely with our discussion of the Jews arriving in Babylonia.

Next we moved into a discussion of Muhammad and the origins of Islam. We talked about current events a bit and how the Jews were treated better under Islamic regimes in Babylonia than they were under Christian rule. We discussed the difficulties of being ruled by a people that spoke a different language (Arabic)

and some of the ways the Jews dealt with this - writing Jewish books in Arabic or in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic words written in Hebrew characters.) We discussed how Judaism is adapting to living in a largely non-Jewish world and the pros and cons of this.

We talked briefly about the Karaites, just emphasizing that Jews disagreed about how to live in the Diaspora and why each group felt the way that they did. Then I gave the kids a map of the world that we are going to continue to work with over the course of the year, coloring in the areas of the world that Jews have immigrated to. We are "color-coding" this roughly by time frame which I am going link up with our timelines so the kids can see where the Jews were living around the world when certain events were occurring. I have the kids guess the location of a certain country/area, and then I walk around helping them narrow in so they color the right area of the map. So far we've colored in Israel, Babylonia, North Africa and Egypt, Spain, Germany, and France.

### **Chapter 7: Ashkenazi and Sephardi**

We looked at a map to see where each kind of Jews are from. We discussed where the kids' families come from and over the course of the class they each came to the conclusion of whether they were Ashkenazic or Sephardic or both. They seemed to be pretty interested in this topic. We discussed how each group developed differently but how they both were similar in that they practiced the same basic elements of Judaism. This chapter also talked about Kabbalah, so we discussed that as well.

### **Holidays:**

We have discussed Rosh Hashanah - what the holiday means, a little bit about the differences between the Jewish calendar and the Gregorian calendar, some traditions we have, and what Rosh Hashanah means to Humanistic Jews. We talked about Hanukkah, going over the history of the Maccabees and how we celebrate Hanukkah and how our traditions relate to the historical story. We talked about Tisha B'Av and the importance of remembering the sad times in our history so that we don't let them happen again.

The class of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders is focusing on modern Jewish history. Here is a summary from James:

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### **Jewish History in the Early 20th Century:**

Topics covered have ranged from shtetl life with its pogroms and anti-semitism through Jewish immigration in the early 1900's, quotas, Jewish reactions to World War I, the creation of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the impact for American Jews of this type of communal cooperation and reactions of prominent Jews to the war. We questioned whether anyone's family members had experience with anti-semitism firsthand, and used the Leo Frank case and Henry Ford as examples, talking about how anti-semitism is like other forms of prejudice. We looked at the rise of Jewish gangsters and the depression era. We briefly read about the Jewish War Board and the conflict between Orthodox and Reform Jews and the common Jewish military prayerbook. A comparison of an orthodox siddur and the Reform Gates of Prayer as well as an examination of an invitation to a tradition bar mitzvah illustrated the differences between the various approaches. We touched on the idea of Jewish unity and klal yisrael. We had a very lively discussion on charity, with the focus on tikkun olam and tzedakah as related to Jewish charitable responses to the needs of European Jews during the 1930s and continued with an overview of Maimonides eight levels of charity. We then transitioned into the beginnings of the Holocaust in Europe and a new textbook. So far we have covered Kristallnacht and the destruction of concrete cultural artifacts, such as books and buildings. Jewish values we have discussed include the Talmudic dictum, "To save one life is as if you have saved the world" and "you must not stand idly by your brother's blood." 'Daf ha-yomi' is the traditional idea of learning a page of talmud per day, and we'd like to inspire our students to read their textbooks every week!

### **Famous Jewish Americans:**

We focused on the different ways in which Jews in America excelled after World War I,

including in entertainment, business, and literature. Each student gave a report on a 'Famous Jewish Person' from the 20th century. Students reported on Jerry Seinfeld, Marc Chagall, Peter Singer, Mets player Brian Green, Judy Chicago and Bess Myerson.

**Holidays:**

For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we related the story of early 1900's baseball player Hank Greenberg's dilemma and discussed his choices.

For Simchat Torah' we discussed different ways that people approach the Torah – as literature, a book of rules, history, mythology, etc.

