



We are **Associated**  
Associated Hebrew Schools of Toronto

# The Ties That Bind

BY MAYTAL GREENSPAN, AHS TEACHER, GRADE 1

“Today’s Mitzvah Corps was so much fun! We made bookmarks out of beads and they turned out so pretty. We helped a charity called Families for Children. It is in India. A girl named Sophie came and she is only 11. She sells bookmarks, necklaces, and sock monkeys and all the money goes to Families for Children. It was so much fun I wish I could help again!”

“I thought that making sandwiches was AWESOME! We learned how to work together and it was really fun too! I mean I barely get to make sandwiches and these are for the homeless! If you were here with me you would love it too! And just leaving school with a fun time and knowing that you did something good is the best part of all! Keep smiling is what Mrs. Greenspan always says!”

“I feel like there’s always more I can do. Which make me feel that one person can make a difference.”

“I feel happy because it makes unfortunate people feel good.”

“Each time I do something I feel even more happy. And I’m going to be happy for a long time.”

MITZVAH CORPS  
STUDENTS’ REFLECTIONS

Each Shabbat, we say a *bracha* (blessing) for “all those who faithfully serve the community”. For the third year in a row, Posluns’ Mitzvah Corps program has offered AHS students an opportunity to do just that.

When Eric Golombek, Principal of Posluns Education Centre, approached me with a vision for a program giving students the opportunity to build relationships within the larger community, I was not just interested; I was inspired. I believe we need to prepare our children for the ever-changing and challenging world that lies ahead of them; helping others and taking the time to make a difference in someone else’s life is essential. Starting early is the key.

True to its name, the Mitzvah Corps offers students in Grades 2-5 a chance to volunteer their time and make a difference. Each week, the children participate in community projects with a variety of organizations, including

V’Ahavta, Zareinu, Families for Children, the Yonge Street Mission, and many others. From putting together packages for food drives, creating art for sale at charity events and writing letters to soldiers in Israel; to making sandwiches for the homeless, planting trees and visiting the elderly; our AHS students are discovering the joy of the *mitzvah* of helping others.

Two of the strongest ties the Mitzvah Corps has developed are with Terrace Gardens Retirement Residence and Baycrest Terrace Assisted Living Facility. The residents look forward to and greatly enjoy the children’s monthly visits, and are often waiting for their young friends when they arrive. The relationships built between them are precious, and very touching. The students feel it keenly too, and many go back on weekends and visit with their families as well.

It’s an honour to be running Mitzvah Corps personally. Going to sleep knowing that I make one person smile, or helped pass a lonely person’s time, is an integral part of my day and life. Not only has the program impacted my life, it has made an enormous difference in the students’ lives as well. Their enthusiasm and dedication are contagious and the ranks of the Mitzvah Corps are always full. In fact, due to its popularity the program was divided up into 2 sessions this year, to allow more AHS students to experience the personal satisfaction and yes, *fun* of getting involved.

Their artless reflections are proof of their pride and pleasure in working to improve the lives of others. Under our guidance and example, our children are learning not only how much they have to offer their community; but how much the act of giving has to offer them. •



Mitzvah Corps students create beaded bookmarks for charity.



## We Are Associated

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*We Are Associated* is a joint communication vehicle of Associated Hebrew Schools and the Parent Teacher Council. It is our aim to provide meaningful and useful information to parents, students, alumni, staff and members of the community who all contribute to the excellence of our school.

The goal of Associated Hebrew Schools is education. Our constituency comprises members from many cultural, social and religious segments of the Jewish community. Since 1907, we have provided the finest educational services and facilities. A dynamic institution, Associated has adapted its programs throughout the decades to ensure that an outstanding educational experience remains accessible.

For those who seek wisdom, understanding and the opportunity to perpetuate the Jewish people and our Jewish community, we invite you to associate yourself with our quest for success.

Readers are invited to submit comments or questions in writing to *We Are Associated* at the address below:

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## M E S S A G E F R O M



Dr. Mark Smiley ('72)

## Dr. Mark Smiley Director of Education

Following a week of Grade 1 *Chagigat Siddur* ceremonies at our school, I find myself uplifted by the way Associated creates community with our parents, grandparents and students; and reflective of how together, we continue reaching out.

