

# SHALOM *y'all*

FALL 2018 | THE PUBLICATION FORMERLY KNOWN AS CIRCA



## PICTURING SOUTHERN JEWISH LEGACY

**EDUCATION:  
TO INFIN-EIGHTEEN  
AND BEYOND**

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**THE  
LEGACY OF  
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## When you picture **LEGACY...** what do you see?

ALL YEAR LONG, THE ISJL HAS BEEN CELEBRATING our “Chai” year. Eighteen years of serving Southern Jewish communities is a milestone we are so proud to share with our partners and supporters. We are only here because of those who have worked with us, supported us, encouraged us, believed in us; you are all a part of our legacy, and we are honored to be a part of yours.

As part of our yearlong Chai Celebration, we invited communities to participate in a regional art project. Picturing Southern Jewish Life asked individuals and communities: “When you picture Southern Jewish Life... what do you see?” and encouraged them to create collages to answer that question. As the collages began pouring in – at the education conference, after community visits, in response to programs – our hearts swelled with pride. The legacy of the Southern Jewish community, and of the Jewish people, is truly awe-inspiring.

Throughout this issue of Shalom Y'all, we're taking an intimate look at Southern Jewish life and at what it truly means to embody a Jewish legacy. Within these pages, you'll find:

- The heartfelt words of a donor, Elaine Gutenstein, on why her family recently made a tremendous gift to the ISJL
- Images from the Picturing Southern Jewish Life art project, highlighting communities across the region
- An article about the mentorship program enriching our Fellow Alumni Network and continuing their connection to the ISJL legacy
- A save the date to celebrate someone who truly embodies Southern Jewish legacy, our own Macy B. Hart
- Updates from each department of the organization, sharing news from 2018, and looking ahead to what the future will bring
- And much, much more!

As always, we invite you to join in the ongoing conversations about legacy, education, history, heritage, family, and more. And as we approach the end of the year, we hope you will remember the ISJL in your year-end giving. Each gift helps to ensure the ongoing impact and legacy of the ISJL, and the communities with which we partner.

**Thank you for eighteen wonderful years.  
Here's to the next eighteen!**





**Michele Schipper**  
ISJL CEO

TIME FLIES. I LOOK at my youngest son, who is a high school senior and almost 18 years old. We are approaching this milestone so quickly. The days passed in an instant; I remember watching him take his first steps, throw his first baseball, read Torah, pass the driving test – all of these significant moments in his life. Soon he'll embark on his next adventure – college. He has accomplished so much in his first 18 years, and I am so very proud of him.

That's how I feel about the ISJL.

I recently re-read an article from an early issue of CIRCA, the precursor to Shalom Y'all magazine. In it, the hopes and dreams of what this organization could be were shared by Macy Hart and members of the ISJL board. Just as I have provided guidance, focus and parenting for my son, so too did those early leaders guide the ISJL, helping us mature into the vibrant organization we are today.

We've celebrated our

18th birthday all year – and what a year it's been! We welcomed our new rabbi, Rabbi Aaron Rozovsky to continue the important work of serving Southern communities with no full-time rabbi. Our community engagement department has strong initiatives working in the community, partnering with other organizations and impacting the greater community. Our education program now serves almost 4,300



HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH IN HIS FIRST 18 YEARS, AND I AM VERY PROUD OF HIM. THAT'S HOW I FEEL ABOUT THE ISJL.

children across our 13 state region. In the early years we had twenty participants at our first education conference. This year we had 150! We also started working with other synagogues who no longer have religious school aged children, but want to enrich the lives of those adults in a community to provide adult education opportunities.

Our historian has been on the road to work towards completing our online encyclopedia of southern Jewish communities with our last state of Florida. I remember when our state by state research was simply in a filing cabinet in the office – now it's a searchable and ever-evolving online resource. Our heritage and interpretation department has assisted with tour groups exploring the rich history of Southern Jewry and our cultural programming department continues to partner with excellent musicians and speakers to enrich the lives of those in our southern communities.

Just as my son grew in stages, so too did the ISJL – growing, maturing as the ISJL has taken the concept of a holistic approach to Jewish life in the South and made the dream a reality. But the ISJL board and staff members didn't do it alone. We did it with you – our community partners and donors. In these pages of Shalom Y'all you will see the direct impact of your contributions. You have helped us attain this 18th year. Thank you!

As we raise a glass to toast the ISJL on our 18th year, it is with a mazel tov

# CEO MESSAGE



AS WE RAISE A GLASS TO TOAST THE ISJL ON OUR 18TH YEAR, IT IS WITH A MAZEL TOV AND CONGRATULATIONS TO US ALL ON THIS MILESTONE- AND IT'S ALSO A NOD TO THE FUTURE.

and congratulations to us all on this milestone—and it's also a nod to the future. We still need your help and support so that we may have another toast on our Double Chai (36th year). Won't that be amazing?

May we all continue to go from strength to strength.

*Michele Schipper*



**Rachel Reagler Schulman**  
ISJL Board Chair

*"YOU ARE NEVER too old to set another goal or dream a new dream."*  
- C.S. Lewis

As we move towards the conclusion of our yearlong 18th birthday celebration, I raise a glass to toast the past, toast where we are today, and toast a big *l'chaim* to the future! In particular, I want to thank the people who gave from their hearts, minds, and wallets, to create and make the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life what it is today. The goals and dreams they first envisioned are the ones we're still building on today.

Our founding leader, Macy B. Hart, transitional Board Chair Herman Kohlmeyer, Jr. and incoming Board Chair Sylvia Goodman worked with the first Board of Directors of the ISJL... did they imagine that there would be staff of two dozen in the ISJL office, answering calls, traveling our 13 state region, serving Jewish

communities of all sizes and making our world a better place?

