



# L'Chaim!

News & "Chailights" of The Greater Altoona Jewish Community

October 2011  
Issue No. 20  
Federation: 515-1182  
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## Synagogue welcomes new spiritual leader

Rabbi Josh Wohl, his wife Julie and their sons Micah and Sam moved to Altoona in August when he began his duties as Rabbi at Agudath Achim Congregation.

Wohl grew up in Detroit, where he met Julie. They moved to New York City in 2003 when Rabbi entered rabbinical school and Julie pursued her Masters degree in Jewish Education. They spent a year in Jerusalem and later moved to West Orange, N.J. and then Beacon, N.Y., prior to coming to Altoona.

Rabbi responded to the following questions from L'Chaim:

**What attracted you to Altoona?** "I describe Altoona as friendly and hamesh, with a sense of community and midwestern values. I think that the con-



**Rabbi Wohl and wife Julie have two sons.**

gregation was looking for someone with new ideas and looking forward to change."

**What are some of your goals for your first**

**year?** "I'd like to make every service meaningful and joyful. With the help of the Sisterhood, I plan to have a very special Friday evening

service once a month. I hope to help all congregants focus on all three pillars of Judaism: Torah (study), Avodah (prayer) and Gimilut Hasadim (acts of loving kindness)."

**Are there any special aspects of Judaism of special interest to you?** "I hope we can reflect more on our understanding of God. I believes that many adults still have the concept of God that they learned at age 5. I would also like to help people make more connections between modern issues and Jewish values and ideas. I have a special interest in the Holocaust as all four of my grandparents are survivors."

Our community welcomes Rabbi Wohl and his family and wish him a long and happy tenure in Altoona.

## Weinberg to be honored by Israel Bonds

The State of Israel Bonds annual dinner will be held on Sunday, Oct. 23 at 12:30 p.m. at The Casino.

Henry Weinberg will be honored for his many years of service to the Jewish and general community and for his dedication to Israel.

Henry is a lifelong member of Agudath Achim Congregation and has for many years chaired the Cemetery and Ritual committees. He is an active Federation board member and coordinates



**Henry Weinberg**

the annual Veteran's Memorial service for the Jewish community. He has traveled to Israel and supports it through programs like Federation, Bonds and JNF.

Henry's love of Judaism is evident through his Hebrew tutoring of youth and adults, service to his congregation and many volunteer activities.

Join us in honoring him on Oct. 23. For tickets, call the Federation office.



**See and hear Rabbi Rami Shapiro in November. See page 2.**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: BY BILL WALLEN**

# Around the community

**Around the community**

This fall presents so many opportunities for Jewish learning and spirituality.

In addition to the Days of Awe, Sukkot and Simchat Torah, there is a wealth of upcoming programs in Altoona and close to home. Please take advantage of these opportunities.

**Rabbi Rami Shapiro**

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is an award-winning author, poet, essayist and educator whose poems have been anthologized in over a dozen volumes and whose prayers are used in prayer books around the world.

Rami received rabbinical ordination from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and holds both Ph.D. and D.D. degrees.

He will speak in Altoona on Friday, Nov. 18 and at Juniata College on Sunday, Nov. 20. Details will follow.

**Judy Meisel to visit local schools**

Our friend Judy Meisel, who is a Holocaust survivor and civil rights activist, will make her sixth visit to our area from Oct. 30-Nov. 3.

She has spoken directly to over 12,000 students during her presentations here. Call the Federation office if you would like to see her.

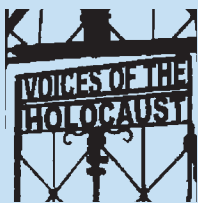
**Holocaust resources and programs  
The Van Dommelen Collection**

This summer I was fortunate to meet Michal Van Dommelen, who as a child fled Berlin and the Nazis and eventually settled in McAlevys Fort.

She was preparing to move to Alaska to be closer to family. For over 70 years, she has read and collected books about the Holocaust. It was her wish that others might benefit from the lessons contained in the over 150 books in her possession.

On behalf of Agudath Achim Congregation of Huntingdon, I accepted the collection, which is now on permanent loan to the Juniata College Library. The books are listed online and available for loan.

See the Federation website for a copy of Mrs. Van Dommelen's memoir under Yom Hashoah.