For Hanukah, we shared family traditions and discussed the story. We drew one parallel between Hanukah and Kristallnacht by noting that in the case of Hanukah, the Syrians targeted the temple and holy books for destruction just as was done in 1938.

All of the students are learning songs and dance. Here is a summary from Sophia:

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Kindergarten-1<sup>st</sup> Grade Songs:

This little light of mine  
Chiri bim  
Yismechu Hashamayim  
Haida  
Sevivon  
Shalom Chaverim  
Ma Yafeh Hayom  
Boneh Ani Chanukiah  
Ner Li  
Chanukah oh Chanukah  
Bim Bam  
Give light  
Make new friends  
I have a little dreidel  
Study War No More  
Shake my sillies out  
Love is Something  
A family under one sky  
Hineh ma tov (2 versions)

K-1 Dance: Mayim

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Songs:

Give Light  
Bashanah Haba'ah  
Shlomit Bonah Sukkah  
Haida  
Ma Yafeh Hayom  
Bim Bam  
A Nigundl  
Light One Candle  
Mi Yimaliel/Who can Retell  
Chanukah oh Chanukah  
Boneh Ani Chanukiah  
Sevivon  
Yishmechu Hashamayim  
Eliyahu Hanavi/Miriam Haneviah

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Dances: Mayim, Turkish Kiss

4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grade Songs:

Give Light  
Bashana Haba'ah  
Hava Nashira (in a round)  
Shlomit Bonah Sukkah  
Haida  
A Nigundl  
Eileh Chamda Libi  
Study War No More  
Yishmechu Hashamayim  
Eliyahu Hanavi/Miriam Haneviah  
Chiri bim  
Bim Bam

4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grade Instrumental: Sivivon

~Teresa Galloway, Sunday School Director



## *News and Notes*

The **Kol Haverim book group** will meet the second Wednesday of March, April, and May, and the first Wednesday of June from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. or so. The location rotates among the homes of members.

For the April 11th meeting we'll read and discuss *Color of Water* by James McBride. For the May 9th meeting we'll read and discuss *Water from the Well: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah*, by Anne Roiphe. The group plans to watch a video one of the months, and will likely not meet during the summer. For location information, please contact Jane at [jsegelke@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jsegelke@twcny.rr.com) or 257-9598.

To provide continuity and foster ongoing relationships among its members and friends, Kol Haverim will be reinstating informal small (four to six individuals) gatherings at member homes. The get-acquainted gatherings, brunch, dinner, tea, dessert, are casual, fun, social events. They're a great way for members to stay in touch, and for prospective members to get a feel for the group. These get-togethers will happen throughout the month of March. For more information or to offer to host a get-together contact Jane Segelken at 257-9598 or [jsegelke@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jsegelke@twcny.rr.com).

### *Darfur Update:*

#### *Never Again or Again and Again*

Nearly four years after the initiation of the genocidal attacks on the peoples of the Darfur region, the world community has not yet identified effective action measures to restore peace in the region. Several hundred thousand civilians have been killed and more than two million displaced. Most permanent settlements have been destroyed and the refugee camps have now come under attack forcing many to flee into Chad. Humanitarian aid has been blocked by the Sudanese government and many

humanitarian workers have been killed. President Bashir opposes the introduction of a UN peacekeeping force. While seeking water and firewood to support their families, many women have been raped and murdered.

In the 65 years since the Holocaust, there have been systematic mass killings in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Northern Iraq and the Congo. In none of these cases has an American president attempted to militarily or politically intervene in the mass atrocities. Our foreign policy has been based on real politic rather than humanitarian idealism. Despite periodic polls indicating that a large proportion of the American public supports intervention to prevent such mass killing of innocent civilians, no administration has been willing to commit US troops or employ non-military sanctions. In Darfur, the Bush Administration has created the appearance of substantial engagement without achieving significant results in practice.