Could they predict that the ISJL Education Curriculum would be a living document of more than 5,000 pages of comprehensive, trans-denominational content? Did they imagine so many Education Fellows visiting communities three times a year? Could they picture a network of more than 50 Fellow alumni, maintaining ties to the ISJL and a commitment to the Jewish community?

The idea of Rabbis traveling to communities in our region to serve as spiritual and practical rabbinical resources, on the ground and also available by phone and video conference, was revolutionary to our communities when

# BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE

the ISJL was founded. Now it's a resource counted on by dozens of communities.

Did the first board members know that the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, which was created and is maintained by the ISJL's historians, would draw hundreds of thousands of viewers to the ISJL website? Individuals and academics alike value being able to easily look up information on Southern Jewish communities – in areas still thriving, and in areas where there is no longer a Jewish presence. People from around the world visit our site; we've been featured on the BBC, in the Jewish Daily Forward, and all over.

As you can imagine, I can go on and on about our wonderful

organization and what we are doing now, how we have grown and surpassed goals and dreams from "Year One" of the ISJL. However, I want you to read the rest of this great edition of Shalom Y'all so I will stop for now.

I hope you will join me and raise a glass. Whether your glass contains grape juice, Manischewitz, or a glass of Chianti, please join me in celebrating all of the wonderful achievements of the ISJL thus far, and help us continue to grow and celebrate in the future.

*L'chaim!*

*Rachel R. Schulman*



# THE GUTENSTEIN FAMILY

ELAINE AND MICHAEL GUTENSTEIN are ISJL partners in every sense of the word. The couple has attended the ISJL Education Conference every year for the past five years; they do the hands-on work in their community in Marietta, Georgia—bringing the curriculum home, working with their religious school, welcoming ISJL Education Fellows, demonstrating daily their commitment to their family and their Jewish heritage.

That commitment to their family, to their Judaism, and their partnership with the ISJL led them to make a surprising, wonderful, tear-inducing gift to the ISJL; a gift that will help ensure everything they hold dear when it comes to Jewish life will have a surer path forward.

At this summer's ISJL Education Conference, we were honored to be able to thank Elaine and Michael Gutenstein in person as we announced The Robert G. & Ellen S. Gutenstein Family Foundation's gift—an endowment supporting one ISJL Education Fellowship in perpetuity. This named Fellowship is a beautiful tribute to the Gutenstein family and what they hold dear, and truly a gift to the organization and all of our communities who benefit from this generous endowment. We asked Elaine to share some of her thoughts on legacy, and why their family decided to make this gift. Thank you again, Elaine, Michael, and all of your family; sharing in a legacy with you is our humbling honor.



# EACH ONE OF US

## By Elaine Gutenstein

FOR YEARS NOW I'VE BEEN holding little hands on their journey into that thing we call life. Most recently my favorite little hand to hold, when he stops moving long enough to let me, is that of a beautiful almost-three-year-old – Elliot.

When I hold hands with Elliot, heaven opens up. Somewhere his namesake is singing her version of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" while she watches over the scene. I feel the meaning of legacy.

Not long ago, another scene played out, embodying legacy in another way: A quietly generous

philanthropist became a legend while the last nor'easter of the season covered the land. He answered to "Bob" and "Dad" and "Poppi." He was my father-in-law, Robert Gutenstein. And before he left this life, he planned for his legacy. The dream he carefully nurtured over decades is becoming a reality.

For the past thirty-one years, my husband and I constantly witnessed the difference one person can make. Together with his wife, Ellen, Robert Gutenstein created a foundation that has touched many generations and helped shape their futures. Many new traditions have been created while honoring those important traditions of our faith. The middot (practices) we hold so dear shape our decisions. They form the basis for our giving.

The torch has been passed and it is our time now. Just as the generation before us heard their calling so do we hear the calling. It is our responsibility to ensure that future generations know who they are, and we believe that begins by knowing the traditions that shape them.

Those traditions start with education and mitzvot – values my husband and I have seen embodied for years by the ISJL Education Department. It is such

a privilege to get to give to this program; we are glad we can give a gift to an endeavor that has been a gift in our own lives, and in our community.

It is with much humbleness that we honor the legacy we have inherited. It is with great pleasure that we continue to model for our children and our grandchild's generation the gift of giving. It is through such gifts that we keep our heritage alive... just as our ancestors kept it alive for us. That's legacy.

The next time you are given the opportunity to hold the future in your hands, will you grasp it or simply let it go?

Our traditions teach us that we are all responsible for each other. Each of us has a legacy to leave. For Michael and I, our partnership with ISJL is a genuine extension of the legacy we wish to leave.

Tradition, Education and Mitzvot: That's our legacy. We leave this legacy to the future of the ISJL Fellowship Program, countless education volunteers in small congregations in the South, our daughters, our grandson and to every child seeking their roots.

Legacy: Each one of us has one. We are so honored and humbled to get to live out our legacy, and in so doing, honor our parents while preparing the future for our children. What will your legacy be?



**There are many more opportunities to support ISJL staff positions, departments, and the organization as a whole. We thank the Gutenstein family again for leading the way with their heartfelt and visionary gift.**

To learn more about legacy gifts and supporting the ISJL, visit [www.isjl.org/plannedgiving](http://www.isjl.org/plannedgiving) or email Beth Kander-Dauphin ([kander@isjl.org](mailto:kander@isjl.org))

# TO INFIN-EIGHTEEN... AND BEYOND!

By Rabbi Matt Dreffin, MAJE  
ISJL Director of Education

WHEN I MOVED TO MISSISSIPPI in 2013 (the ISJL's Bar Mitzvah year!) I was excited to have a job back in the South. But my wife, Erica, and I were of the mind that I'd fulfill my first three-year agreement and then move on to another job. We didn't think our future was here. But five years later, we've purchased a home, brought a new life into the world, and both got promotions at our jobs.

