



L'Chain!

Fall 2002
Sh'vat — 5763

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Federation: 940-6001
Email: altfed@uplink.net

News & "Chailights" of The Greater Altoona Jewish Community



Caroline Pielmeier comes up for air at the Federation's pool party in August.

Federation creates splash

The Greater Altoona Jewish Federation kicked off its fall calendar with a barbecue-pool party at the home of Michael Tomor in Juniata Gap.

The event featured the installation of new officers (please see related story, page 2) along with a tribute to outgoing president Mickey Port, who held the position for three years.

Nearly 50 people, including three generations and a number of children, were on hand.

"We are striving to have these kind of events more often," new Federation president Neil Rudel said. "We'd like to promote more social events and the idea that Federation is about family."

Rudel thanked Tomor, an incoming vice president, for graciously offering his home. "We hope to make this an annual event," he said.

The cannonball contest was won by Jay Eiman.



Phoebe Simon gets a kick out of her dad's imitation of a seal.



Torch passed to new officers



New Federation officers are, from left: Mickey Port, Neil Rudel, Michael Tomor, Roz Sky, Michael Cohen, Sue Simon, Marilyn Muhlfelder, and Henry Weinberg.

The Federation's new set of officers were sworn in during a pool party/barbecue held on Sunday, Aug. 19 at the home of Michael Tomor and Tom Trexler in Juniata Gap.

Among those installed included incoming president Neil Rudel, vice presidents Michael Tomor, Sue Simon and Roz Sky, secretary Marilyn Muhlfelder, treasurer Michael Cohen and deputy treasurer Henry Weinberg.

Rudel follows Mickey Port, who held the presidency for three years.

"Mickey is a true role model in our community," he said. "We owe her a debt of gratitude for her commitment. "Following her is an honor and a challenge, but we know we'll be able to lean on her guidance, wisdom and friendship."

Wallen named executive director

The Federation is pleased to welcome its new executive director, but he's really not new.

Bill Wallen was hired over the summer. He replaces Reva Schulman, who held the position for the past several years and did an outstanding job.

Wallen has been extremely active in the Jewish community. He is a past president of the Federation and has been extremely involved at both Temple Beth Israel and Agudath Achim Synagogue.

Bill has a diverse background in human services and most recently served as Program Director of the Blair County Easter Seals. He and his wife Carolyn have two children, Joellyn and Kevin, and one grandchild. They reside in Hollidaysburg.

He will be joined on the Federation staff on a part-time basis by Paula Pimentel, who will coordinate the Federation's Senior Outreach program. Paula resides in Altoona with her daughters, Amy and Rani.

The secretary at the Federation office is Wendy Christie.



Mickey Port

The Federation made a contribution to the Joint Distribution Committee in honor of Mickey, who presided over the installation of the new officers, which included her daughter, Sue Simon. Rudel noted that the leadership of the Altoona Jewish Federation has now been defined for nearly the next decade, which should help organizational continuity.

Past Federation presidents include Susan Leopold-Ansin, Allen Goldberg, Donald Devorris, Stephen Port, Neil Port, Ed Giller, Morley Cohn, Bob Neidorf, Ed Petsonk and Bill Wallen.

The Federation thanks Michael and Tom for their gracious hospitality.



Paula Pimentel and Bill Wallen



Upcoming Federation programs

Film Festival returns in February

Committee chairs Michael Tomor and Barbara Hollander are announcing an exciting series for the 4th annual film festival.

The films will be scheduled on the four Thursdays in February with the goal that each evening will be a special event for the community.

We will continue to have a dinner prior to each performance and this year we are adding speakers and performers.

Tentative schedule is as follows:

- Feb 6 Schmelvis-Searching for the King's Jewish Roots.** The film seeks to unravel the story of Elvis' Jewish roots. The evening will begin with a 1950's diner style meal, include an Elvis impersonator and possibly the producer of the film.
- Feb 13 Courage to care.** This documentary film chronicles roles of religious christians during the Holocaust. The authors of the film and book will join us and speak about their work.
- Feb 20 The Vow.** A 1937 Yiddish tale of love, fate, and mysticism adapted from an ancient folk tale.



This will be Yiddish night with songs and a typical Eastern European meal.

- Feb 27 Focus.** This is a recent Hollywood production that deals with anti-Semitism in the United States during World War II. This film especially timely considering the recent increases in anti-Semitism in our country and in Europe.

Look for our brochure to be sent out soon and reserve your tickets early.

