

BRANCHES

ANAFIM עֲנָפִים

a publication of the mjds alumni network

IN THIS ISSUE

- ALUMNI PROFILES
- *MITZVAH* BOUNCERS: AN ALUMNI BUSINESS
- REFLECTIONS FROM VETERAN TEACHERS
- CLASS NOTES

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MINNEAPOLIS JEWISH DAY SCHOOL



WELCOME *BRUKHIM HaBa'im* ברוכים הבאים

Dear MJDS Alumni,

Greetings and *shalom* from the Minneapolis Jewish Day School, and welcome to *Branches*, the new publication of the MJDS alumni network! We hope that this first issue finds you well and enjoying life to its fullest!

We are extremely proud of each of our nearly 300 alumni, who offer countless examples of outstanding achievement, excellence, dedication, and success by any standard. Our alumni are excelling in high school, college, and graduate programs; are involved in diverse, meaningful, and inspiring careers; and are making a difference in their communities.

As the school continues to grow, it is even more important to remember its history—and that's you! A few months ago, we put out a call for information and you responded. Dozens of alumni contacted us with updated addresses, emails, and interesting information that they wished to share with their friends from childhood.

In this publication, we bring this information to life as we profile interesting, accomplished individuals

who are community-minded, entrepreneurial, making an impact at home and across the world—and are a credit to the MJDS community. We've also included for the first time a section of class notes which we hope will give you an idea of what your friends are up to.

We're thrilled at the level of participation for this issue, and are looking for you to be a part of future newsletters and publications. Please return the update card below—or, if you prefer, you can go to www.mjds.net. Click on *Alumni* and share a bit of news with other MJDS grads—the school you're attending, a new job you have, a trip you've taken, the band you're playing with, or community action activities.

Thank you for taking time to reconnect with MJDS. We look forward to hearing from you very soon!

B'shalom,



Jeffrey Protas, Development Director

ALUMNI UPDATE

Name _____ MJDS Class of _____
 Current Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Preferred Phone _____ Preferred Email _____
 High School _____ Class of _____
 College _____ Class of _____
 Graduate School _____ Class of _____

News I'd like to share with my friends from MJDS _____

Thank you for taking the time to keep us informed. Please tear off and return to
 MJDS, Barry Family Campus, 4330 Cedar Lake Rd, Minneapolis MN 55416.

ALUMNI PROFILE • CLASS OF '02

EMMA WEINSTEIN-LEVEY ROCKS BBYO

Emma Weinstein-Levey believes in community. It started with her attending MJDS and has continued through her involvement and activity in Jewish and secular organizations. An active volunteer, Emma works hard to make our world a better place. Since graduating from MJDS in 2002, Emma graduated from TCJMS, went to Herzl Camp ('02/'03), and participated in the Alexander Muss High School in Israel Program. She is a senior at Southwest High School.

An active participant in BBYO (the *B'nai Brith* Youth Organization) for the last four years, Emma currently serves as Vice-President of the Resnick chapter, for which she has also served as President. She credits Alexander Muss with reconnecting her to Judaism and the foundations that she learned in her time at MJDS. She recalls that MJDS played a vital role in helping her develop her Jewish identity. "Our family wasn't the most observant, and I remember asking if we could go to synagogue, or practice some of the cultural aspects of Judaism that I was learning about at school." In addition to her involvement with BBYO, Emma is a student Area Coordinator for Amnesty International (AI). In this role, she works with more than 30 groups to connect them with AI and educate them about AI's five major priority issues. She became involved as a 9th grader by participating in a club at her school. She attributes her political and social activism to her family's social awareness. About her community involvement, Head of School Ray Levi remarked "Emma's commitments reflect our hopes for the kind of people our graduates will become. [We] are reminded by stories like these of the ways in which our students find roles as active leaders in their communities."

