

## Beth Shalom Religious School Announces New Curriculum School Will Use Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Jewish Life Study Program

The Religious School of Beth Shalom of Lake Norman is excited to announce their adaptation of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) curriculum starting with the 5770 (2009-2010) school year.

ISJL is a private, non-profit and trans-denominational organization based in Jackson, MS. ISJL, home to the "Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience," utilizes its active research in areas such as education, history and social justice to support the program that Beth Shalom will implement. This religious school curriculum is used in more than 100 Congregations in 13 states to provide the foundation for a meaning-

ful Jewish educational experience. Kristine Mahoney, Director of Education, will represent Beth Shalom at the ISJL Conference in Jackson, MS on June 28-30.

When asked about the new program, Ms. Mahoney commented: "I am excited to be a part of the growth and success Beth Shalom has embraced. ISJL will provide our students with a structured spiral curriculum, ensuring the mastering of skills through thematic units of study. Our teachers will be provided with ongoing professional development enabling them to deliver lessons that are both age appropriate and engaging. In addition to our adaptation of the ISJL curriculum, I look forward to

solidifying the relationships we have formed with USCJ and Temple Israel who are dedicated to our success. Enlightened by change and hopeful for our new beginning, thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn and grown with your children."

In addition to the adaptation of the ISJL curriculum, Beth Shalom will continue to receive support from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) and Temple Israel ensuring the Conservative influence on the students' education. Hebrew acquisition and tefillot will be the areas of focus.

Beth Shalom's Center for Learning, serving children ages 3-

13, meets weekly at St. Albans Episcopal Church in Davidson, NC. Registration for the upcoming year is in progress. For further information visit [www.bslkn.org/Education.html](http://www.bslkn.org/Education.html) or contact Kristine Mahoney at [K.Mahoney04@gmail.com](mailto:K.Mahoney04@gmail.com); 980-253-0232.

### About Beth Shalom of Lake Norman

Beth Shalom ("House of Peace") of Lake Norman is about family, friends and faith. We are dedicated to developing a meaningful Jewish life for our members and our community. We come from different backgrounds, traditions and practices, but we come together as a congregation to form

an extended family. We express this dedication through our commitment to foster and fulfill the spiritual, educational and social needs of the Jewish community in Lake Norman. We strive to create inviting, participatory atmosphere that allow each of us to connect with our Jewish spirit and identity. Family. Friends. Faith – Building the foundation for future generations. [www.BSLKN.org](http://www.BSLKN.org). ☆



## Lake Norman Jewish Congregation Shabbat Initiative

By Renee Slonim, Traditions Committee member

The idea of the Shabbat Initiative: Embracing Shabbat was developed at the 2007 Biennial of the URJ. The goal of Embracing Shabbat is not only to create services that are heartfelt, inspiring and community-building, but to explore the broader question of Shabbat observances. All Reform congregations were invited to participate, and those who chose to were supplied with a wide variety of materials to study and explore Shabbat.

The Shabbat Initiative has proven to be the ideal stimulus for the Traditions Committee at LNJC in developing and promoting meaningful services and traditions for our young and rapidly growing congregation.

We were very pleased to receive this note from Rabbi Eric Yoffe, President of the Union for Reform Judaism commending the Shabbat Initiative of the Lake Norman Jewish Congregation:

"It is an impressive and comprehensive program and I simply wanted to offer a hearty 'mazel tov' to you and your leadership in undertaking it. We will certainly share it with others and encourage them to follow your example."

One of our first tasks was to think through what Shabbat obser-

vance means to a Reform Jew. This means emphasizing the "Thou Shalts" of Shabbat – candles and Kiddush, rest and study, prayer and community – rather than the "Thou Shall Nots." It means expanding our understanding of rest, study and prayer on Shabbat, and defining new ways of interpreting these ideas within our families and community.

At LNJC, we decided to introduce a specific ritual/aspect of Shabbat at services each month, but in a tangible way, involving a variety of senses. Working closely with our Rabbi Michael Shields, we have been focusing on and presenting Shabbat traditions not as something that each family must do, but on introducing our families to the beautiful aspects of Shabbat, to feel comfortable and knowledgeable with them, and to utilize them if they wish to do.

In February, we distributed "Shabbat Boxes" to each family at services. In each box was a spice bag, plus a copy of the Spices blessing (from Havdalah) in English, Hebrew and transliteration, along with the following message:

This "Shabbat Box" is a symbol of Shabbat traditions on which we focus at each service. To introduce the joy and sweetness of Shabbat, we present you with this spice bag.

Inhale the sweet aroma to set the mood for a "Sweet Shabbat." We welcome your unique spice, "the sweetness of your own family" to this "Kehillah Kedosha" (sacred community). Smell the spices. Then recite the following blessing. (Also used at Havdalah to mark the end of Shabbat).

In March, we presented each family with two Shabbat candles, tied with raffia, along with a copy of the blessing in Hebrew, English, and transliteration and this "Welcome to Shabbat Candle Lighting":

Lighting a candle in the darkness is the most elemental human symbol of hope. When you light these candles, you re-enact God's opening act of creation, "Let There Be Light." You also provide warmth – emotional as well as physical – for your home. Candle lighting sets this day apart: it creates sanctity and invites the Shekhina, God's maternal presence, to be you honored guest and sit at your table. For women, it reinforces a bond of memory between mother and daughter going back hundreds of generations. May this be a peaceful and loving Shabbat, for you and all who share your home.

When it came time for candle lighting at services, lights were dimmed, and candles were lit and

the blessings chanted. It was dramatic and stirring.

In April, we gave each family a miniature Kiddush cup along with the blessing in Hebrew, English and transliteration. During services, Rabbi Shields discussed the history and observances associated with this tradition (as he has done with each of the previous traditions highlighted). In May, the Rabbi made and distributed CDs of traditional Shabbat melodies, along with variations thereof; music is a very important part of our services. In June, we distrib-

uted miniature "chocolate chip challas" as we focus on the blessing over the bread.

This Shabbat Initiative has been warmly received by families, mixed marriage or from a more traditional Jewish upbringing. In families where the wife/mother was not raised Jewish, there has been a "welcoming of learning and understanding of tradition," and in our more "traditionally" religious families, we are seeing a return to the rituals of Shabbat (e.g., lighting Shabbat candles) that didn't always exist before.

Please visit [www.lakenorman-jc.org](http://www.lakenorman-jc.org) for more information. ☆

## Mazel Tov & Congratulations



South Charlotte Middle School's Odyssey of the Mind team came in first at the Regional Level. Among the students on the team was: Josh Rosenfeld, Jacob Grenblatt and Brooke Davies.



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