

Schools

Hats Off to Miss Barbara and Miss Ellen

By Elka Bernstein, director, Charlotte Jewish Preschool

Each day, Brooke Amo, CJP Assistant Director, and I give tours to perspective parents. Parents are always impressed with our beautiful classrooms, our expansive playgrounds, and the art work on the walls. We at CJP are lucky to have such beautiful facilities, but it is not the facilities that make the Charlotte Jewish Preschool so special. There is only one true element in any school that makes it special. It is the teachers.

As we begin to move to the end of our school year, I would like to share news about two of our special teachers that have reached milestones at The Charlotte Jewish Preschool. We are excited to honor Miss Ellen Wismuller and Miss Barbara Osborn. Miss Ellen is celebrating 25 years of teaching at CJP. After eighteen years of teaching our fours program, Miss Barbara Osborn will retire from CJP at the end of the school year. With their almost 50 years of combined preschool teaching experience, Barbara and Ellen talked briefly about their careers.

On a personal level, CJP offered both Barbara and Ellen, a sense of community when arriving in Charlotte. The teacher community at CJP was supportive and welcoming and over time, the



Barbara Osborn and Ellen Wismuller.

teachers at CJP became not only strong co-workers, but also close friends. On a professional level, Miss Ellen has enjoyed the different challenges and knows that her work at CJP has kept her young. Miss Barbara has enjoyed the support of her parents over the years, as well as, watching CJP families build a community of friends in the preschool years with ties that last forever.

Miss Ellen and Miss Barbara both believe that each child is special and it is a wonderful experience to watch them grow. Over the years, the children have taught them all that is good in people. The children have continued to teach Miss Ellen and Miss Bar-

bara compassion, honesty, vulnerability, patience, and the ability to love and accept individuals based on their abilities.

When you are a teacher, you become a teacher to your peers. Over the last two decades, Miss Ellen and Miss Barbara's fellow teachers applaud their work. Each member of the Four and PreK teachers spoke about the specialness of each one. Miss Nadine said it beautifully when she spoke of her fellow team members. She said, "Miss Ellen welcomed me into the fours family as a newbie nine years ago. She has always shared and made me a part of this wonderful fours team. Barbara also welcomed me with open arms when I first started. Barbara and I have had a positive and beautiful relationship and I will miss her so badly. It is as if a piece of the Fours Fairy Tale Puzzle will be missing forever.

CJP's former Executive Director and current Interim Director for the Levine Sklut Judaic Library, Debby Block reflected on both of her former teachers. "When I think of Miss Ellen, I think of that wonderful smile. I have watched Ellen Wismuller teach children of all ages over more than two decades. No matter what the challenge, she always smiles and exudes elegance and grace. After years of experience in Florida, Barbara Osborn moved to

The Cost of Continuity

By Mariashi Groner, director, Charlotte Jewish Day School

I just returned from the North American Jewish Day School Conference in Philadelphia and heard a D'var Torah delivered by a colleague of mine from the Lerner Jewish Day School in Durham. She touched a chord, because the topic she addresses worries and concerns me daily. We all know that a Jewish day school education is probably the most effective tool to ensure Jewish continuity and yet the cost is prohibitive for many families or is requiring a lifestyle change that many do not want to make. I share her D'var Torah with you to start the conversation. Who knows what we can accomplish or start?

Ki Tisa, Allison Oakes, Lerner Jewish Day School, Durham

The cost of community. The cost of participation. How much is too much? How much is too little? What if it is too expensive and the decision to participate is turned down? What then? Who have we lost? I often ponder these questions, not just as a Head of School dependent upon enrollment, but as a Jewish woman in the diaspora truly concerned that the disappearance of the Jewish people will not be some sort of external force, but an internal force of disengagement.

In this week's parasha, *Ki Tisa*, the portion opens with God telling Moses to collect ½ a shekel from each individual over 20 years old

for the Mishkan as they are being counted for the census. The payment of this money allows the individual to participate, to be part of the community. As I researched this I found that some rabbis believed this was an annual tax and others thought it was a onetime payment partly for reparation of the golden calf. I have questions ... what if someone could not afford the ½ shekel? Was there financial assistance? How about people that were on the cusp (likened to our middle class families in our schools), if stretched, could afford it ... was there marketing in place to ensure that these people saw the value of stretching themselves in such a way?

Knowing that community is greatly dependent upon money, there has to be a method of collecting it, but I fear the total cost of participation is just too high for the society in which we live. My husband and I forego a lot to make financial membership commitments to synagogue, day school, JCC, plus all of the costs associated with the many programs they all offer at additional costs. Most in our Jewish communities, especially my peers, just choose to not engage ... what does that mean for the continuity of the Jewish people?

I often speak about my own Jewish journey starting with my parents' choice of Jewish Day School when I was four years old. I truly believe that I am the Jewish

woman I am today, raising a Jewish family, with the intent that my children have an even stronger Jewish identity than I and are more Jewishly literate than I so that they continue the legacy of the Jewish people ... all of this because of Jewish Day School. In 1981, my parents could afford to make that choice, they could afford to participate. Thanks to the Internet, my parent's successful business experienced its downfall. If I was born ten years later, I would not be standing here today. Private school, Jewish Day School, would have been off the table and potentially the line of strong Jewish identity through my family's line would have ended.

In our field of work, we spend a lot of time discussing sustainability and the value of a Jewish education and convincing donors and prospective parents of these ideas. I am curious what the ½ shekel gave a member of B'nai Yisrael ... probably access to prayer, education, and community. What would have happened to the Jewish people if our ancestors had to pay a ½ shekel for prayer; another for education; another for community? I don't think any of us would be here to today and this is what I am fearful of for my descendants.

I don't believe I need to say more. ☆

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Charlotte 18 years ago and we were all anxious to make her part of the CJP team. Even the Rabbi came into the preschool's office and said we that we must hire Miss Barbara. Barbara's creativity and enthusiasm for Early Childhood Education has been a gift to CJP ever since."

As their director, I have worked with them as a parent, a substitute

teacher, an assistant teacher, and Judaica teacher. I am thankful and fortunate to have learned from their experience and talents. Miss Ellen will continue her adventures at CJP and Miss Barbara will pursue her passions of working with horses and photography. Meanwhile, their legacy of creativity, laughter, partnership, and beauty will continue at CJP. I hope the community joins me in a heartfelt thanks to the everlasting gifts they have given to the children and families of our Jewish community.

The Charlotte Jewish Preschool is currently enrolling for the 2015-2016 school year. Please contact us at 704-944-6776 or eberstein@shalomcharlotte.org for more information or a tour of our wonderful teachers and school. ☆

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