As the school's programming fosters increasing student involvement in the broader community, Associated is cultivating future generations of responsible, socially aware adults. Community-building activities not only enhance classroom success, but also teach our children important values. Communities exist on a foundation of care and mutual respect; and creating a caring community builds *midot tovot* – positive character traits. As the Associated experience is built on Torah values, we are guided by our sources, which prescribe the elements required to build character and community.

It's a powerful list, and far from complete. The Torah, our traditions and our heritage offer many more; and as we come to the end of the 2009/2010 school year, it is these and other guiding principles that our children – and we ourselves – take with us into the greater community, and into the future. •

## 10 TENETS OF Community

- 1 | **Respect each other and accept individual differences.** (Pirkei Avot 4:1)
- 2 | **Behave honestly.** (Exodus 23:7)
- 3 | **Show thoughtfulness, consideration and appreciation.** (Pirkei Avot 1:15)
- 4 | **Listen respectfully to others.** (Pirkei Avot 4:1)
- 5 | **Take responsibility for the safety of yourself and others.** (Talmud, Shavuot 39a)
- 6 | **Use respectful language.** (Proverb 18:21)
- 7 | **Resolve differences in an appropriate way.** (Psalms 34:15)
- 8 | **Make amends if you hurt others.** (Mishna Torah, Repentance 2:9)
- 9 | **Respect each other and school property.** (Pirkei Avot 2:17)
- 10 | **Share in each other's joys and support each other in time of need.** (Leviticus 19:18)

## M E S S A G E F R O M

It is with mixed emotions that I am writing this, my last address as President of Associated Hebrew Schools. As a student, parent, Board member, Executive member and most recently President, I watched Associated grow into the best Jewish day school of its kind in North America. In my 20 years as a lay volunteer, I have worked with professionals and volunteers who represent the best that this community has to offer, and for that, I am proud.

I am proud of the students and graduates; proud of the parents who make sacrifices to send their children to Jewish day school; proud of our volunteers, teachers and administrators. Proud of our donors who've supported and helped integrate exciting new programs, new technologies and new capabilities into our school. And I'm proud of our partners in the Toronto Federation who do their utmost to ensure the viability of the Jewish day school system.

During my presidency, the school experienced many challenges, many victories and many wonderful milestones. We have introduced newer, cutting-edge educational programs that enhanced our educational product, and allowed us to address the needs of more students who otherwise might not have been able to learn in a Jewish environment. We celebrated our Centennial anniversary and we continue to forge ahead into our second century with confidence and determination. All of this, while maintaining our identity.

There are, however, more great challenges ahead. The cost of a Jewish education continues to rise. Fewer people are able to make the financial

## David Wm. Brown president of Associated Hebrew Schools



commitment without suffering a significant decline in their standard of living. Funding from the community, already at the highest level ever, is straining; and we will not be able to maintain our high number of subsidized students without intervention from either government or community donors.

It is a recognized fact that Jewish education is the single strongest factor in Jewish continuity. We cannot give up our belief that in order to ensure a strong Jewish community, more children must be given the opportunity of attending Jewish day school. We must strive to maintain steady growth and enroll as many children as possible while still preserving our viability and financial integrity.

During my years as President of AHS, I had the distinct pleasure of working with a number of meaningful individuals. My friend Arthur Landa has been Executive Director of Associated Hebrew Schools for the past 18 years. I believe that due to his dedication, knowledge and foresight, hundreds of additional students have been welcomed through the doors of our school. This is his legacy to our community.

I have learnt a great deal from Rabbi Dr. Mark Smiley and my Chairman, Shelly Carr. Under their guidance, the School continues to grow and enhance its position amongst the great educational institutions of our country.

**Finally, my thanks goes out to the dedicated Board members, teachers and staff, and, of course, to my loving wife and daughters, who have allowed me to experience some of the finest moments of my life as President of this great school. •**

**A house doesn't make a home – those who live inside it do.** And a community isn't just a segment of the population – it's the people who live and work within it.

