

Hebrew Academy News

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The Spirit of Judaism Prevails at the Academy

By Cheryl Spangenthal

I always feel the excitement of being Jewish when attending a Bris Milah. The realization that the ceremony has been observed unchanged throughout the generations, emphasizes the richness of the religion. The very old is still very new.

Each one of us is a vital link in the chain of Jewish history and it is our responsibility to ensure the continuation of this heritage and culture which will be entrusted to our children. A Jewish education, which includes the study of Torah, Jewish ethics, values, etc., remains the hub of the wheel from which the sparks of Judaism emanate. Therefore, the presence of a Jewish day school is essential for the well being of the whole community. In addition, it is a haven where our children can feel a sense of identity with other Jews as well as learn and practice their religion in a safe environment.

At the Hebrew Academy we are fortunate to have two special and dedicated Judaic teachers — namely Berta Straz and Ziva London. Berta teaches K-1 grade and often includes children from Temple Israel. Ziva teaches 2-6 grade.

Berta believes learning should be fun and her teaching is consequently very creative. Her warmth and openness is inspiring and she instills a relaxed and positive learning environment. She integrates her teaching of Hebrew in the children's every day life. Commonly used expressions as "thank you", "how are you", are said in Hebrew. The language is also taught through song, dance and drama. Knowledge and understanding of the Yomtovim are gained by introducing the children to traditional songs, psalms and stories pertaining to each individual festival. She thus inspires a "Ruach" among the children as they feel and become part of the "Spirit of Judaism".

Ziva's love and dedication for Judaism is contagious and the language and religion come alive to those around her. She has a natural ability to integrate the teaching of Hebrew with Judaic studies. She discusses the Torah in



Upper grade students present interpretation of Biblical characters to Ks & 1st Graders.

Hebrew and involves the children in melodies, poems and plays. Her goals are to give the children a sense of Jewish identity and pride as well as the encouragement to become active and involved Jews.

As a method of achieving her objectives, Ziva has initiated two new projects this year: "Jewish Book Month" and "Russian Jews". In the former project the children discuss Jewish modern authors, their lives and style of writing. The literature thus becomes meaningful and the children are taught the concept that history, especially Jewish history, repeats

itself. The "Russian Jews" project teaches the awareness of a Jewish existence and struggle outside of America. It involves the listening to authentic tapes and reading letters from witnesses from behind the iron curtain. The children are then encouraged to express their feelings by writing letters to various authorities.

At this point in history, while the traditional Jewish way of life is being dissipated, the Hebrew Academy, through its Judaic program, stands as a firm guardian of the religion and culture. We pray that it may go from strength to strength!!



Making clay pots with Cathy Siderman (rear); Ziva London (L) watching.



Ks and 1st graders enjoy cookies they baked for snacks.

Children Celebrate Thanksgiving



Hebrew Academy & Temple Israel Pre-schoolers cavorting and singing "Our Family."



"Our Jewish Pilgrims"

Photos/Roger Meyers

Tables were covered with white tablecloths and decorated with orange accessories made by the children. The Hebrew Academy and Temple Israel nursery school children celebrated Thanksgiving with a concert followed by a traditional meal. Marlene

Fuerstman organized the performance which included singing, playing of musical instruments and movement.

Children and guests thoroughly enjoyed the celebration. Many thanks to those parents who helped with the preparations.

— Cheryl Spangenthal

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1st and 2nd graders learn math skills through building blocks. (L to R) Naomi Abel, Joe Fuerstman, Philip Schreiber, Josh Rubin.

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