As the new ISJL Director of Education, I'm reflecting on how I've really put down roots both at the Institute and in Mississippi. A freshly minted educator and rabbi, I was blessed to be raised up as a partner in leading the Education Department by Rachel Stern. She included me in virtually every detail of running the department—from supervising Fellows to taking the lead on talking points at the Conference. Her inclusive attitude gave me many experiences that give me high confidence in my ability to run the department moving forward. I feel comfortable, but not complacent. I am reminded of a quote from a famous Mississippi educator, Andy Mullins: "Good schools don't just happen and certainly don't happen overnight; they are built and rebuilt by loving critics, and it takes time."

The ISJL Education Department is more than a good school, it is a great program. And, it didn't happen in the span of twenty-

four hours. As the entire program developed over the course of the last 15 years, we have adjusted and improved at every step. And, we will lovingly build, critique, and rebuild, taking a look at our processes, procedures, and programmatic content to ensure that we are always growing and getting better.

I particularly want to pay attention to how we can make the ISJL Education Fellowship the premier Jewish Fellowship in all of America (if not the world). We will analyze the Fellowship experience from top to bottom to find out how we can ensure we get the highest level of applicants. One of the ways in which we have already started doing this in our 18th year is by instituting a calendar of professional development through next year. From service-leading skills to developmentally appropriate practice, we will be able to point out to any future applicants the experiences they will receive and areas in which they will get specialized training—beyond the natural learning that will occur as they write programs and visit each of their communities.

We are also paying close attention to demographic and educational shifts to explore how best we can accommodate congregations and communities who may move away from the "traditional model" of religious school. What worked in a school of

100 kids in 1980 may not work for the school of 4 in 2024. We want to make sure that the people in our partner communities know we are committed to enabling them to access Jewish life, to learn in engaging ways how Judaism can enhance their life, and the myriad of ways in



which being an active Southern Jew is a great thing.

As an organization that cares about lifelong Jewish learning, some of our adjustments include how to serve congregations in our region who do not operate religious schools. Expanding our work in "Adult Ed" communities is a priority.

This year, we will have 5 Adult Education partner congregations, part of our largest group of overall ISJL Education Partners (74 communities comprised of 80 congregations).

As we acknowledge this 18th year of the ISJL's existence, I

realized I am entering my 36th year of life, or double chai. The symbolism is exciting. I look forward to mentoring many cohorts of Fellows. I look forward to bringing in another supervisor to help me help the Education Department. Most of all, I look forward to being in a place I love at an organization doing work I love.

I can't predict precisely what will happen in the next 18 years, but I'm confident that the ISJL will serve the Jewish South's educational needs in a stellar manner for the foreseeable future. What an honor to be part of this ongoing legacy.

## CALL & RESPONSE

By Rachel Stern, MAJE/MJCS

*Jewish prayer comes in many forms; it is something we experience both alone, and as part of the larger community. When we gather for communal worship, there are formulas for the prayers we say and how we say them. Many of our prayers have a call-and-response element, where the service leader shares some words individually, and is answered by the congregation as a whole. This pattern might sometimes feel routine, but it also feels comforting; it gives us purpose as we join our prayers together.*

This call and response formula for prayer sums up my feelings of working with the ISJL. I truly feel like I was called to do this work, and each and every day on the job I felt my role and my purpose.

The work of the ISJL is rooted in the notion of community, and also follows this call and response formula. The ISJL heard a call from the communities, and responded with resources and support. The community of southern Jewish congregations that the ISJL has convened also came together, able to call on and to respond to each other. Just like prayer, our experience can be made greater by others and there is a role for everyone involved.

When I first received my call we were in the beginning stages of creating the Institute. It has been the joy of my career to have helped this program grow from humble beginnings to region-wide impact.

While I responded to the call from the communities we serve, I also had my own call. I wanted to

find a job in which I would grow, where I could do work that was personally meaningful, where I would love the people I worked with and for, and where I felt inspired. It was a tall order and a rarity in the Jewish professional world and yet my call was responded to by the ISJL.

Yes, prayer can be a solitary experience or it can be enhanced by others. My experience has been greatly enhanced by all of you: all of the Education Fellows (past/present), tireless education directors and clergy, risk-taking teachers, generous donors, my colleagues at the ISJL, the ISJL board, my partner and now successor Rabbi Matt Dreffin, and of course Macy and Michele who gave me this life changing opportunity. I cannot thank all of you enough.

As I respond to my new calling at Shalom Austin, I will make sure to keep up with the amazing ISJL and all of you. I'm still ready to respond whenever I'm needed. *L'hitra'ot!*

# FOCUS ON FAN



## Meaningful Mentoring

One of the most lasting legacies of the ISJL is embodied in our Fellow Alumni Network (FAN). In this issue's Focus on FAN, we wanted to share one of the exciting initiatives the budding FAN group launched earlier this year: A mentoring program, partnering current Fellows/recent Fellow alumni with former Fellows who have been in the professional world for several years.

In January 2018, the first seven mentor-and-mentee pairs kicked off the program. Spearheaded by Mandy Farb Herlich (Education Fellow 2007-2009), the program launched with all mentors and all mentees reading the book *Starting Strong: A Mentoring Fable*. Mentors then had a training session with Mandy over video conference, to frame the mentorship program, followed by another video conference with all mentors and mentees to review SMART goals and set expectations for the overall experience. The mentor and mentee pairs then set their own monthly meetings, goals, and mentoring parameters.

While most of the FAN projects focus on supporting the ISJL and its communities, when the network convened in 2016 and 2017 to plan for its future, a desire for networking and connection between Fellow cohorts was expressed as something that could add to the meaning and value of FAN and the fellowship legacy.