Our relationships with the people in our communities are the underpinnings of our lives. As we move through our existence, we often become part of more than one community. Our commitment to one doesn't negate the other. On the contrary: these connections bolster each other. And the wider we hold our arms out, the fuller and richer our lives become.

Putting together this issue, it hit me just how many people at AHS are holding their arms out. To each other, to the Jewish community, to the wider community at large. And to borrow a phrase from David Brown, I am proud.

I'm proud of the number of parents, faculty and

School administrators who volunteer in the greater community. I'm proud of the number of programs and initiatives offering the same opportunity to students – and of the number of students who take those opportunities to get involved. And I'm proud of the strength of Associated's *ruach*: more than spirit, it is atmosphere; an air; a vibe. And when it's strong enough, it's a tangible force.

Most *mitzvot* (commandments) come down to simple acts; but *V'ahavta I'raicha kamocho* (Love your brother as yourself) quickly becomes a way of life, a worldview that our students absorb in their daily environment and grow to perpetuate.

Just as a house is not a home, AHS is not just three buildings. It's the people that work and learn inside that make Associated what it is. Combined, our open arms have created a *ruach*, a force that

## LETTER FROM THE

## Editor



Naomi Moscoe

carries outward, to ever-widening circles of our community.

From this issue onward, the *We Are Associated* newsletter will widen our focus from our immediate Associated family to reflect our place within the Jewish and broader community. As we pull back the lens, we broaden not just our view, but our outlook towards our extended community – our children.

# Teacher Profile

## What subject(s) do you teach at Associated?

I teach Physical Education. In addition, I coach soccer and basketball, teach *Rikudiyah* (Israeli dance), oversee the student council, am involved in [the] *Keter* [program] and lead a program in the Bet Hayaed (preschool) called 'Move to the Groove'.

## Those all take place within the school day?

Yes. For extracurricular, I coach the after-school basketball team and clinic, and run after-school 'All Sports' programs.

## How long have you been teaching and how did you find your way to Associated?

I have been teaching for five years and coaching for twelve. I began my career at Associated by coaching basketball and substituting at the middle school. I was then given the opportunity to teach grade 5, both English and Hebrew at Kamin. I taught in the classroom for a year and was then asked to take over and run the Physical Education program.

## What is your educational background?

I have an Honours BA degree in Communications and Sociology from York University and a Bachelor of Education degree from the University

of Toronto. I also studied Physical Education and received the highest certification for coaching from the OBA (Ontario Basketball Association).

## How would you describe your teaching philosophy?

My teaching philosophy is that each child has the potential for greatness. Every child has their strengths, and each can succeed in their own way. It is my job as an educator to recognize the potential in each child and provide them with the necessary tools to help him or her achieve their goals. I also believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to foster a safe and family environment where the kids feel at home, feel comfortable and are able to ask questions and speak up. Every person has a spark and if given the opportunity, it will shine through.

## What do you love best about your job?

Interacting with the kids and getting to know all their different personalities. As much as we, as teachers, impact children's lives, they too impact ours. What I really love is to see a kid go – watch them grow and change from September to June. Being a Phys. Ed. teacher gives me the privilege to teach all grades, Nursery to Grade 5, so unlike most teachers, I get to see them progress through many years.

## What would your students be surprised to learn about you?

Probably that I'm also a DJ. I've been doing it since I was 18 years old. I've done parties, fashion shows, Bar Mitzvahs, etc and still enjoy doing it today.

## You also volunteer in several community initiatives outside of Associated. Can you please tell us about them?

Well, I've been a contributing member of the UJA for years, helping raise funds, aiding with telethons and planning events. Now I am also a part of the Israeli Division, which helps raise funds for our Jewish people both here and in Israel. I have volunteered for the JNF on and off for years, but I am currently involved with something very exciting – a JNF basketball tournament set for November 2010. It is the first year we are doing this and it is going to be huge. Our fundraising goal is to build a playground in Israel. I'm also very involved with the charity Na'amat, which helps battered women and children in Israel, victims of domestic violence. My mother is an active member and I've been volunteering there since I was ten years old. I guess you can say, like mother, like daughter. We plan events to raise funds to open women's shelters and have also opened daycares in some of the harder-hit areas in Israel. There are also many other organizations that I support and lend a hand to when needed.