**Voices of the Holocaust**

The Juniata College Concert Choir and the State College Choral

Society will present an inspiring full length choral work based on music from the ghettos and concentration camps on Saturday, Nov. 5 at 3 p.m. in the Rosenberger Auditorium at Juniata College. The songs provide firsthand knowledge of the struggle to maintain human dignity. The choral work is arranged by Sheridan Seyfried and the choir is under the direction of Russell Shelley. Details will be sent by email.

**Russell Shelley****Study of Jewish Life in Central PA**

Congregation Agudath Achim of Huntingdon is planning a Shabbaton on Saturday, Oct. 22, the inaugural event of the Center for the Study of Jewish Life in Central Pennsylvania, a collaborative program with Juniata College and Juniata College Hillel.

It begins at 10 a.m. with a service at the Synagogue, 1009 Washington Street, Huntingdon, followed by a luncheon. The afternoon begins at 2 p.m. in the von Liebig Center, Juniata College.

It features family histories in central Pennsylvania, a pictorial review of synagogues and cemeteries, a presentation by the American Jewish Archives and a presentation by Northern Cambria County High School students about the restoration of the abandoned synagogue in Barnesboro. Next will be a tasting of Jewish foods reception. The Shabbaton will end at 5 p.m.

Everyone is invited to attend all or part of the program and share family histories and pictures. There is no charge but reservations are required. RSVP to aahuntingdon@gmail.com.



## L'CHAIM MILESTONES

### MARRIAGES

**Ian Housman** and **Danielle Ascher** were married on Sept. 25, 2011 in New Jersey. Ian is the son of **Jan and Jack Housman** and grandson of **Joe Lurie**. They had celebrated their Auf Ruf at Agudath Achim on July 2.

**Jacob Gordon** and **Elizabeth Snyder** were married on Sept. 5, 2011. Jacob is the son of **Bob and Bonnie Gordon**.

**Jason Kivitz** and **Jamie Walter** were married on June 5, 2011 at Temple Beth Israel. Jason is the son of **Chuck and Ellen Kivitz**.

### BIRTHS

**Yeshaya Matan Goldstein** was born on June 7, 2011 and is the son of **Amanda and Evan Goldstein** and the grandson of **Reina and Mike Dudley**.

**Addie Hana and Marnie Paige Marowitz** were born on May 21, 2011 and are the twin daughters of **Ellen and Ken Marowitz** and the granddaughters of **Maxine and Henry Weinberg**.

**Chaya Muskha Stein** was born on June 9, 2011 and is the daughter of **Rabbi Yossi and Chana'le Stein**.

## We remember them...

*So long as we live, they too shall live,  
for they are now part of us,  
as we remember them.*

### Ruth Marcus Covitch

Aug. 28, 1917-Sept. 9, 2011

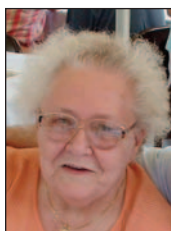


**Ruth Marcus Covitch**

Ruth Marcus grew up in Altoona and then married Bernie Covitch. They celebrated 68 years together and became active citizens in the Ebensburg community through their clothing store and their numerous community service activities. Ruth was a social worker, dancer, active volunteer and devoted mother of three and grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of 14.

### Ann Gertraud Golant

Feb 27, 1930-June 13, 2011

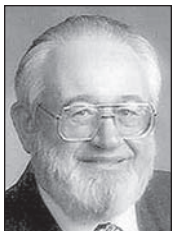


**Ann Golant**

Born in Berlin Germany to a family that opposed Hitler, she met Jakob after the war, and they married in 1949. They moved to New York and later settled in Altoona in 1976. She became a Jew by choice and provided a warm and loving Jewish home for Jakob and their four children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

### Melvin C. "Pete" Getz

March 27, 1933-Aug. 30, 2011



**Melvin C. "Pete" Getz**

Pete was a native of Tyrone who served in both the US Navy and Marine Corps. He worked in food service in Tyrone and for Penn State University. Pete married Judy Silberberg in 1991 and is sadly missed by her as well as many family members.