Mandy Farb Herlich, who cherished her time as an ISJL Education Fellow and continues to work in Jewish education as Director of Lifelong Learning at Temple Beth El in Northbrook, Illinois, found this mentoring program to be a smart next step.

"Mentoring is an important focus for FAN because we all share common stories and experiences from our time working at the ISJL," Mandy explained. "We can use these stories to connect while sharing with each other our continued career successes. As alumni grow more experienced in their fields, they are a perfect resource for younger Fellows to turn to, in order to help them learn and grow on their own professional journeys."



# SAVE THE DATE

april  
**6**  
2019

*To celebrate Macy B. Hart!*

We'll gather in Jackson in honor of Macy's retirement, and thank him for his five decades of service to the Jewish community and beyond.

If you're interested in being a sponsor of this event, email Michele Schipper at [mschipper@isjl.org](mailto:mschipper@isjl.org)

# FOCUSING ON FLORIDA AS WE CONTINUE AN ONGOING LEGACY

**By Dr. Josh Parshall**  
*ISJL Director of History*

Preserving and sharing Southern Jewish history is an ongoing legacy at the ISJL, and one I'm pleased to oversee as we deepen our outreach and expand our offerings.

This summer, we re-instated our ISJL History Internship. I had the pleasure of working with two exceptional history interns, Margaret Weinberg and Jacob Morrow-Spitzer, who primarily spent their internship helping me with research and writing for the forthcoming Florida section of the online Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities.

Margaret and Jacob got us off to a great start on the forthcoming addition to the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities by helping to organize Florida research materials and completing ten essays. As we worked together on

the local histories, we came across a number of significant events and themes, each of which required us to do a little digging outside of specifically Jewish sources.

We read a lot about mosquitos and tropical diseases in the 19th century, researched the boom and bust of the Florida real estate market in the 1920s, and learned about the military's development of orange juice concentrate in the 1940s. These were among the many state-wide historical trends that affected Florida's Jewish history. Our findings have reinforced my sense that this story is a southern one, even as I gained new appreciation for the things that set Florida apart.

The highlight of the summer was our week-long research trip through the Florida Panhandle.

We visited Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach, Panama City, Tallahassee, and Quincy, with important findings in every stop. (We also got to spend a little time on the beach!)

With the interns departed and fall starting, the History Department is once again a solo operation, and I am hard at work on the remaining Florida essays. Among the more surprising stories from the current research is the history of Jewish life on the Space Coast (Brevard County), where military contractors and rocket scientists played important roles in the organization of Temple Beth Shalom (Melbourne). Like the Jews of Oak Ridge, Tennessee—home to a Cold-War-era nuclear facility—Temple Beth Shalom's members used their practical skills to build much of their original synagogue building themselves. The building's wiring, for example, was done by Leonard Arnowitz, an electrical engineer on the Vanguard satellite project.

Keep an eye out for the Florida section of the encyclopedia, which will launch in spring 2019, and will be packed with fascinating stories. I'm glad to continue the legacy of these stories through our free online resource, and excited to keep preserving and sharing Southern Jewish stories.

## UPCOMING HISTORY TALKS



Oct.  
**26-28**  
 2018

Southern Jewish  
 Historical Society  
 Conference  
**Mobile,  
 Alabama**

Nov.  
**15**  
 2018

**Dallas,  
 Texas**

Jan.  
**20**  
 2019

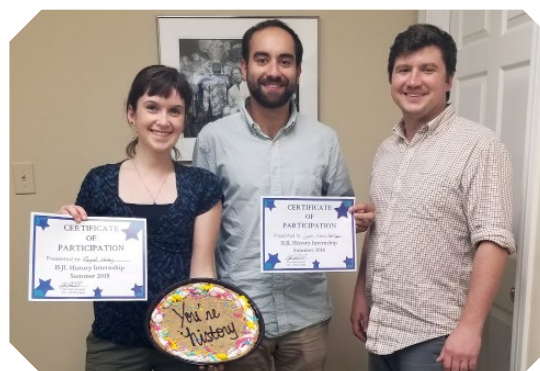
**Memphis,  
 Tennessee**

Apr.  
**4**  
 2019

**Frederick,  
 Maryland**

Want to hear Dr. Josh Parshall talk about Southern Jewish history? Here are the next several speaking engagements he has lined up—and if you'd like to bring him to your community, reach out to Ann Kientz (akientz@isjl.org). To connect with Dr. Parshall, email jparshall@isjl.org

**HISTORY INTERN SPOTLIGHT:** The 2018 Summer History Internships were a great success! Whether writing for the Encyclopedia, recording and conducting interviews, or keeping score for a trivia game, Margaret and Jacob tackled all of their assignments with grace and aplomb. They were welcome additions to the ISJL's office culture, and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors!



**ISJL Immigration TRAVELING TRUNK**

Hands-on experiences with the past. New perspectives on southern history.  
*Celebrating immigrants' contributions to the American story.*

The **ISJL Immigration Traveling Trunk** is a hands-on educational opportunity containing activities, artifacts, photographs, maps, oral histories, and three lesson plans to teach 4th- through 6th-grade students of all backgrounds about 18th- through 20th-century Jewish immigration to the American South and how these immigrants made an impact on their communities. Learn more and reserve the trunk at [www.isjl.org/traveling-trunk](http://www.isjl.org/traveling-trunk).

# LOOKING AT LEGACY

When we picture Southern Jewish Legacy, we see...