The Save Darfur Coalition is an alliance of 170 humanitarian and social justice organizations including many from the Jewish community. The Coalition lobbies Congress and the President to strengthen their commitment to resolve this humanitarian crisis. Kol Haverim has conducted fundraisers to support their work for the past two years. Please consider becoming more actively involved in the Coalition's advocacy and educational programs. ([www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org))

A Darfur Week of Action at Cornell is scheduled for March 26-30. There will be a vigil, films, lectures, and a benefit concert. These events are sponsored by groups that include: Tzedek: Jewish Social Justice. STARS (Students for Tolerance, Awareness, and Remembering Survivors), Cornell Hillel, and the Islamic Alliance for Justice, I hope that some of you may have the opportunity to participate in this week's activities.

~Brian Eden, Chair, Social Action  
Committee

### *Letter from the Board*

A concern has been raised that at times at our adult-oriented programs the kids can be disruptive. This is an important concern, as our goals as a community are to be open and welcoming to all age groups. We have events that are targeted to all age groups, others that are specifically targeted for either kids or adults. Those of us with kids often become desensitized to how disruptive kids running in and out can be at what is intended to be an adult-oriented program. In order to make our events work for all age groups, we propose to restructure how we handle childcare at our events and we would like to be clearer about our expectations.

We are going to try to have two childcare people at most events and identify more age-specific activities. We propose that there will be four spaces available to kids: 1) a supervised activities area (arts & crafts, games, stories); 2) a supervised video (appropriate for pre-school → school age kids); 3) an unsupervised **quiet** area in the study for older kids who would like read, play games, talk quietly; and 4) older kids are more than welcome to participate in the adult program, as long as they can do so in an appropriate way.

We ask that parents take a more active role in being sure that their kids are content and not being disruptive. We ask that parents work out with their kids where they would like to be, what the expectations for that space are and if things are not working out, we ask that parents take the initiative to resolve the issue. We also ask that there be no running around in any of the spaces inside the building during events.

We hope that by being a bit more aware of each age group's needs, we can make our events enjoyable for all members of our community.

~The Kol Haverim Board

### *Member Forum*

Reasons to celebrate Darwin Day  
by Caren Cooper  
(Ithaca Journal, February 7, 2007)

Imagine a law compelling the placement of baby teeth under pillows for collection by the Tooth Fairy. Of course we'd call this foolish because the Tooth Fairy is an acknowledged myth, but this example illustrates the lack of wisdom in basing public policy on beliefs that have no evidence to support them. Yet we face a dangerous future because our government too often shapes public policy on religious ideology rather than scientific evidence. Religion has its virtues, but relying on verifiable observations for the sake of problem solving is not one of them.

What some consider real, others view as pretend. If the Tooth Fairy can be placed in the "pretend" category, then so can Santa, the Easter Bunny, Ghosts, Zeus, and even God, or an upcoming Rapture. Believing in these requires faith, accepting them as real requires evidence.

Still, we have plenty of evidence for things that some people won't accept, like the Earth orbiting the Sun (20% of Americans think the Sun revolves around the Earth). Or that DNA is the key to heredity (70% don't know this). We also have evidence from recent research that 95 % of Americans of all generations have had sex before marriage, and that comprehensive sex education lessens the spread of disease and unwanted pregnancies. Yet the federal government only funds abstinence-until-marriage education despite evidence of its gross inaccuracies, ineffectiveness, and likelihood of putting young people at higher risk. Wishful thinking is so often favored over what is real that now we need a law requiring that federal funding be limited to fact-based sexuality education (H.R. 2553

and S. 368 - The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act).

We know that hundreds of thousands of blastocysts await disposal from fertility clinics. Some theologians claim that a blastocyst (the structure formed 5-6 days after fertilization, but before implantation in the uterine wall, comprised of about 200 cells in a spherical shape) has a soul. Although there has been no general outcry from people of faith regarding the routine disposal of blastocysts from fertility clinics, the federal government will not fund the use of these “surplus” blastocysts to develop new stem-cell lines for research, even with the real likelihood that the research discoveries could alleviate much human suffering.

We know that in 1992, scientific evidence led the Union of Concerned Scientists to issue a severe “warning to humanity” about global warming’s causes and consequences. Yet even now President Bush pays lip service to calls for a sustainable energy policy, infusing doubt about climate change into every statement (even as business leaders call for change) and suppressing scientific evidence (see recent report by Congressman Waxman). With suggestions like a 1-mile-per-hour increase in fuel efficiency within 3 years, Bush demonstrates a “tooth under the pillow” mindset rather than one prepared to face the inconvenient truth.