Ports to host annual Super Bowl party

Circle Sunday, Jan. 26, 2003. That's the date of the Greater Altoona Jewish Federation's fourth annual Super Bowl party.

This year's event will be hosted by Josh and Leeanne Port.

"I'm only hoping we don't need a team doctor on site," Port said.

The Ports finished building a new home at the corner of Oak Lane and Crescent Road in Altoona - a touchdown pass from Mansion Park.

Kickoff for the game, which will be played in San Diego, will be at 6:20. Doors open at 5:30 and just so Josh and Lee have ample notice:



The event is so big that Hyman Antikol, kosher hot dogs in hand, once showed up at 3 p.m. for it.

"Despite that, we're willing to host," Port said.

Parents are encouraged to bring their children to what has become one of the Federation's biggest social events of the year.

Please call the Federation office at 940-6001 to RSVP (by Jan. 15) and be thinking about what kind of covered dish you'd like to bring.

The Federation would like to thank Josh and Lee for their gracious hospitality.



L'Chaim Profile: Nancy Devorris

A community leader...by example

(Editor's note: L'Chaim continues its series of profiles of long-standing members of the Jewish community. This edition's subject: Nancy Devorris.)

Name: Nancy Devorris.

Address: 304 E. Ward Avenue, Altoona.

Family: Husband Donald. Daughter Andrea Cohen (39) and son Philip (37). Andrea is married to Michael Cohen. They have two children -- Allison (10) and Scott (8). Philip and wife Colleen have three children -- Max (6), Claudia (3) and Felicia (2).

High school: Graduated as Nancy Scott from Columbia High School in South Orange, N.J., class of 1960. Father David owned a florist business and mother Ruth was a schoolteacher who also worked in the business.

College: Attended Mount Ida in Newton, Mass.

Hobbies: Golf, tennis, exercise, gardening, cooking, playing cards. Very active in the Blair County Arts Foundation, Penn State-Altoona and the Altoona Symphony. Nancy also helped start the Blair County Community Endowment.

Congregation: Agudath Achim Synagogue.

I've been a contributor to the Federation campaign since: I moved to Altoona in 1961.

I have been to Israel: Once. We went with a whole group of Altoona people in the mid-'70s. There were 16 of us from this area, and it was all of our first trip to Israel. There were the Leopolds, Scheinbergs, Katzens, Susan and Dave Burrows. We all wore sweaters that said: "Altoona Has Hustle." Altoona got known very quickly.

My first memories of being Jewish include: I still remember my Sunday School days. My parents were always Federation givers. I came from a predominantly-Jewish area in South Orange, N.J. We were reform and we went to Hebrew and Sunday School on Sunday mornings. We always celebrated all the Jewish holidays with family and friends.

My strongest Jewish influence at an early age were: My mother had two friends that were very involved in Jewish organizations. One kept kosher and my grandmother kept strictly kosher so I knew about Judaism because of them. And I often went to the kosher butcher with my mother. And we would go into New York on 47th Street and you'd see the Hasidic Jews walking up and down the street with their long beards.

The leaders in the Altoona Jewish community when I first came here were: Sam Port, Rose Port and all the



Nancy and Don Devorris are active in many aspects of the Jewish community.

Ports, Irv Bregman, Julius Rosch. As time went on, Evelyn and Howard Kenvin, Peter Billig, Bert Leopold, Bess Levine and my husband, Donald. Those are some of them.

Past positions held: I've been on the Federation board and helped to run both the men's and women's campaigns. I've been very active at the Synagogue, running the gift shop for the last 39 years, and have been involved in many aspects of the Synagogue, including being a past Hadassah president. I've also served on a number of boards, and have tried to do a lot of fund-raising in the community.

In our Jewish community, I am most proud: Donny and I have been strongly involved in the Jewish and non-Jewish activities in our community. We have both been very philanthropic, and we taught our children that they should be leaders in the community. I feel very lucky I am financially able to support and help others. Judaism has always played a very important part of our life. At the same time, we've always been very closely associated with many non-Jewish people, which was different in the way than I was brought up. We were brought up in a predominantly-Jewish environment.

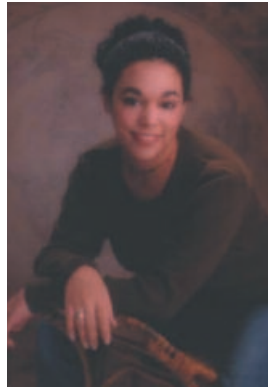
My vision for our Jewish community includes: Because we're a small Jewish community, I would love to see the Synagogue and Temple merged. I feel we should all be one. I think it would be a much healthier atmosphere. Truthfully, let's face it: We're all one anyway.