University of Alabama Hillel Torah re-dedication, 2011



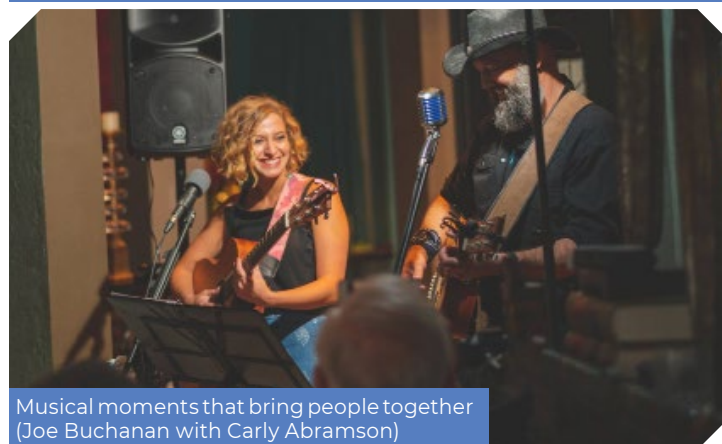
Our first Gutenstein Family Fellow, Becca Leaman



The 60th anniversary celebration of Congregation Beth Israel in Gulfport, MS



All the volunteers and students and community partners who make programs like the Literacy Achievement Bonanza (LAB) possible



Musical moments that bring people together (Joe Buchanan with Carly Abramson)



Hands-on heritage experiences... shipped in a trunk

# GIVING IS A GIFT

## Meaningful gifts carry meaningful messages

As a nonprofit organization, we rely on donors to make our work possible. Every gift touches our hearts—and some gifts come with a note like this one, which thrills us. Notes like this get circulated around our office, so every staff member can see that our supporters are as touched as we are by the work the ISJL does. We asked this donor, David Shemper of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, if he would allow us to share his kind words not only with our staff but also with our Shalom Y'all readers. He graciously agreed.

*Thank you, David!*

DAVID GENE SHEMPER

6/30/18

Michele, Betsy, Stern, Rabbi Dreffin, Department Heads, & Fellows:

Thank you! Thank you for the work you all do.

I had the pleasure of attending conference for the first time this year, and fortunately/unfortunately I can finally say: "I get it".

The collective energy of the ISJL and the individual energy of its staff is enviable. Our Judaism is a living, breathing, ever-changing, always-demanding-introspection, (and we hope) ever-growing way of modeling our lives for the collective benefit of all things for all times. But... we only get to live today and a few tomorrows, and the challenge faced by every small congregation you serve is in how we plan for and insure our continued existence bringing light into what can so often be a dark world.

You, collectively and individually, are the embodiment of rising up to meet that challenge. And for doing so, I thank you again. Be well.

Sincerely,

## ISJL BOARD CHAIRS: LEADERS WHO PAVED THE WAY TO THE ISJL LEGACY

We gratefully acknowledge all the men and women who have served as Chair of the ISJL Board of Directors, each of whom provided steady leadership, guidance, and encouragement over the past 18 years:

**Herman Kohlmeyer, Jr. | Sylvia Goodman | Jay Tanenbaum | Rayman L. Solomon | Rachel Reagler Schulman**



# PICTURING SOUTHERN JEWISH LIFE

By Nora Katz

ISJL Director of Heritage & Interpretation

IN JANUARY, WE LAUNCHED a region-wide multimedia art project. It's a chance to have conversations about Jewishness in the South, covering topics from food traditions to more complex issues of identity and community. Education Fellows and other staff members have been bringing the program to communities from Texas to Virginia, encouraging participants from early childhood to adulthood to make collages from materials like brochures, newspapers, magazines, maps, photographs, instant camera pictures, and even an ultrasound image!

Picturing Southern Jewish Life is a project that celebrates the ISJL's 18th anniversary – our Chai year. We're working with partners throughout the South to create visual representations of our communities, large and small.

We exclaim "L'chaim!" ("To life!") in times of celebration just like this one. In this celebratory moment, we're asking our partner communities – both Jewish and

secular – to picture what Southern Jewish life means to them and what their communities look like today. We're sparking conversations about community values, identities, and memories as we create images that represent who we are.

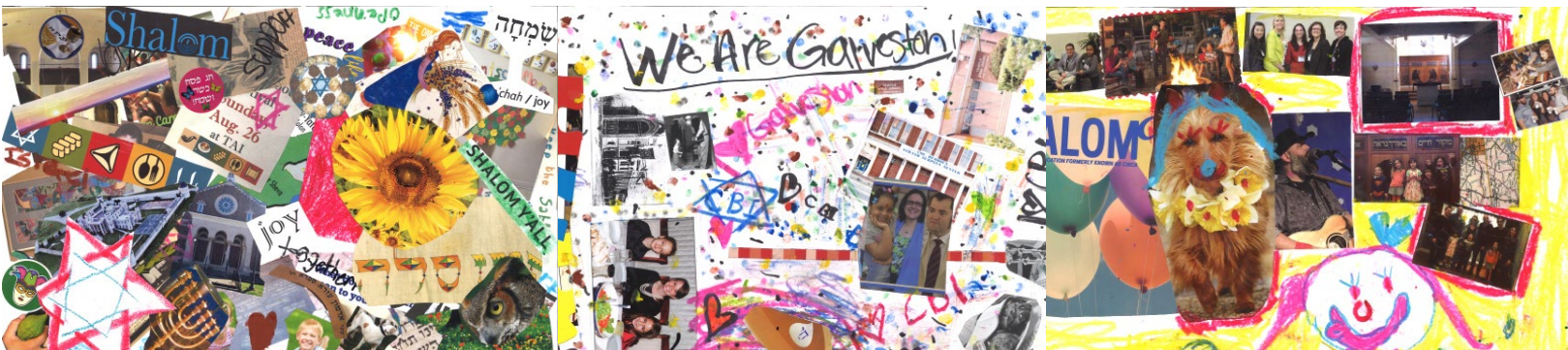
What does a Picturing Southern Jewish Life session look like?