Revi  
Laufer  
KAMIN CAMPUS

## What do you find the most satisfying about volunteering?

The end results. Seeing that playground built, knowing battered women are being offered shelter ... whatever the goal, making it happen. You or I can make a difference. It's powerful. A small investment of my time, my energy, can change someone's life. •

BY CHUCK ENGLISH

## A Heartfelt Farewell

### For Arthur Landa, it's been all about the people.

His mother wanted him to be a Rabbi; he wanted to be an actuary. So perhaps it's not surprising that Arthur Landa ended up with degrees in Math and Social Work. As Arthur prepares for his retirement in August, it's clear that both aspects of his background have been indispensable in his role as Associated's Executive Director for the past 21 years.

For Arthur, his work at Associated and in the field of Jewish communal service have always been about serving a higher purpose. "What sustained me throughout was the feeling of excitement I would wake up with in the morning – the rush of adrenaline, the tingling down my spine – knowing that in some small way, I was going to make a contribution to the future of the Jewish People."

Although Arthur's term as Executive Director was marked by many achievements, he believes his greatest accomplishment was his ability to support and facilitate the efforts of Associated's lay leaders. In the process, he developed and nurtured many personal relationships at the school. Speaking about the six presidents of the school with whom he has worked, Arthur says, "I was and continue to be in constant awe of their commitment, dedication and tenacity. Every one of the presidents has been truly inspirational." His relationships with Associated's leaders has produced many memorable moments, including long talks with Harold Dessen, who

"... instilled in me the soul of Associated." Arthur also recalls challenging Henry Koschitsky at a meeting and not only sharing a laugh about it later, but having Henry become a trusted mentor and friend.

During his late wife Eva's illness, and during his mourning for her and for his late father, Arthur was astounded at the support and personal sacrifice of so many at Associated. More evidence of Arthur's great ability to build strong relationships lies in the countless *simchas* (celebrations) of Associated families to which he has been invited. As he puts it, "There have been many beautiful moments."

David Wm. Brown, Associated's current and also retiring president, has become a close friend, and feels that Arthur has had tremendous impact on the school. "He has been instrumental in directing our school and has distinguished himself with the skill, insight, professionalism, sensitivity and commitment he brings to his work every day at Associated."

It's no surprise that when asked to talk about his most meaningful or touching moments at the school, Arthur recalls the many occasions on which he was thanked by parents, teachers and staff for his efforts on their behalf.



Arthur  
Landa  
Associated's  
Executive  
Director

Ultimately, Arthur feels he should be thanking them. "I look back at my time at Associated with a deep sense of gratitude – to the organization, to the people. I am tremendously indebted for the

purposeful experience I have enjoyed [here]."

At the same time, he is looking toward his retirement with great anticipation. "Between spending more time with my children and grandchildren, pursuing my musical interests and doing some consulting work, I can expect to be very busy," he says.

Asked to consider the future of Associated, Arthur says his hope is that "100 years from now, they will say that for over 200 years, Associated has been a Jewish day school that has never denied a child access to Jewish education as a result of his or her ability to pay, affiliation, or socio-economic background." It sounds like his hopes for the future, just like his efforts of the present and past, are still all about the people.

**The Officers, Directors, Governors, parents, teachers, students and staff of Associated join together in gratefully recognizing Arthur's tremendous contributions to the Associated community and wish him a wholehearted *hatzlacha rabba* – all the very best in the future. •**

# Volunteer Profile

## Why did you decide to get involved as a volunteer at AHS?

When my daughter first started at Associated, the school provided a warm and friendly environment that made me want to get involved.