2002 graduates take next step



Adam Bergstein is a graduate of AAHS and is attending Juniata College, majoring in computer science.



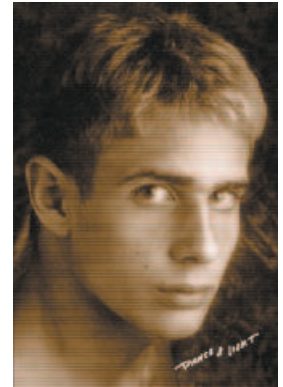
Karen Gurman is a graduate of HAHS and is attending Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts.



Adam Schneider is a graduate of HAHS and is attending University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.



Bobby Greenberg is a graduate of AAHS and is attending Penn State Altoona, majoring in business.



Michael Weiss is a graduate of AAHS and is attending the University of Pittsburgh.



Melissa Kivitz is a graduate of HAHS and is attending Boston University.



Adam Seltzer is a graduate of AAHS, where he was the valedictorian, and is attending Bucknell University.



Jason Clayton is a graduate of HAHS and is attending West Virginia University as a pharmacy major.



David Allen is a graduate of AAHS and is attending Penn State Altoona.



Dane Adelman is a graduate of AAHS and is attending IUP, majoring in music composition.



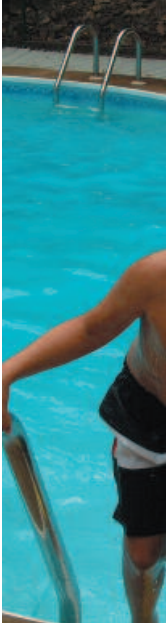
Nicholas Benjamin is a graduate of AAHS and is attending Penn State Altoona, majoring in business.



Jennifer Benjamin is a graduate of AAHS and is attending West Virginia University, majoring in broadcasting.



Smile for the camera: The



In the past year, members of the Jewish community gathered for such events as (clockwise from top left) the celebration of Israel's birthday at the Lakemont Casino, an Israel Bonds breakfast in August at the Hampton Inn, the Film Festival preceded by dinner at the Southern Alleghenies Museum downtown and at the annual Super Bowl party, held at the Bellemeade Inn.



Jewish community in focus



Socializing was in high gear at Michael Tomor's pool party/barbecue, where kids splashed and parents mingled, and at regular meetings of the Adult Social Club.





L' Chaim Perspective: Heidi Housman

'I embraced the State of Israel'

By Heidi Houseman

From April 21-23, I embraced the state of Israel with my heart and mind.

For so long I had shut my doors to the thought of terrorism in Israel and America's role in the whole mess. I was too self-absorbed to realize that the people of the Jewish homeland, my people, were struggling to keep Israel alive.

Three intense days in April changed my life and my mindset.

Along with fellow Hillel members from WVU, I attended the 43rd annual AIPAC convention. We were joined by some 600 other college students and nearly 3,000 adult AIPAC members. Famous diplomats, foreign politicians, past and present prime ministers of Eretz Yisrael – all united by a common bond – a love for Israel.

The three days spent in Washington D.C. were filled with wonderful new friends, inspirational speakers and, of course, incredible security.

Upon being police escorted, I noticed the snipers on the roof. Tough security guards hovered around and bomb-sniffing dogs roamed about. Metal detectors and full body pat downs became the norm and identification badges hung about our necks each day. All of this heightened security scared me. However, it was also comforting to know that we were being watched after.

The foreign Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, addressed us. His voice captivated me. He was so gentle and well-spoken, and it was truly an honor to be in his presence. He could not thank our country enough for its support.

He said, "We have had one great help – the friendship and support of the United States."

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle showed his support of Israel in an unforgettable speech. Here was a man who is not Jewish, but somehow he still shared this love. As he spoke the last words of his speech, the 3,000 strong audience rose to their feet, cheering unanimously for several breathtaking moments. "Am Yisrael Chai!" he said – Israel will live!

Our dinner will be one I will never forget. Benjamin Netanyahu addressed AIPAC. As he approached the microphone everyone stared chanting, "Bibi! Bibi! Bibi!" The excitement and anticipation of his speech was overwhelming. His words were so inspirational. One comment refer-



Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses American Israel Political Action Committee convention.

ring to the Middle East that I particularly remember was, "It is not that they hate the West because of Israel. They hate Israel because of the West."