Like most lessons in the ISJL Education curriculum, it begins with a set induction, priming participants for learning. If you're an early childhood education student, you might have a discussion about things from your home that would help a friend learn why you love that place. Elementary school students discuss the Jewish value of *hachnasat orchim* (welcoming guests), and compile a list of things from their congregation that they might share with a new member of the community. Middle school students talk about community symbols, and high schoolers devise an imagined time capsule with physical and intangible items representing their congregation.

Adult participants in the program view and discuss historic images of Jewish life in the South, dissecting these photographs of southern Jews of the past and their contemporary parallels. Other participants might be asked to think about a quote from Deuteronomy Rabbah – "a community is too heavy to carry alone."

Participants then move on to a photography challenge in which they explore their congregation and photograph places and people that they consider to be important representations of their communities. These photographs – along with magazines, newspapers, flyers, tourist brochures, maps, and other materials – form the basis for collaborative collages, accented with rich color from oil pastels.

The collages return to the ISJL in Jackson, Mississippi, to be photographed and scanned for use in an online image gallery and virtual exhibit – and for other displays and uses as well, which we'll be rolling out over the coming year.



Excited about Picturing Southern Jewish Life? Want to bring it to your community? Talk to your Education Fellow or contact ISJL Director of Heritage and Interpretation Nora Katz at [nkatz@isjl.org](mailto:nkatz@isjl.org).



**Rabbinical**

# HEEDING THE CALL TO SERVE: THE LEGACY OF SOLDIER-CITIZENS

**By Rabbi Aaron Rozovsky**  
*ISJL Director of Rabbinical Services*

*“The National Guard has served America as both a wartime force and the first military responders in times of domestic crisis. Hundreds of times each year, the nation’s governors call upon their Guard troops to respond to fires, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters”* -Lieutenant General (retired) Russel Honore

*“Then I heard the voice of God saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me.”* - Isaiah 6:8

One of the things that I am most grateful for in working at the ISJL is that in addition to the meaningful work I do each day as the ISJL’s Director of Rabbinical Services, I have received the Institute’s, and in particular, CEO Michele Schipper’s full support in continuing my National Guard career.

This aspect of service is vital to my rabbinate. I have been

in the Army National Guard for twelve and a half years (which has included year-long deployments to Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba). I chose this path long before I ever considered becoming a Rabbi. For many years I was a Military Police Officer. Now in congruence with the other facets of my life, I am a Chaplain.

One could argue that “going off and playing Army” one weekend a month and two weeks a summer is a distraction from the vital work we do at the ISJL. In fact, the opposite is true- being an Army National Guard Chaplain makes me a better rabbi for the ISJL, and being an ISJL rabbi makes me a better National Guard Chaplain. This is because there are many similarities between these two worlds.

Working for the ISJL and the National Guard both involve a commitment to serving Jews and Jewish communities that are located far from major resource-

laden population centers like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Both involve conducting services and ceremonies where often many of the attendees sitting in the pews are not Jewish. Both heavily incorporate the customs and traditions of the larger communities in which they find themselves- “Southern Judaism” as I have come to find out, definitely possesses a culture unto itself, and the military, especially the National Guard, certainly has its own way of doing things as well.

Ultimately, I have found that being a rabbi has allowed me to serve as an ambassador of the Jewish people and faith to both the brave men and women who selflessly serve in our armed forces as well as the numerous friendly and welcoming communities throughout the 13 state ISJL region. I feel blessed to simultaneously serve in two such wonderful organizations!

**To connect with Rabbi Rozovsky, email [arzovsky@isjl.org](mailto:arzovsky@isjl.org).**

**Programming.....**

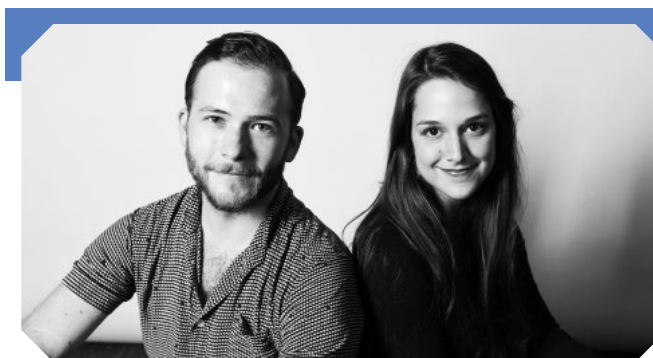
# THE LEGACY CONTINUES: WELCOMING NEW PRESENTERS, AND A NEW (AND NOT-SO-NEW...) DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

**By Alachua Nazarenko**

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, I’ve been privileged to serve as the coordinator of ISJL’s cultural programming. One of my favorite parts of my position is the outstanding presenters with whom I work. I am constantly meeting

new people, learning about them, and getting excited by the ways in which they can ultimately enrich so many of the ISJL communities. No two presenters are the same; each individual or group offers a different set of expertise and talents. I get to

know them all very well, but I would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to two of the newest groups on our programming roster, both of whom have already started to mark their mark as members of the ISJL family.



**Eric & Happie**

If you attended the 2018 Education Conference in Jackson, you’ll recognize these two either from their Wild Card session on creating sacred space in the classroom, or from their Monday night concert. With their warm folk harmonies and indie sensibilities, Eric & Happie can spend a weekend in your community leading you in song, prayers, and workshops – and their personalities are as lovely as their music!



**The Bible Players**

The Bible Players are a comedy team who describe themselves as “improv”-ing Jewish lives (yes, improvisational comedy is part of their routine!). From plays to stand-up shows to training workshops, they use improv and comedy to teach Jewish values. Whether you want a program for students, a show for adults, or a weekend covering multiple age groups, The Bible Players are an excellent addition to any community. And wait, there’s more: The Bible Players will be the featured presenters at the 2019 Education Conference – so make sure to come to Jackson to learn and laugh with them!