## How do you volunteer your time for AHS?

Currently, I am a member of the Board of Directors, PTC Liaison for the Danilack Middle School, and Co-Chair of Kadima's new Family Giving Campaign. I also enjoy working as a committee member for the PTC Gala. Whenever there is a need at Associated, I am always happy to help.

## Do you volunteer for any other organizations?

Yes, I am Co-Chair of the Zareinu Fashion Show and its Moveathon Miracle Run. I have also recently worked on fundraising events for Migdal Ohr Educational Centre in Israel, which houses over 6500 orphans and have worked to help promote my local shul, Chabad of York Mills.

## What inspired you to volunteer your time for so many organizations?

The feeling of helping people is very rewarding. It's always a team effort and I get energized by working with others on these events. In many ways, the committees that I have joined provide me with a sense of family and belonging.

Also, growing up, my family believed strongly in helping people in need and never turning away a request for help. Throughout my childhood, my parents always gave their time and support to many community organizations including my school, and our synagogue, and showed me the importance of *tzedakah* (charity). Their example has always inspired me to get involved and help out in any way that I can.

## What has been your greatest achievement as a volunteer?

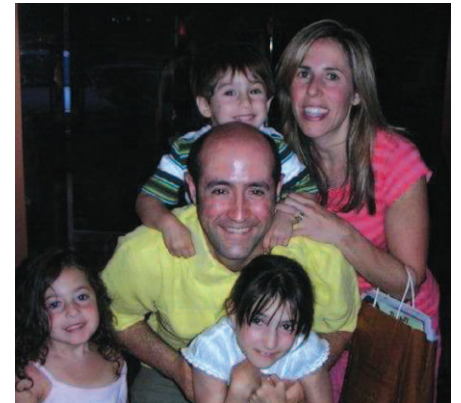
The greatest achievement by far has been exposing my children to the idea of helping those in need. Through my involvement in various fundraising initiatives, my children have learned about helping children with special needs and how to think of others. Also, the outcome of the events and the money raised to help people makes me feel like I have accomplished something very meaningful.

## How does AHS promote community action?

Within the school, there are so many opportunities for the students to get involved and raise money for so many

organizations both within the Jewish Community and beyond. The Terry Fox Run, support for Haiti, Out of the Cold and the Mitzvah Corps are just a few of the great ways that AHS is teaching its students to be the next generation of volunteers. Also, AHS' dedication to providing all Jewish children with a Jewish Education sets a strong example of the school's commitment to the community. •

renée Rosenzweig  
POS LUNS PARENTU



BY LAURA WALSH

## No Jewish Child Left Behind

**Associated Hebrew Schools (AHS)** has always prided itself on welcoming students from the Jewish community, regardless of practice, history or culture. Therefore, when the She'arim Hebrew Day School closed, the only school of its kind in the community; AHS, along with Netivot HaTorah and TanenbaumCHAT, opened its doors to the displaced special education classes.

For the past two years and with the support of the UJA, Associated been enabling another group of students to benefit from a Jewish education. The school has embraced the new pupils warmly and responded robustly to their needs under the auspices of the Centre for Diverse Learning (CDL).

*"The guiding principal of the CDL is to provide multiple ways for diverse learners to learn successfully, within the resources available to us and for as long as we see a learning curve"*, explains Dafna Ross, Vice Principal, who is co-chair of the Centre for Diverse Learning together with Director of Education Dr. Mark Smiley.

In this past school year, the former She'arim students attended two CDL classes for students with special needs: Grades 4 and 5 at the Kamin campus and Grades 6 and 7 at the middle school. The goal of the CDL program is to facilitate responsible and successful learning based on individual learning profiles and performance levels (as well as available resources). Every effort is made to meet the appropriate Ontario Curriculum with empathy and compassion. To accomplish this, CDL matches students with his or her own education plan, wherein both their weaknesses and strengths are considered in devising an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to maximize the learning of each child.