As I looked around, excited faces flashed and glowed. The sound of 600 pro-Israeli Jewish students singing the familiar Hebrew songs radiated throughout the massive crowd. I sang along and clapped my hands. All of these college kids were so pro-Israeli. Their hearts were filled with this incredible passion and I was so excited to feel this passion in my own heart.

For the first time, I felt this undeniable connection to my people and the land of Eretz Yisrael. It was the most incredibly overwhelming feeling!

Although Netanyahu did not speak very long, his words were inspirational. At the conclusion of his speech, I reached out my hand and for a brief moment he embraced it, shaking my hand in his. It was a wonderful touch to end a fantastic day.

The next day we went to the Jefferson Memorial. Senator John McCain took the podium. As they announced his name, they told of his heroic struggle in Vietnam and they also told about his love for Israel and his devotion to the state. Senator McCain's speech was filled with hope for Israel's future. At the conclusion of his powerful speech, my friend Dana and I made our way through the monstrous crowd and shook the hand of this brave man. He shook

(continued on page 9)

L' Chaim Homecoming: Tessie Sky Altoona native shares experience

Tessie Sky-Sabbag returned home to Altoona, along with her husband Sami and son Jonathon, and she spoke to a gathering from the Jewish community on August 2.

The Sabbag family live in Rishon-Lezion, the third largest city in Israel where Tessie is an elementary school teacher. Tessie said suicide bombings have become so common throughout Israel that security measures have to be taken to an extreme.

"The suicide bombings bring war to your own neighborhood. The threat of terrorism never escapes the minds of Israeli citizens. It affects your everyday life-you avoid crowded places. You don't go out alone. You stay home. You have to feel comfortable in your own home."

Tessie and her family will return to Rishon-Lezion despite the terrorism. Even though there is danger, there are many rewards.

"I've found many comforts living there," she said. The comfort of living with people of my own religion, the comfort of being with my in-laws, the comfort of speaking Hebrew and English and making connections with both languages, and the comfort of being part of Israel and the Israeli heritage. It's not the easiest place to live, but for me it's the right place to live."

The Sabbags spoke at a breakfast at the Hampton Inn co-sponsored by Israel Bonds and the Greater Altoona Jewish Federation. Special thanks to Phil and Roz Sky for their planning of the event, and also to Greg Morris for his hospitality.



Tessie Sky visited in August.

(continued from page 8)

each and every hand and smiled for every camera. He came down to our level and made himself real to us, just as Netanyahu had done the night before.

After McCain's speech came the conclusion of AIPAC's 43rd annual conference. Over the course of our three days in Washington, I had gotten to know many new friends with whom I now share the same love for Israel.

From the moment we got in the van to drive home, I was filled with an enthusiasm for the future of Israel and the Jewish people. I pray for peace in my homeland every night. I thank God that I am an American, for America has always been Israel's closest friend – even during her most trying times.

I was so fortunate to be able to participate in the AIPAC convention. I know in my heart I have always loved the state of Israel, and I am certain that as long as people like me love Israel, then there will be hope for the Jewish homeland.

Am Yisrael Chai — Israel will live!



Heidi Housman spent three days at the AIPAC convention.



Annual campaign update

The work is not yours to complete, but neither are you free to desist from it.

Ethics of the Fathers 2:21

This year, more than ever, our joint UJC/Federation campaign needs you to continue to support our programs here at home, in Israel, and in 67 countries around the world.

Our goals remain the same as always – to

- Save Jewish lives in Israel and in other countries torn by war, famine, and poverty.
- Provide food, clothing, shelter, and medicine to the elderly and poor in the former Soviet Union, Israel, and Argentina.
- Maintain and restore Israel as a safe haven for all Jews.
- Provide enriching programs to the Greater Altoona Jewish community including:
 - ✓ Senior Outreach
 - ✓ YES – Jewish camps, workshops, and retreats for our youth
 - ✓ Altoona Jewish Community Sunday School for our youth
 - ✓ Jewish Film Festival for the community
 - ✓ Passport to Israel for the teens
 - ✓ Holocaust education and remembrance
 - ✓ Celebrate Diversity Program for the community

Our goals remain the same, but our needs continue to increase. Our world today has dramatically changed because of such factors as September 11th, the intifada, and increased anti-Semitism.

We need your help more than ever.

Help us take responsibility and continue our work. Please complete your pledge card and return it to us as soon as possible.