The hazards of our tendency to favor hopeful beliefs rather than accept evidence calls for a reminder of the achievements of our most reliable way to obtain knowledge and improve the human condition. This reminder is Charles Darwin’s birthday, typically referred to as Darwin Day, an international day in recognition of science and humanity.

Kol Haverim, the Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism, will celebrate Darwin Day on February 10 from 3:00-5:00pm at Lifelong Center (119 W. Court St, Ithaca). At this free public event there

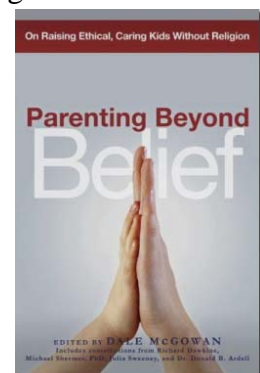
will be birthday cake and a philosophical discussion led by Will Provine, Professor in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department at Cornell. Dr. Provine will talk about Darwin and his deeply religious friend and colleague, Asa Gray. The conversations between Gray and Darwin, sparked by Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection, are still relevant to current discussions between religious and non-religious people. For children, Kol Haverim will host some natural selection games and a reading of the evolution-based children’s book, “Tree of Life.” We’ll also have information about legislative issues concerning the role of science in public policy from the Secular Coalition for America and the new Center for Inquiry in Washington.

As children grow up, the discovery of the truth about the Tooth Fairy helps them learn to distinguish between the real and the imaginary. As citizens grow in their civic involvement, we must learn to put aside religious beliefs when developing sound policy for the common good. Let’s have science and real evidence inform the public policy created in the Houses of Congress, and faith and theologians inform beliefs in houses of worship.

### ***Check It Out!***

*Parenting Beyond Belief* is a book for loving and thoughtful parents who wish to raise their children without religion.

Includes essays by Richard Dawkins, Julia Sweeney, Penn Jillette, Mark Twain, Dr. Jean Mercer, Dr. Donald B. Ardell, Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, and over twenty-five other doctors, educators, psychologists, and secular parents.



## *News from SHJ*

Seminar “To Life! Celebrating the Jewish Life Cycle,” Open to All

Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation of Highland Park, Illinois will play host to the International Institute’s upcoming seminar, April 27-29, 2007.

This IISHJ offering, entitled “To Life! Celebrating the Jewish Life Cycle,” will be led by Rabbi Adam Chalom of Kol Hadash and will be open to the general public as well as continuing education students and IISHJ matriculating students.

There is no charge for Friday evening’s 8:00 p.m. Shabbat presentation, “Celebrations of Life,” which will act as a prelude to the weekend. The actual seminar will begin with Part I at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, encompassing “Birth and Growing Up—Welcoming Children and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs.”

Session II, Saturday at 1:00 p.m. is entitled “Maturity and Partnership—Marriage and Inter-marriage.” The final session on Sunday will deal with “Memory and Creativity—Death and Other Celebrations of Life.”

Rabbi Chalom holds a Ph.D. in Hebrew and Jewish Cultural Studies and is the Associate Dean of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

Call 847-347-3003 or email info @kolhadash.com or see the website, www.Kolhadash.com for fees and further information and to register by April 22, the latest.

### ***KOL HAVERIM VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES***

<b>Volunteer Actions</b>	<b>Volunteer Positions</b>	<b>Current Board Vacancies</b>
Set up/Clean up at an event	Supply closet coordinator	Publicity Chair
Re-design brochure	Library coordinator	
Share (poem, thought) at Shabbat or Havdalah service	Coordinator of Baby-sitting & Children’s activities	
Lead an event or ceremony	Web site updater	
Photograph events	B’nei mitzvah coordinator	
Contribute to the Newsletter	Caring committee coordinator	
Be an “Elder” at summer camp	Community Service coordinator	
Mentor a B’nei mitzvah student	Join any committee	

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