

# Baruch HaBah: Peter Blair Joins Levine JCC as CEO

By Amy Krakovitz

"We just felt in our kishkes that this was home for our family," Peter Blair says of his visit to Charlotte. "It spoke to me as a Southern Jew, having been born and raised in Memphis."

Blair joins our community as the new CEO of the Levine JCC and his enthusiasm and vision are already well in place.

He comes most recently from the Harry and Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center in Milwaukee, but was in the Jewish education field for 15 years prior to that as Director of Early Childhood Education for the Mercer Island and Seattle campuses for the Stroum Jewish Community Center in Seattle, followed by a stint

as Head of School for the Merage Jewish Community Center of Orange County in Irvine, CA. His experience in education plays a large role in his plans for LJCC's future.

"I have a deep commitment to the role learning plays in Jewish life," he asserts. "... The LJCC can be a unique destination for life-long Jewish experience, one that celebrates our traditions and diversity, and offers an inclusive entry point for community engagement."

As important as education may be to Blair, he also feels that the people are essential, too. "I have a real simple goal for the near term: to meet the community and learn from its members. ... People will

learn pretty quickly that I am a hyper-communicator. ... I'm not hesitant to engage in respectful, open communications, even when opinions differ."

But for all his experience in Jewish communal work and his commitment to communication, members of the Jewish community of Charlotte know one thing: Shalom Park is a unique and different kind of organization than found in all of the Jewish world. But Blair feels that the partnership structure will not be a stumbling block for him. "I ... very much believe that the success and strength of any one organization directly impacts the other. I come from a very collaborative environment, where a shared vision and



Peter Blair



brings with him with wife Traci, children Hudson and Cohen, and a history of Jewish commitment. In Memphis, he "was a member of Temple Israel – a large Reform synagogue. ... My parents instilled in us the value of education, and I've made that a priority in my life through ongoing fellowships." The whole family is excited to begin this chapter of their lives in Charlotte. "We have every intention for this chapter to be a long one!" ☆

mission can be accomplished in a variety of ways. I'm excited to join a community where the foundation of that culture is in place."

Blair does not join us alone. He

# Shalom Green Forges Ahead with Initiatives

Efforts to improve environmental awareness and increase sustainability on Shalom Park are progressing as Shalom Green, the Shalom Park Environmental Initiative, moves ahead on a number of fronts.

- Shalom Park Community

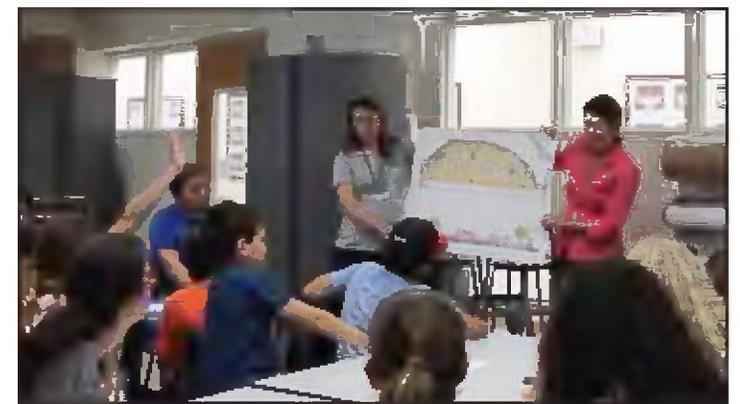
Garden - The design for the Shalom Park Community Garden is complete, and the first work days for garden construction and planting will take place in late September and early October. Community members are encouraged to participate. For more in-

formation or to volunteer, contact Yonatan Thull at [catalyst.ahelpinghand@gmail.com](mailto:catalyst.ahelpinghand@gmail.com).

The Shalom Green Garden Committee is currently seeking donations to help complete the build out of the garden. Donations in any amount are appreciated - \$72 will help purchase a tree; \$360 a rectangular raised bed; \$720 a large trellised raised bed. All donations are tax deductible. Checks may be made payable to the Foundation of Shalom Park with "Community Garden" in the memo line and mailed to the Foundation at 5007 Providence Road, Suite 102, Charlotte NC 28226.

- Reducing our Carbon Footprint

Energy Audits of Temple Beth El and the main campus buildings on Shalom Park have identified opportunities to save thousands of dollars, while at the same time re-



Teen camp learns about the new garden from designer Bobbie Mabe.

ducing energy usage and impact on the environment. Green teams at each agency will be evaluating ways to implement recommended changes, and Shalom Green's Carbon Footprint Reduction Committee will be supporting these efforts with information and educational programming. For more information, or to get involved, contact Lisa Garfinkle at [environmental@shalomcharlotte.org](mailto:environmental@shalomcharlotte.org).

- Shalom Green Challenge – Beginning in October, LJCC Cares will be leading the Shalom Green Challenge, monthly challenges - connected to Jewish values – to live more sustainably at home. The challenge will include learning opportunities, activities, and discussion topics to get families working together to go green. Monthly themes will include Appreciating and Caring for the Earth, Reducing Waste, Reducing Carbon Footprint, Conserving Water, Eating and Growing Green, and Spring Clean/Green Clean.

Register by sending an email to Julie Rizzo at [julie.rizzo@charlotttejcc.org](mailto:julie.rizzo@charlotttejcc.org).

- Educating our Youth - Teen campers at the LJCC enjoyed a morning with Garden Committee members and Education Co-Chair Rabbi Jonathan Freirich, as they learned about Jewish values related to protecting the planet, started seeds of fall vegetables for the community garden with Garden designer Bobbie Mabe, and worked in the Charlotte Jewish Preschool garden with Garden Committee chair Candice Serbin. Religious school students of all ages, from kindergarten to high school, will have the opportunity to learn more about Jewish values and sustainable living during the upcoming school year. ☆



SHALOM GREEN  
Jewish Values, Sustainable Living  
Shalom Park Environmental Initiative



Teen campers planting.

You are invited to attend our  
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Grades 6 - 12  
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"Meditation and prayer before God are particularly efficacious in grassy fields and amid trees, since a man's soul is thereby strengthened, as if every blade of grass and every plant united with him in prayer."

-- Nachman of Bratslav