2002 campaign update

Annual campaign goal	\$ 200,000.00
Total pledged:	\$ 164,006.00
Amount paid:	\$ 121,024.60

Israel Emergency Campaign

Total pledged:	\$ 10,035.00
Amount paid:	\$ 7,105.00

Bonds dinner honors Schulman



Reva Schulman

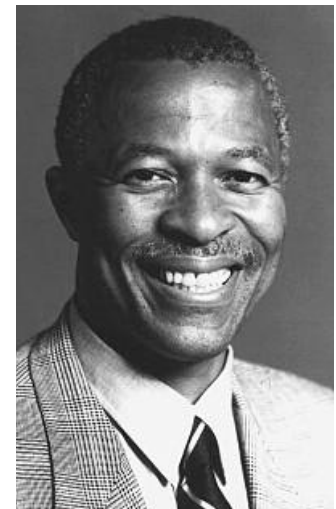
The Altoona Committee for the State of Israel Bonds wished a "Bond Voyage" to Reva Schulman on Sunday, October 27 at the Casino.

Join us in wishing her well in her new role as Executive Director of Temple Emanuel of South Hills in Pittsburgh.

Our featured speaker for the evening was Professor Raymond Tanter, scholar in residence at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C.

Tanter is one of America's most knowledgeable men on terrorism. We were fortunate to have him come to our community.

The evening drew about 60 people, who enjoyed listening to Tanter's dynamic speech and wished Reva well.



Raymond Tanter



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov 19 A Matter of Faith 7 p.m. Penn State Altoona, Edith Davis Eve Chapel.
- Nov 26 Sixth Ward Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, Grace United Church of Christ, 7 p.m.
- Dec 12 Greater Altoona Jewish Federation Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- Jan 26 Super Bowl party at home of Josh and Leanne Port, 6:20 p.m. kickoff.
- Feb 6 5th Annual Jewish Film Festival, film 1.
- Feb 13 5th Annual Jewish Film Festival, film 2.
- Feb 20 5th Annual Jewish Film Festival, film 3.
- Feb 27 5th Annual Jewish Film Festival, film 4.

L' Chaim!

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Suggestions and feedback are welcome.

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Margalit Younger volunteers for AMITIM

Margalit Younger will be spending this coming year dedicating her time and energies to a Jewish community in the former Soviet Union through the AMITIM program, a service of The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI).

She is a graduate of Brandeis University and decided to apply to AMITIM (Hebrew for Colleagues) to gain a deeper understanding of Judaism and its effect on other people's lives.

After completing four weeks of training in Israel this fall, Margalit will be living and working in the former Soviet Union where she will serve as both a formal and informal Jewish educator. She will be working and living with a group of two Israelis and one other American. Their team will work to support and empower the Jewish community in their assigned city. AMITIM offers a remarkable opportunity for the volunteers to reach into their personal resources and share of themselves as well as to learn more about each other's similarities, differences, and traditions they work toward a common purpose—strengthening Jewish communities abroad.

Margalit Younger is the daughter of doctors Linda Shaw and Joel Younger of Hollidaysburg.

She began her training in Israel in October.



Margalit Younger

Judi Sue Meisner recognized for Diversity program



Judi Sue Meisner

Thumbs up to Judi Sue Meisner, who is the driving force, the heart and soul, of Celebrate Diversity, a local program for area youth designed to erase intolerance and to raise awareness about attitudes of prejudice.

This year, Celebrate Diversity involved more than 200 middle school students from the Altoona Area, Claysburg-Kimmel, Hollidaysburg Area, and Spring Cove school districts, as well as the Diocese of Altoona Johnstown and the Jewish Community School. It has grown in the eight years of its existence.

Through Meisner's efforts and leadership, and the tireless work of her steering committee, Celebrate Diversity thrives. Since its inception, more than 1,000 area youth have been fortunate to participate in this worthwhile and much needed program.

Steve Wilson, Altoona
St. John the Evangelist School



L' Chaim News & Notes:

- Congratulations to Amy Pimentel on her being named Outstanding Woman of Blair County—2003.
- Mazel Tov to Dr. Herb Kushner on the celebration of his milestone birthday.
- Congratulations to Gareth Kafka on becoming a Bar Mitzvah on September 28.
- Congratulations to Sandy and Phil Singer on the upcoming marriage of their daughter Brenda.
- Condolences to the Kardon family on the loss of Philip, beloved husband, father and grandfather.
- Heartiest congratulations to Michael Tomor and the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art on being honored at the White House as a recipient of the 2002 national award for Museum and Library Service. The award was presented by First Lady, Laura Bush.
- A joyous Chanukah to the Jewish community. The first candle is lit on Friday evening November 29.



The Greater Altoona Jewish Federation

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