As for MJDS, Emma fondly remembers her time with Ms. Kaplan and particularly enjoyed Social Studies and History. One of her favorite MJDS

experiences came during the 2000 elections. Her experience in Ms. Becker's class was her first exposure to the political process and her introduction to Hillary Clinton. This experience helped develop her interest in politics. She looks forward to voting for the first time this fall.



Emma was honored earlier this year as one of BBYO's **Future 50**. Fifty BBYO leaders from across the country were nominated; Emma was one of six selected to appear in a full-page ad placed in the *Forward*. The ad identified Emma as one of the next generation of Jewish leaders. Her parents, friends and peers in NorthStar BBYO were very excited and proud of her, as was MJDS. Emma is also a 2008 recipient of the National Council of Jewish Women's Rose Rees Peace Award. Established in 1935, this award is given annually to a graduating senior from metro area participating schools who demonstrates a special commitment to international relations and world peace.

In addition to all the activities described here, Emma also competes in rugby, is an activist for Rock the Vote and Africa Aware, volunteers for the Fringe Festival, and is a member of the Minnesota Interfaith Darfur Coalition.

Kol hakavod (congratulations) from your *alma mater*, Emma!

MITZVAH BOUNCERS: AN ALUMNI BUSINESS

Planning a special event can be stressful enough, but wondering how to keep young guests occupied and safe at the same time can sometimes be overwhelming. That's where the *Mitzvah Bouncers* come in. Established years ago by MJDS alumni, the *Mitzvah Bouncers* ensure the safety and security of each event that they work. Chaperoning children and escorting guests, helping set up the event, and post-event clean-up are but a few of the services provided by this unique business. Not only do they supervise activities at the event but, they also can accommodate requests for cleaning, escorting, setting up, taking pictures, and more.

Who are the current *Mitzvah Bouncers*?



David Ribnick (Class of '02) is a graduate of the Twin Cities Jewish Middle School ('04) and a senior at St. Louis Park High School. He was active in the TARBUT program at Beth El Synagogue and has co-chaired the Beth El USY Purim Carnival for

several years. David is also a member of USY, and will be attending the Ramah Israel Poland Seminar this summer. And if that isn't enough, he played offensive line for the St. Louis Park Orioles Football team.



Ben Segal (Class of '02) is also a graduate of the Twin Cities Jewish Middle School ('04) and is a senior at St. Louis Park High School. He is a prayer tutor in the Saturday Morning Program at Adath Jeshurun, and is a member of USY.

Ben is also an All-Conference swimmer, a pole vaulter, the captain of the St. Louis Park Math Team and a writer for the Echowan (his school's yearbook).

Other staff include Jason Ketover, Ryan Sherling, and Shawn Abelson.

MJDS parents rave about the business. One parent says that "They are very easy to work with and proactive in communicating with clients. All of the employees handle themselves very professionally." Another said "The *Mitzvah Bouncers* are professional and diligent well beyond their years. They do a fantastic job in all aspects—they are courteous, work well as a team, always seek ways to help, are well coordinated, and show common sense."

The cover of Branches features artwork by MJDS eighth grader Kayla Salsberg. The original papercut was created in one of the many arts electives offered as part of our Upper School program.

ALUMNI PROFILE • ATTENDED '92-'93

YAMIT TARAGAN TEACHES FOR AMERICA AND ISRAEL



When Yamit Taragan first arrived from Israel, she spoke no English. She was not particularly fond of snow or cold weather, and missed her life on *Kibbutz*

Urim in southern Israel where she was an accomplished swimmer. Her innate intelligence, goal-oriented personality and persistence brought her much success as a student and as a contributing member of our community. She received the Rose Rees Peace Award as a Hopkins High School student in 2001, and went on to graduate from George Washington University with degrees in International Affairs and Spanish. She taught sixth grade math in an urban school in Charlotte N.C. through the Teach For America program and completed her two year corps experience in 2007.

