

## The Latest and Greatest at JPS

By Nancy Zolotorofe

Is your child on track for kindergarten? This was on the minds of some JPS parents who attended the preschool's kindergarten readiness program on the evening of November 19. A highly-esteemed panel of speakers discussed the developmental skills needed to make a successful leap to big-kid school as well as the "homework" a parent should do before making the decision. The latter might include knowing the expectations of the school your child will be entering, finding out what your child's preschool teacher would recommend in terms of placement, and grasping where a child's social development stands.

"This was a fantastic program, especially because the cut-off dates for kindergarten are changing and parents have become even more confused," says Elise Kosofsky, who has a child in the 4s and one in the 3s. Preschool director, Jen Lahn, agrees about the program's timeliness. She



Students at JPS presented Rabbi Groner with a "big" check for the community's new Torah.

says, "Now is when parents are considering their child's ongoing formal education for the following year. Hearing from experts in the field will arm them with tools through the process." This is just one of many educational opportunities Lahn hopes to offer parents that will enable them to make informed decisions about their children's future.

Many thanks to panel members: Mara Rosenberg (kindergarten teacher at CJDS), Cheryl Wolfe (Gessell examiner), Mandy DeFilippo (CJDS lower school director), Frank Gaskill, Ph.D.

(part of the CAIS study group for private schools), Beverly Wakefield (4s teacher), and Erica Katz (4s teacher).

### Collecting Their Pennies

For the last year, children at JPS have been busy filling their tzedakah boxes (and searching under couch cushions and in the crevices of their car seats for coins). Ultimately, they collected \$1800 to donate toward the completion of a new Torah for the community. Reaching this monetary goal has allowed them to share the mitzvah of sponsoring an entire week's portion of the Torah; this section will be dedicated to the children attending JPS during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. On December 5, students celebrated this amazing mitzvah by presenting the preschool's co-founder, Rabbi Groner, with the money that was raised. Then, the students marched around the school in a Torah parade, waving the torah flags they made and playing musical instruments. ☆

## Giving at CJP

By Stephanie Starr

Most families in the Jewish community do not truly understand how wonderful an organization the Charlotte Jewish Preschool is in terms of teaching the values of giving and tzedakah. As both a parent of two children who attend CJP as well as the Director of Jewish Family Services, I can honestly validate this more than most.

I see the wonderful sense of excitement and pride that my children have when they bring coins every week in their Tzedakah coin holders for Shabbat or when they bring non-perishable food to the Food Pantry at JFS. It is infectious and invigorating – a pure sense of wanting to give to help others. As parents, this is exactly what many of us strive to teach our children in this very materialistic world – to give because it is the right thing to do. Helping others provides a wonderful feeling that sometimes cannot be described in words. We see it on the faces of our children and hear it in the excitement of their voices.

On the receiving end, I see the needs of individuals and families going through hard times and crisis. Poverty and difficult times do not discriminate and are experienced in the Jewish community at equal rates to those in the general community. We are in one of the worst economic recessions in his-

tory. There is an increase in those who are having difficulties in our community, many who have never dealt with this before. It is not easy for most individuals to ask for help or to accept it. I cannot describe the true appreciation that many individuals and families verbalize for the assistance and food that JFS is able to provide. JFS would not be able to provide this help without the generosity of CJP and other community agencies.

CJP does many drives throughout the year to help Jewish Family Services. Here are just a few of these. During Sukkot, the preschool classes were all assigned a variety of non-perishables to bring to the JFS food pantry. This food drive lasted several weeks and helped feed many families who would have done without. The children all delivered their items to the food pantry with huge smiles on their faces. They were able to see the true effects of their giving. Over the month of December, CJP and J-Tots are collecting all "green" currency as tzedakah on Shabbat. The money collected will bring wonderful presents for many individuals, children, and families in need. This program is proof that when everyone gives only a small amount, it can add up quickly and go a long way. Just think about it – a dollar a week for each child adds



Ms. Haley's 4s deliver food to the JFS Food Pantry and JFS employee Nicole Vagnone.

up to \$750. A dollar alone makes a small dent; dollars together make a big difference. Imagine how many individuals and families this can help. It is also so effortless and easy. As a mother of three who works full-time, I appreciate any kind of way that I can help others without having to do the shopping myself. Sticking a dollar in a coin holder is easy.

There are many other ways that CJP teaches children the philosophy of giving and tzedakah. I see it in the classrooms daily. There is a sense of nurturance and caring that is exhibited by teachers and administrative staff. As a parent and a professional in the social service field, I want my children to be in an environment in which they experience daily reinforcement of kindness and giving. CJP provides this and I could not imagine my children anywhere else. Thank you to CJP for all you do for the children in our community and for all of your assistance

## CJDS Middle School News

"You can't control the wind, but you can adjust your sails."  
- Yiddish proverb

As we rapidly approach the halfway mark of our 2008-2009 school year, we are pleased that our CJDS middle school students have had such a rewarding educational and social experience. Our Board of Directors took a "leap of faith" by adding the fifth grade to our existing middle school for the current year. Students, parents,

and teachers have all been very pleased with the success of the program and the camaraderie and friendships that have evolved among the 32 current students in all the middle school grades.

The economic challenges faced by many in our community in recent months have had a profound impact on our middle school, and many other private schools and colleges are facing similar issues. It has become apparent that enrollment for next

year will be well below our projections, and there will be a greater need for financial assistance because of the economic downturn. The Board of Directors has carefully considered the effect of reduced enrollment and its financial impact on our ability to sustain the middle school program at its current level of performance and programmatic excellence. The realities are disappointing but undeniable. CJDS is very fortunate to have a strategic plan in

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## New and Smiling Faces at CJDS

Charlotte Jewish Day School's Ein Gedi program has long been respected as an oasis where Jewish children experiencing learning, behavioral, and sensory challenges can be nurtured emotionally, psychologically, and academically. As the Ein Gedi program expanded, so did the need for additional staff, specially trained to provide the very best for these students.



Patty Reynolds

Please join us in welcoming Patty Reynolds to Charlotte Jewish Day School. Mrs. Reynolds teaches the Ein Gedi students in the pre-adolescent, middle school age group. Her responsibility is unique, as she strives to give these children the tools they will need as they "mainstream" into more traditional school settings.

Patty is native to Long Island, NY and is a graduate of Empire State College. Her passion for teaching children with special needs is a result of the struggles she faced and conquered as a

youngster. She has worked in special education for 15 years and can think of nothing more rewarding. Reynolds "golden rule" for her classroom is in and of itself inspirational. Her room is a "leave your negativity behind" zone, which encourages students to respect one another, to treat each other as they would like to be treated, and to be non-judgmental. Her students never cease to amaze. The Ein Gedi II students serve as reading buddies with the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten kids and are looking forward to someday helping the senior citizens of the Jewish Community Center. The sense of pride that Reynolds instills in these youths is palpable.

Patty resides in Monroe, NC with her husband of 27 years. She has two grown children who are the apple of her eye. She is a history buff and looks forward to exploring the culture in the South ... both old and new. ☆



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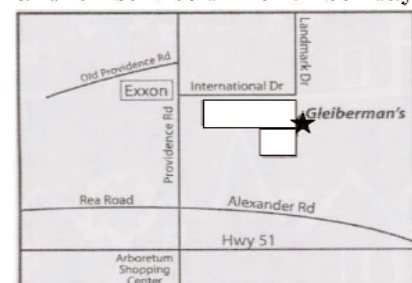
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