The classes take place in the regular AHS buildings, rather than in a segregated setting. This allows one of the most unique elements of the CDL program: integration and reverse

“  
The program is so engaging; it creates a sense of belonging to the school and to the community at large, among special needs students who previously felt on the periphery.”

integration. For example, a CDL student with talent in math, identified in his or her IEP, will attend the regular math class to 'strengthen his strength'; while a regular student with a weakness in reading might join the CDL class for literacy training, to develop that particular skill. Integration extends to extra-curricular activities as well: some of the CDL students are representatives on the Student Council.

The CDL class setting and curriculum (pioneered by the Kamin Principals, Mrs. Kathy Friedman and Mr. Sandy Rabinowitz) also feature a strong Judaic component. According to Mrs. Ross, *"The program is so engaging; it creates a sense of belonging to the school and to the community at large, among special needs students who previously felt on the periphery."*

The collaboration between UJA (funding) and AHS (knowledge and expertise) has made some of the top resources available to the CDL classrooms, such as Neos, SmartBoards, laptops and other assistive technology. In fact, just recently our computer consultant scanned the entire Grade 6 Math curriculum, making it available to the CDL (and regular) classes. A simple visit to the classroom attests to the success of the program. Students, as well as teachers, are recognizing that all students are on a learning continuum. We

all learn in different ways and as a Jewish institution, AHS has the ability to model the commandment *'Ve'ehavta leracha camochah'*, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', by embracing the spectrum of our community.

AHS is building pathways to successful learning for all Jewish students. With the shared commitment and combined resources of the Federation and the dedicated educators of our school, we will continue to attend and support the emotional, social and academic needs of diverse learners within our Jewish community. •

BY TAMAR GIBBERT

# What's Up @Associated



## AT Kamin

### AHS' Kamin branch has been busy getting green.

Kamin was recently assessed by Ontario Eco-Schools and awarded Gold certification, the highest offered by the organization. "To become certified, a school must demonstrate achievement in at least 4 key areas: energy conservation, waste minimization, ecological literacy and school ground greening for shade and energy conservation." (ecoschools.org)

Kamin's Eco Team, comprised of students and administrative advisors, conducted a survey of the school's environmental

friendliness and developed initiatives based on their findings such as a 'lights-out' campaign, to reduce unnecessary energy consumption. The team also created an 'eco-board' to highlight eco-friendly efforts at school and at home, and wrote and performed an original play encouraging recycling and reusing, complete with songs, dances and props.

In addition to increased numbers of recycling bins around campus and added green bins to the lunchroom, the school has prepared outdoor learning areas with flower, vegetable

and herb gardens where teachers can bring students to attend to the plants and do some learning outside. Families are invited to pick the herbs at the end of the season.

Awarded 'guardianship' of the Oak Bank Park on Centre Street, Kamin students are involved in the annual planting and cleaning of the park area around the pond. 'Eco-outings' include the Twinning Program in Downsview Park, where students helped plant trees, and the Water Festival in Bruce's Mill Conservation Area. •

## AT Danilack

### Danilack Middle School Student Council developed a three-tiered project

in support of Out of the Cold, a charity that brings together members of the community to provide hospitality, safe refuge and emergency shelter to the homeless community. Associated's ongoing Middle School project began this year with a clothing drive to collect coats, hats, scarves, gloves and other warm clothing to donate to those in need.

Following the clothing drive, students embarked on their next goal: to gather toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, sanitizer and other personal items donated by the students. These were bagged and given out directly at the Out of the Cold's Beth Emeth location.

The 3rd and final phase of the project was to pack lunches for the guests. This required students to reach out beyond their own student body and look to members of the community to help support the campaign. Students called local businesses

to solicit donations of food and were able to secure donations from Aaron's Kosher Meats, Richman's Bakery and General Mills. Realizing that although people may be homeless, they too are deserving of a healthy meal and kindness, the children not only prepared the lunches but also took the time to enclose a hand-written note for each guest. They felt it was important to connect to these people on a deeper level, encompassing the *mitzvah* of *d'erech erez* (respect for others).

The Out of the Cold project brought students together to learn teamwork, develop life skills and above all, give them a better sense of their role as part of the greater community beyond the walls of Associated. This project touched students, and made them think twice about how fortunate they are. Many of the students have continued volunteering with their own families on a regular basis. •



## Our new CFO/Executive Director

Associated is pleased to announce Elliott Brodtkin as our new CFO / Executive Director.