**Editor's note:** The above obituaries are of recent passings. L'Chaim would also like to extend condolences to the families of the following who passed away since our last issue:

- Joyce Steiner
- Ida Wolfberg
- Bernard Shapiro
- Helen Edelman
- Morris "Moe" Antikol

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 7 Kol Nidrei
- Oct. 8 Yom Kippur
- Oct. 13-19 Sukkot
- Oct. 23 Israel Bonds dinner
- Nov. 5 Voices of the Holocaust concert
- Nov. 22 Interfaith Thanksgiving Service
- Dec. 20 Chanukah 1st candle
- Jan. 8 Sunday School resumes
- Feb. 8 Tu B'Shevat
- Feb. 16 Film Festival - opening night
- Feb. 23 Film Festival
- March 1 Film Festival
- March 4 Purim Carnival
- March 8 Film Festival - final night
- March 8 Purim

## UPCOMING B'NAI MITZVAH

- Nov. 4-5 Bar Mitzvah Tyler Rispoli
- March 9-10 B'nai Mitzvah Felicia & Claudia Devorris
- April 20-21 Bat Mitzvah Abigail Simon
- May 11 Bat Mitzvah Emily Knepp
- June 1 Bat Mitzvah Marissa Dubrow

## L'Chaim!

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# Smile for the camera: The



The Sky-Rispoli family gathers at Chanukah.



Mike Holzer (back left) leads a band of



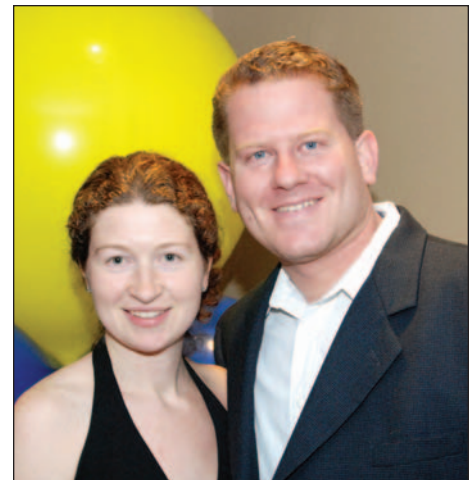
Matt and Dalia Evans and their children.



Lou Silverman and wife Veronica.



Marvin Meisner and wife Judi Sue.



Greg Werstil and wife Janine.



# Jewish community in focus



Budding Shofar players at Sunday School.



Steve and Amy Seltzer and their growing family.



Dancers at the Port Bar Mitzvah include, from left: Ilissa Zimmerman, Phil Devorris, Dana Sky, Janine Werstil and Madelyn Greenberg.



Jacob Port celebrated his Bar Mitzvah with proud parents Lee Ann and Josh.



Bobby Greenberg and fiancé Julie.



Sammy Sky (left) joins members of the Scheinberg family – Nathan, Noah and Jacob.



# Birthright 'a trip of a lifetime'

by Allison Cohen

My first trip to Israel began with a familiar face when I ran into Kathryn Schmidt on the first day of my Birthright program.

I was 6,875 miles from home with 40 new friends on my Boston University Birthright trip when I unexpectedly ran into Kathryn at Daganía Kibbutz in northern Israel.

It was great to see her and we had a few minutes of fun, but Birthright is a fast-paced highly programmed tour, and my group was soon outdoors hiking the Golan Heights.

My group spent two nights at Daganía, the oldest kibbutz in the Israel. It was our base for Jilabun hike of the Golan Heights, rafting on the Jordan River, and learning about sustainable farming in the desert.

Our third day took us to Tzfat the center of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah. We visited a Sephardic synagogue with a beautiful old ornate ark, and learned about glass blowing from Sheva Chaya, a Denver native who made aliyah. We continued on our journey to Haifa, where we picked up eight Israeli soldiers to complete our tour group. Outside of Haifa, we learned about the largest fire in Israeli history and gained a newfound respect for Israeli bravery as the firefighter told stories of battling this massive blaze.

Seeing Jerusalem for the first time was very emotional. As we overlooked the city, we toasted with wine and sang the Shehecheyanu. We then explored Yad Vasham for a sobering day of education and then continued our exploration of Jerusalem. Hanging out with our new Israeli soldier friends was especially fun. It is hard to imagine their commitment and strength for their country. That evening we learned about Israeli culture from a filmmaker who showed us two short films. We continued our cultural learning with a night out in the city.

On Friday night, we passed countless groups outside singing or lighting candles, welcoming Shabbat in their own way. Once at the western wall for the second time everyone came together, singing and dancing.

Sunday was an emotional day as we visited Har Hertzl, the military cemetery, and said goodbye to our friends in the Israeli Defense Force. Looking back, the fast friendships that I made with these soldiers were one of the highlights of my trip. I think the rest of my Birthright group would also agree.

After our sad farewells, we traveled to the desert to see Ben Gurion's grave.