As you can tell, I feel very lucky to work with such amazingly talented folks, but you don’t have to take my word for how great they are! You can visit the ISJL website anytime to check out video clips of our presenters and get a better sense of what they can offer your community. If someone piques your interest, just be in touch to learn more. Before you know it, you’ll

have presenters like Eric & Happie or The Bible Players providing high-quality Jewish programming in your community. They’re joining a long line of existing and past presenters who have enriched the fabric of Southern Jewish life through their dynamic performances.

It’s been a privilege to work with these presenters, and all of our communities. However, this fall

I’m beginning a new role in Texas. Good news: Ann Kientz, the ISJL’s former Director of Programming, is re-joining the team to lead this department. It has been an honor and a joy working with you, and I hope you get as much pleasure from getting to know the presenters on our roster as I have, and I know Ann will be delighted to get to work with them—and all of you.



## Community Engagement

# ASK: A NEW TAKE ON TIKKUN OLAM

By Dave Miller

ISJL Director of Community Engagement

**ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF WORKING AT THE ISJL is that we are provided the opportunity to ask Jews around the region what being Jewish means to them. Most responses center on traditions, values, and engagement. We love our holidays, the warmth from the Shabbat candles, the reflection of a powerful Passover Seder, and the joy of standing with loved ones in the sukkah. We care deeply about welcoming the stranger, pursuing justice, and educating our children. We actively pursue opportunities to collaborate in secular arenas, gather and share with individuals of all faiths, and to ensure that Jews of all ages feel at home in the Jewish community now and in the future.**

Over the last two years, the Community Engagement Department has been developing and piloting a new program that embraces these cornerstones and asks participants to explore their faith with us. During our time together, participants engage in 90-minute modules that cover a wide array of topics all centering around the ideas set forth in Pirkei

Avot: On three things the world stands: the Torah, the service, and acts of lovingkindness. The name of our program is ASK which stands for Act (wherein we explore direct service and action), Share (where we explore themes of loving-kindness and sharing with others), Keep (how we keep the traditions of our heritage and Torah alive by working to make the world a better place).

In true ISJL fashion, we have designed the ASK modules to amplify the joy and fun in learning and perpetual need for more shtick. Don't expect a lecture. We incorporate arts and crafts, songs, games, meaningful discussion, and, of course, debate. ASK isn't just for the kids. We have modules for Eema, Abba, Bubbie, and Zayde too.

Recently, Community Engagement (CE) Fellows Lizzi Meister and Ava Pomerantz as well as CE Associate Rachel Glazer went on a weeklong summer road trip bringing ASK to Dothan and Birmingham, Alabama; and Atlanta, Georgia. They drove over 1,600 miles, presented to individuals from ages 9 to 98 years young, had over 165 participants, and met and presented to groups as diverse as camps, federations, congregations, Hillels, and an assisted living facility.

For Rachel, some of her highlights included seeing the differences in perspective across the generations and hearing the various stories people shared during the Jewish Social Justice

101 module. "Often they surprised, moved, and delighted members of their own community as much as they did us as outsiders! I enjoyed seeing our programs embraced by such a diverse array of participants and hearing the conversations continue even as we packed up to leave each site. Being honored with an aliyah in Birmingham was a really special moment toward the end of our journey."

For Lizzi, she reflects fondly on having led two groups with the same program, one at a camp and the other at the assisted living facility. It was powerful for her to hear a child's perspective on a topic, and compare and contrast that with someone who has a much broader perspective on life. She notes that many of the 5th graders had an expansive view on Jewish social justice as well as an eagerness and thirst to do the work while those at the assisted living facility had a passion for sharing and passing on their ideas, ideals, and beliefs.

Ava's moment of impact came while she too was at the assisted living facility. While working on one of the activities an older gentleman said to her, "Think about what you say because when you say it, it isn't yours anymore, it's the world's to share." For Rachel, Lizzi, and Ava the ASK Tour was a journey about providing Jews the opportunity to reflect on their values as well as an opportunity for them to embrace what it means to have their words available for the world to share, or at least Alabama and Georgia.

Working to repair our world is an important link in the chain of Jewish legacies generally, and the Southern Jewish experience specifically. We're honored to share a new way to bring tikkun olam and Jewish service-learning to your community – ASK us all about it!



Above: Ava, Rachel, and Lizzi  
Middle & lower: Participants of all ages engage with ASK!

To learn more about the Community Engagement Department and all its programs, contact Dave Miller at [dmiller@isjl.org](mailto:dmiller@isjl.org)

# I'M NOT JEWISH, BUT MY SUMMER INTERNSHIP WAS

*So... what's it like working at a Jewish office when you're not Jewish?*

By Taylor Ortner

"You're gonna work with the Hebrews?" My dad asked in his incredibly southern accent. "Those are God's people, y'know," he remarked before I could answer.

The answer was yes. I had been accepted as an intern for the Heritage and Interpretation Department of the Institute of Southern Jewish Life.

"We have Jews?" My mom piped up.

The answer was, again, yes.

"We" – the South – have Jews.

Being southern born and raised, outside of the major metropolitan cities like Atlanta or Houston, coming across the region's Jewish presence is rare. My family and I would pass synagogues during drives through the rural South, but they had often been repurposed as Protestant places of worship. My grandparents, living outside of

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MY FAMILY AND I WOULD PASS SYNAGOGUES DURING DRIVES THROUGH THE RURAL SOUTH, BUT THEY HAD OFTEN BEEN REPURPOSED AS PROTESTANT PLACES OF WORSHIP.

Eudora, Arkansas, would sometimes mention a store "run by a Jew," but it seemed like a distant and unrelatable past. We sometimes attended Seder, but even then it was always Christianized. In short, my knowledge of Judaism and Jews was just that: short.