Elliott brings over 30 years of financial and management experience to AHS, including over 12 years as the CFO at Toronto French School. We are confident that Elliott's professional expertise and volunteer experience in other Jewish organizations will have much to offer Associated, and look forward to welcoming him as he assumes his new role in August. •



## A Call to Arms

BY PAULINE PANKOWSKI

**As individuals, as families, and as a community;** as Jews we re-commit ourselves daily to maintaining our Jewish heritage, traditions, and values.

In a society that exerts increasing opportunities and pressures to assimilate, the cultivation of a strong Jewish identity requires determination and effort. Every Associated parent, past, present and future, believes this; and on behalf of their children, has been prepared to shoulder the cost.

For our children to retain their heritage, Associated believes that familiarity with the Hebrew language and classical Jewish texts are as essential as exposure to the beauty and diversity of our Jewish culture, music and art.

We take it on proudly, though it is no small task. It takes a

great deal of time, preparation, support, and many layers of expertise to educate our students on their Jewish heritage, without compromising the high level of General education that prepares them for a competitive secular society.

Beyond the handful that have been featured in past issues of this publication, there is a long list of graduates who can attest to the formative impact of their educational experience and involvement in the Jewish community. By and large, alumni of the Jewish day schools are committed to having their children benefit from the formal education on their heritage, religion and lifestyle that they have enjoyed.

Together – alumni, past and current parents, and the wider Jewish community – we strive to support Jewish day school

education and the parents struggling to meet its costs. To do otherwise, in the words of Rabbi Josh Elkin, Ph.D., Head of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, is to "wreak considerable havoc on our Jewish future". By supporting Associated's Kadima program, we support the school and through it, our own commitment to the next Jewish generation: Our children, who as they grow, will themselves re-commit to maintaining our Jewish heritage, traditions, and values. •





BY LISA EISEN, CO-BRANCH LIAISON, POSLUNS

# The Little Kesher That Grew

From the time my eldest started nursery at Associated, I knew I wanted to be involved. I wanted my kids to know that their school was important to me and, if I'm

being perfectly honest, a small part of me wanted to be that fly on the wall.

Initially my interest was in volunteering in my children's classrooms so I could get a glimpse of how my kids managed at school with their teachers and friends. That was great – at first. My daughter had a big grin on her face when I

was in the room and her friends would all crowd around and try to sit on my lap. Loved it! I think she felt pretty special; I know I did. The same proved true with my two sons who followed. However by Grade 2 Tamar's proud smile had turned to a pained grimace, and her eyes would involuntarily roll to the back of her head if she saw me at school. O.K. – I get it. I'm embarrassing. Although my younger boys still liked to see me around, the future was clear. If I wanted to stay involved at the school, I had to broaden my horizons, so to speak, and find other ways to do it.

With no shortage of volunteer opportunities, I began helping out on a few committees, a few fundraisers, and soon found myself drawn in to an amazing and committed community of parents who, along with myself, wanted to make Associated an extension of their homes. These parents give tirelessly, organizing fundraisers, welcoming our kids to school in the morning drop off program, serving pizza lunches, organizing mentor programs, and so much more.

It wasn't until the last curriculum night that I

realized what gives meaning to anything you do – whether work, school, or volunteer experience. My youngest's Senior Kindergarten teachers made an amazing video presentation for the

parents about their goals for the upcoming year. The word that kept coming up on the screen was 'kesher' – connection. That's when it struck me: the essence of why I volunteer. The connections I have made with other parents, teachers, administrators, secretaries, caretakers, security guards, and students are what make volunteering

rewarding. And while there are still days when I long to be that fly on the wall once again, my role as Branch Liaison has offered me an opportunity to connect and contribute in a way I could not have imagined, sitting that first year reading stories in my daughter's classroom. The *kesher*, and the commitment to sustaining it are apparent in the many initiatives designed to maintain the *hamishe* atmosphere in our growing school. New families to the school are contacted personally and offered individual support and guidance. Class parents stay in touch with family events and organize support and assistance when needed. Calls are made with condolences, *refuah shelemahs* (get well wishes), or mazel tov and in times of stress, help is available with drop-offs, pick-ups and play-dates. If there is a birth in the family, calls are made to other parents and a meal is arranged to be sent to the family. If there is a death in the family, visits are organized to the *shiva* house.

