

The Blessing of a Visit from Wendy Mogel

On January 11 and 12, Joined in Education (JIE), a joint project of Charlotte Jewish Day School, The Charlotte Jewish Preschool, and The Jewish Preschool on Sardis, sponsored Two Days with Dr. Wendy Mogel, author of *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* and *The Blessing of a B Minus*. During her visit, Dr. Mogel's chock-full schedule included a major donor reception, keynote speech ("The Big Talk"), parent breakfast, a meeting with students, and a teacher workshop. The universal response was "WOW!"

First on Dr. Mogel's agenda was a meeting with area middle and high school students. Dr. Mogel has been meeting with teens across the country, learning from them and compiling data in support of her next book. As par-

ents brought their teens in, several asked Dr. Mogel, "Do you think the high school kids will say much? My son never speaks at home." Dr. Mogel answered, "In my experience, middle school kids usually have a lot to say and the high school kids will be much more reluctant." Well, our wonderful group of young people not only engaged in conversation with her, but left wanting more time with her.

After a short break, Dr. Mogel settled in for an evening of meeting, greeting, and lecturing. The night began with a pre-reception for major supporters and donors, giving those in attendance a chance to meet Dr. Mogel in a more intimate setting. Following the pre-reception, everyone gathered in Knight Theater to hear Dr.

Mogel's keynote address, otherwise known as "The Big Talk."

During the presentation, Dr. Mogel referenced her most recent book, *The Blessing of a B Minus*, by addressing a common question asked by parents: How can I be an effective parent in a culture that breeds anxiety and entitlement in children? Dr. Mogel acknowledged that parents have more reasons to worry as children transition from adolescence into teenagers; after all, there is a big difference between teaching your child to ride a two wheeler and helping them get behind the wheel of a car. Dr. Mogel advised, however, that even though parental concerns are real and the dangers scary, teens need to face difficult challenges to grow into resilient, optimistic, and independent adults. She feels that parental "overreaction" to adolescence can impair a child's ability to reach their true potential, and is more of a threat to their development than the real-world dangers faced by today's teens. "Be alert, not alarmed," she advised.

As parents, we should be supportive and loving caregivers, not micromanagers prone to overreact to our children's missteps. Dr. Mogel recommends that worrisome teen behaviors be met with thoughtful care, not anxiety. "Parents," Dr. Mogel said, "need to recognize that the adolescent road will be bumpy. It's supposed to be." But, she offered, parents

are up to the job. Her words - "Remember that a snapshot of your teenager today is not the epic movie of his/her life."

Much of Dr. Mogel's philosophy is grounded in classical Jewish values and teachings. She emphasizes the importance of leading by example through *bitachon* (trust in God), faith in your child and your own parenting, and by appropriate action. By the end of the night, the sold out crowd of 1,100 people had laughed at her jokes, nodded at her words of wisdom, and offered a prolonged ovation in appreciation of her teachings.

The following day, Dr. Mogel attended a parent breakfast followed by a teacher workshop. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions of Dr. Mogel that were more specific to their particular child/situation. While offering a voice of compassionate reason and common-sense wisdom on the complicated nature of raising teens, Dr. Mogel stressed the importance of "maintaining composure and creating some distance" as being vital in this culture where fear of adolescence, rather than its promise, seems predominant. Our teenagers "need to make



Wendy Mogel speaking at the teachers' workshop.

dumb mistakes to get smart." Whether you are the parent or the teacher in a teen's life, "put the oxygen mask on yourself before you put it on your child" and by doing so, "take the opportunity to cherish what being a teen really means."

Those of us fortunate enough to have attended at least one of the four JIE-sponsored events featur-

ing Dr. Mogel, were given the gift of reassurance: reassurance that teens will make mistakes they're supposed to make, and yes, we as parents will make mistakes we are supposed to make; but if we're smart and work with our children, we can better avoid the big mistakes when it comes to raising teens. Parents can find comfort and peace in Dr. Mogel's teachings. And that is a blessing. ☆



Michelle Rusgo with Wendy Mogel

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Three Families and the Jewish Preschool on Sardis

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kids who left JPS we more than ready for kindergarten."

Sam: "Intimacy, smaller and cozy groups, for children to not get lost in the shuffle, for my kids to have fun, to meet nice children, for me to meet friends through the

children at school."

Julie: "The education and quality of the teachers, the ratios, the school size, the personal attention and familiarity with the families."

What is your favorite thing about The Jewish Preschool on Sardis so far?

Lisa: "The supportive, friendly staff, other parents. From the first day, he loved it and made friends. He integrated immediately and comes home singing the brachot, songs he learned. I like that families come from different backgrounds. Some are in public schools, others are in private. Some are stay-at-home moms and some work, some are from Charlotte, some just moved like me."

Sam: "It immediately felt like family with a sense of community. Moms reached out with emails and phone calls for hair places, things to do, invitations to get together. She is jumping up and



Maggie with her friends dressing up for a wedding.

down on school days. She really loves it here. I enjoy the weekly Mommy & Me classes."

Julie: "The Judaica customs are great. It makes me happy that she is excited each school day. She looks forward to being at JPS. Extended day is a way for her to make additional new friends with kids from other classes. There is a whole other level of interactions with kids and teachers for Judaica, additional education, reinforcing the benefits of outdoor time. It's fantastic and the teachers are great!"

Is there anything you would want others to know about JPS?

"Everyone should consider JPS." "It is a hidden gem." "You should definitely come and see it!"

Thank you, ladies, for sharing your thoughts about The Jewish Preschool on Sardis. We truly love having your families here.

For more information about our preschool, extended day options, or camp, please call 704-364-8395. ☆



Olivia all dressed up.

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