Yamit has recently taken on a huge responsibility as Country Relations Manager in Israel for **Teach For All (TFA)**, a new partnership between Teach For America and Teach First in the United Kingdom. Teach for All is committed to helping other countries create equity in education by supporting organizations that want to replicate the TFA model locally. Yamit was recently featured in *Nonprofit Leadership*, the Teach For America Career and Leadership newsletter. In her alumni profile written for this newsletter Yamit comments, "When I entered the corps, I never intended to make a career in

education. However, while experiencing both the challenges and successes with my students, I realized that there is a dire need to improve the education system. I looked at opportunities to address education issues on a more macro level that would fit with my personal goals and skill-sets."

Her role as Country Relations Manager for TFA in Israel is a perfect marriage of her passions and interests: international affairs, Teach For America, education development, and Israel, her birthplace. The mission of Teach For America is to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting the nation's most prominent recent college graduates and professionals of all academic areas to commit to teach for two year in our nation's neediest schools and facilitate educational change. Yamit hopes that in her position in this start-up affiliate of Teach For America she will be able to bring those ideals to her work in Israel. In this new position she collaborates not only with the global network of Teach For All but also with local leadership, the Ministry of Education, potential donors and other organizations in the education sector in Israel.

We wish Yamit continued success and we are very proud of her accomplishments.

To learn more about Teach For All, please visit http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/special_initiatives/teach_for_all.htm. To learn more about Teach For Israel's Tomorrow, please visit <http://www.teachforisrael.org.il/english.html> or contact Yamit (yamit.taragan@teachforamerica.org).

MJDS Veteran Teachers REFLECT ON THE HISTORY OF YOUR SCHOOL



ROZ KAPLAN

Eleven years ago I was hired for third grade because they had enough students for a second section. Helen Siegel was the other third

grade teacher. My classroom was upstairs from the JCC lobby. It was a long narrow room with no windows and no sink. Our only sun was the artificial sunflower plant that I brought from home. There was only one section each of fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Now we have three sections in each grade, kindergarten through fourth grade! Dismissal for the entire school was at the south door. The MJDS office was first in a small classroom space and then at the front of the JCC (where the Jewish Historical Society is now) and the auditorium served as our lunch room. From my very first day, I have always been impressed by the warmth, caring, and sense of community found at MJDS. It always amazes me to see the integration of Hebrew with kindergarteners and what they know by winter break!



YEFET ZADAKA

Through the years, MJDS has been a big part of my family. I remember the first meeting I ever attended in the old building. We were asked about our dream for the future of MJDS; I couldn't help but think how great it was to have a school so full of life and excitement and that the walls would burst with the energy of learning. I didn't know that the walls were windowless and the rooms themselves a plain narrow section where desks were shoved about and books placed on makeshift bookshelves. During the day, the amount of learning that went on broke through our classroom barriers. It was only at the end of the day when all the students left and rooms were left bare that we remembered them for what they were: plain, old, dark classrooms.

One thing that has not changed over the years is the feeling of community. There is a special connection among the teachers and students—it is one of the greatest values that we uphold. MJDS is known for its core values that are ever-constant and which help us reach our goals for today and for tomorrow!



ELLY BECKER

Eighteen years at MJDS have provided me with many wonderful memories of students, families and facilities. Our classrooms in the JCC were always interesting and often adventurous. If our rooms weren't windowless, then they were tiny. If they weren't tiny, then they were located in the basement of the JCC. If they weren't in the basement, then they were off campus at the old Talmud Torah building. The year we were at the Talmud Torah building was certainly one of the most memorable years for me because not only did I have my smallest class size ever (10 students), but it was the school year of 9-11. The level of maturity in dealing with the events of 9-11—and shlepping from the MJDS campus to Talmud Torah—made me realize what a unique group students and families we had (and have) in our school.

Thanks for the memories, MJDS!

CLASS NOTES

Class of '92

Ron Garber

Graduated from the University of Michigan in 2002 and from law school in 2007. He is currently a law clerk in the Capital Markets Group at Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York, NY.