I have never thought of myself

as an ignorant person. I have been overseas, I plan on going to graduate school, and I have lived among people from many different cultures. However, as I began my internship, I found myself Googling very basic and/or ridiculous things in secrecy at my office desk: "Will I desecrate a Jewish cemetery by visiting?" "Can Jews eat crawfish?" "Do Jews believe in ghosts?" One can imagine the difficulties I had with Google trying to describe what I now know is a shofar. If nothing else, I am a testament to the effectiveness of MyJewishLearning.com, because it kept me afloat throughout the summer.

Because I had met a Holocaust survivor (an inspiring woman who spoke to my 8th grade class), and focused on the Jewish presence in the Freedom Summer for my senior project in college (whispering "Yas

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MY FIRST OFFICIAL DAY AT THE ISJL WAS A WAKE UP CALL... I BECAME ENGULFED IN A DIMENSION OF SOUTHERN HISTORY THAT HAD BEEN KEPT FROM ME IN MY EDUCATION.

queen" while reading the speeches of female Jewish Civil rights activists), I mistakenly thought I knew plenty about the Jewish experience. My first official day at the ISJL was a wake-up call. As I sat in the ISJL library surrounded by old religious texts, antique history books, and a popcorn machine, I became engulfed in a dimension of southern history that had been kept from me in my education.

As a future historian, and a southerner, I was offended that no one had stopped to inform me about just how influential and instrumental Jews were in the South. I was fascinated to learn they had been here this whole time. I'm in awe at our differences, but even more so at how similar we are. I remember being nervous standing in front of the imposing temple in Natchez, Mississippi, but I was pleasantly put at ease by the leader of the congregation, a man who looked and sounded just like my very own Pawpaw. My mind was blown.

What was it like being the only gentile among the Jews at the ISJL? Well, I felt like it was culturally inappropriate for me to join in on some of the office antics, like coming up with "Jewish fashion

puns." It was slightly disappointing to me that the Rabbis I met did not dress like Tom Hardy on *Peaky Blinders*. However, I was delightfully surprised to see beer at after-hours office gatherings (something unheard of at any southern Baptist get-together).

All jokes aside, my internship was incredibly enriching. The marriage between progressive values and faith is something I seldom get to experience in the Deep South. Here, strict conservatism is often synonymous with Christianity. The friends I have gained through the ISJL and the conversations I have been privileged to take part in have opened me to reexamining my own personal faith, this time in a more positive and progressive light. I have gained so much more than an internship to add to my resume.

This summer, I have gained a perspective that most do not get to experience, learned a history

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THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE VALUES AND FAITH IS SOMETHING I SELDOM GET TO EXPERIENCE IN THE DEEP SOUTH.

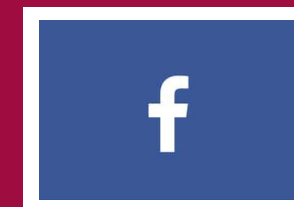
that is seldom taught, and met a wonderful group of people committed to their community. I felt honored that I was able to share my enthusiasm for Jewish learning through the Immigration Traveling Trunk—with southern Jews and southern Gentiles alike. I wouldn't trade that for anything.

P.S. I eventually thought of a Jewish fashion pun – Koshers Couture!

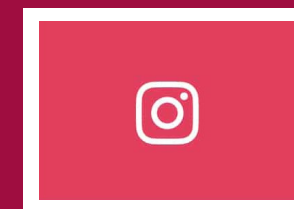
## Taylor Ortner— dog enthusiast, native southerner, and aspiring historian—



—was the Heritage and Interpretation Intern at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) this summer. She researched, wrote, and edited content for the ISJL Immigration Traveling Trunk, an educational resource that teaches 4th- through 6th-grade students about 19th through 20th-century Jewish immigration to the American South. Interested in history and heritage internships at the ISJL? Look out for our application in November! Interested in bringing the Immigration Traveling Trunk to your school or congregation – or maybe know a great potential intern for next summer? Email ISJL Director of Heritage and Interpretation Nora Katz at [nkatz@isjl.org](mailto:nkatz@isjl.org).



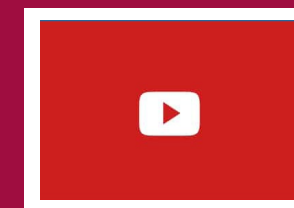
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# WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?



**Legacy is more than what we leave behind—it's what we send ahead to those we love. It's how we impact the future, starting today.**

## **What is a "legacy gift" or "planned giving"?**

A planned gift is a charitable gift that you decide now to make at some time in the future as part of your estate and gift plan. A planned gift can benefit you and loved ones that you name. At the same time, it stands as a lasting reminder to your children and succeeding generations of the values and charitable works that are most important to you. Wills, trusts, and endowments are all examples of planned giving and legacy gifts.

## **How can the ISJL help?**

Whether it's preserving Southern Jewish stories, putting rabbis on the road to small towns, furthering Jewish Education, making our world a better place through literacy and life-changing community engagement initiatives—whatever touches your heart and resonates with your legacy will shape the conversation of how together, we can plan for a meaningful future.

**The ISJL's Legacy Giving program can help you meet your planned giving goals. To learn more, visit [www.isjl.org/planned-giving](http://www.isjl.org/planned-giving) or email us at [kander@isjl.org](mailto:kander@isjl.org).**

## Gifts & Gratitude .....

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

**In these pages, you can see the impact our education, history, heritage and interpretation, cultural, community engagement and rabbinical programs have on thousands of people just like you. With deep appreciation, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life extends thanks to everyone who made a contribution or pledge from January 1 - September 30, 2018 to enable our important work.**

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