**Truly, we are a community in every sense of the word; and one I am proud to be a part of.**



## MESSAGE FROM

Traditionally, the message from the President informs you of what the PTC does, has been doing, and what opportunities await. It is meant to encourage and entice you, the reader, to want more out of your child's school.



PTC President  
*Tracy Zepp*

In this spirit, I would like to tell you about my experience this year, my first in the role of President of the AHS Parent Teacher Council.

Vice President Sari Bercovitch and I have led the PTC through many triumphs and challenges throughout this past school year. Our strong Executive Committee deserve a heartfelt 'yasher koach' for their commitment of time and effort to our school community.

The past few months have been very difficult for me personally. In January, I lost my father. It was very sudden and difficult for myself and my family. The reason I bring this up is the emphasis in this issue of We Are Associated on community.

My father, z"l, was a pillar of his community. He taught me to help when you can, to be aware of all the people around you, not just your inner circle. He touched so many people of his community, people his family did not even know that he knew. He was a true leader, and a true friend.

Within my own leadership role, I truly appreciate the importance of community. The team of people who surround us, who support, comfort, and help us get through life's challenges are a big part of why we do what we do. We volunteer to be part of something. We volunteer to feel good about what we are doing. We volunteer to make a difference to our school, and to each other. We volunteer to be a part of this very special community.

The Parent Teacher Council works hand in hand with parents, staff, administration and students to enhance the educational experience at Associated Hebrew Schools. With representation on the Board of Directors, the *Va'ad Hachinuch* (Education Committee) and the Executive Committee, the PTC represents parents at all levels of decision-making within the school. In doing so, we bring together a huge network of people with one common goal: a quality Jewish education.

I am so proud to be a part of this community, and to lead the PTC again this upcoming year. I encourage you to participate in all that PTC has to offer, for the school, the students, and yourself. Thank you all, parents, staff and administration, for your ongoing commitment and involvement. We are ALL part of this community and together we can make great things happen.

**Wishing you a wonderful summer holiday,**

**Tracy Zepp**

[ptc.president@ahschools.com](mailto:ptc.president@ahschools.com)

## Bulletin Board

### HOLD THE DATES:

Please join us for our Parent Teacher Council General Meetings:

**Tuesday, October 26, 2010, 8:00 pm Kamin Branch**

**Tuesday, February 1, 2011, 8:00 pm Hurwich Branch**

**Tuesday, May 31, 2011, 8:00 pm Posluns Branch**

**It is an opportunity to meet other parents, hear about the school and get involved! Don't miss out!**

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...

**The PTC is looking for volunteers to help during the 2010-2011 school year. There are so many ways to get involved!** • Contact your school office or branch liaisons to see what volunteer opportunities await you! Whether you have an hour a month, a week, or a year, we can find a good fit for your schedule and interests.

### HOP ABOARD THE WELCOME WAGON!

**Mentor families are needed for September 2010!!**

Join us in Welcoming "new families" to Associated Hebrew Schools by volunteering as a mentor for our Welcome Wagon program. Contact your school office or branch liaisons for more details.

## Casino Gala 2010

**ON MARCH 13TH**, the Associated PTC hosted Casino Gala 2010 at the Pride of Israel Synagogue. It was an outstanding night with fabulous food, fantastic live music, lively casino games, and a silent and live auction. Most exciting of all, over \$25,000 was raised for the purchase of more SmartBoards in each of the branches.

Through community support and the dedication of our volunteers, this and other fundraising efforts enable the PTC to proudly enhance the educational experience for AHS students. Thank you to everyone who took part in making our 2010 Gala such a great success.