Class of '95

Jennifer Minsberg

Graduated from Indiana University in 2006 and has been working for the University for the past two years. She is in the process of applying to graduate school in student affairs and hopes to be an advisor or advocate for college students with disabilities.

Jaelyn Saad

Graduated from the University of Michigan in 2005 and is currently studying at the William Mitchell College of Law. She's getting married in May of 2008.

Class of '96

Abry Deshong

Graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2006 and is applying to graduate schools in child psychology.

Class of '97

Oren Berman

Is a candidate for graduation from Cornell University in May 2008, and is planning to spend time in Israel.

Ilanit Kakou

Is very excited to get in touch

with classmates and teachers who helped mold her life as a child and now as an adult. She's thankful that she was provided with unending support and love from MJDS. She's currently studying at the University of Minnesota.

Class of '98

Mara Minsberg

Is currently student teaching AP History and Honors Government in Bloomington, Indiana. She hopes to move to Chicago and teach there in the future.

Class of '99

Ari Witkin

Is currently studying at Goucher College and recently spent a semester living in a Buddhist monastery in Japan.

Class of '00

Mark Divine

Is currently studying business and economics at the University of Minnesota and will be a business analyst intern at Target Corporation this summer.

Class of '01

Danielle Sandler

Graduated from Hopkins High School in 2007 and is now studying pre-med at Boston University.

Class of '02

Lily Harris

Was awarded gold and silver medals in the Scholastic art competition for pieces she designed during a class at Hopkins High School.

Sophie Krupp

Was awarded a gold medal in the

Scholastic art competition for a jewelry piece she designed during a class at Hopkins High School.

Monica Routman

Recently performed in the Hopkins High School production of *Beauty and the Beast*, works at the Buckle in Ridgedale Mall and is deciding between Ohio University and the University of Tampa for next year. She would love to hear from her friends.

Ben Segal

Is a National Merit Commended Scholar and is considering spending a year in Israel before attending college.

Grace Washko

Was awarded a silver medal in the Scholastic art competition for jewelry she designed during a class at Hopkins High School.

Class of '03

Noah Berman

Is the Regional *Mazkir* of Young Judea and will be attending the Young Judea Year Course in Israel in 2008-2009.

Class of '05

Leah Segal

Is looking forward to spending her summer at Camp Ramah—it's her *machon* year!

Class of '07

Asher Mintzer

Received first prize in poetry in the *Keren Or* creative arts contest for students in grades 7-9.

ALUMNI PROFILE • CLASS OF '04

aiden pink ON JEOPARDY!



MJDS alumnus Aiden Pink appeared this past summer on Jeopardy as a finalist in the Summer Teen Tournament. Held in July, the Tournament started

with over 8,000 teens from North America who took an online test, all at the same time, on a crisp October afternoon. The top 200 scorers were invited to regional competitions; Aiden was one of those invited to compete in Chicago. There, the competitors took an extensive written test, played a game of Jeopardy against two other teens, and had personality interviews with the producers. A few months later, Aiden was one of 15 chosen to be in the tournament. He was the youngest competitor chosen (14 at that the time, and one of only two high school freshmen in the tournament.)

He flew to Los Angeles in February where he taped the Tournament. Having been bound by a confidentiality agreement, Aiden was unable to talk about the results for months. Needless to say, he did great, making it to the finals. He was the life of the Tournament.

Unfortunately, Aiden wasn't around to watch the Tournament. He left for Kenya a week before the Tournament aired on television, to build a school and teach English to the Masai people as part of a teen leadership program of Free the Children, called Leaders Today. Free the Children's Education projects are focused on providing the schools, teachers, and resources disadvantaged children need to get a basic primary education. Today, more than 50,000 children attend more than 500 Free the Children schools every day.

It was clear that his Jewish pride showed through; MJDS is very proud of him.

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