**Allison (second from right) and friends ride camels on Birthright.**

The day picked up with camel riding in the desert and an overnight in Bedouin tents and a bonfire.

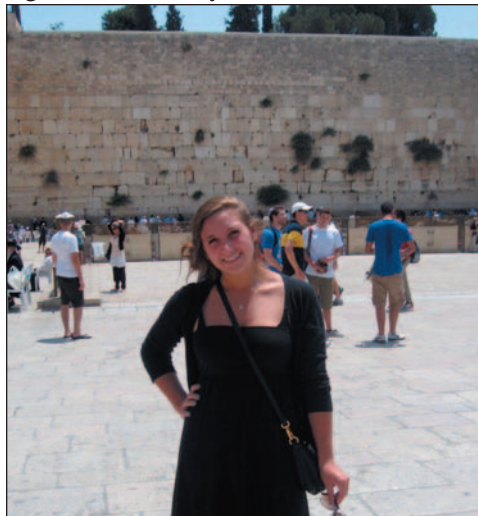
With little sleep, we awoke early in the morning to climb Masada and see the sun rise. After the beautiful display, our program director led us in yoga on top of the fortress, which we then explored.

After a quick snack, we went to the Ahava factory before wading into the Dead Sea where we floated and covered ourselves in mud. The last activity of "the longest day" of the trip was a quick hike in Ein Gedi that thankfully ended with us cooling off under a waterfall. That night, we gathered for the naming ceremony of our recent Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

The next morning, day ten, we arrived in Jaffa, the old city of Tel Aviv, to explore. In the afternoon we moved into Tel Aviv for a relaxed afternoon of shopping in Magen David Square, which hosts weekly art fairs, an open-air market, and shops. Back at our hotel, the Sachlav staff met us to discuss our opportunities to come back to Israel in the future. After dinner, we walked to the Mediterranean Sea to watch the sun set and swim with the jellyfish. For our last night together, we experienced Tel Aviv nightlife.

My Birthright experience was the trip of a lifetime. Seeing Israel with friends was a special and unique way to connect with the land and the people. They are so brave and special. I will always see Israel in a new perspective. You read so much about all the Israelis have accomplished but you have to see it to believe it. I encourage everyone to take this type of trip and support Israel in all manners possible.

I hope to return very soon.



**Allison is a sophomore at Boston University.**



### L'CHAIM PROFILE

# Introducing new congregation presidents



**Clark Adelman with his wife Kim**

**Family:** wife Kim; son Clark M. and his wife Angela of Baltimore; son Dane of Pittsburgh, brother Ron of Juniata and sister Joy of Hollidaysburg and their families

**Hometown:** Altoona

**Education:** B.S. in Accounting from Penn State University

**Business and Professional:** secretary/treasurer of American Eagle Paper Mills.

**Congregation:** Agudath Achim

**Federation and Jewish community activities:** board member of Federation, president of Jewish Memorial Center, president of Agudath Achim Congregation.

**Interests and hobbies:** PIAA basketball and volleyball official; Penn State, Steelers, Pirates and Penguins fan.

**Significant influences in our lives:** My mother Jennie of blessed memory and my wife Kim—the nicest, most honest and most sincere person I have ever known. Also, Rabbi Panitch and Rabbi Berger.

**Early Jewish memories:** Sunday School at AAC with Mrs. Levine, Sunday/Funday at the JMC, the building of the AAC social hall and classroom building. High Holiday services in the balcony.

**In our Jewish community, I am most proud of:** The rich Jewish tradition of this small town and how everyone comes together to support each other for life-cycle events.

**My vision/hope for our Jewish community:** I would hope that our traditions continue and that all Jews can live and support each other in our community. L'dor V'dor.



**Mike Dudley**

**Family:** wife Reina; son Jonathan, recent graduate of American University; daughter Amanda and husband Evan Goldstein and their new baby, Shaya. Mike met the love of his life, Reina, in Boston and with their children relocated to this area to pursue his career.

**Hometown:** Our new hometown is Huntingdon

**Education:** University of Missouri, major in Chemistry and Education.

**Business and Professional:** Mike specializes in property and casualty insurance.

**Congregation:** Temple Beth Israel

**Community activities:** Temple Beth Israel president, Huntingdon County United Way vice president, Greater Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce, Central PA Chapter of the Society of CPCU, vice president and membership committee chair.

**In our Jewish community we are most proud of:** Even though our Jewish community is small in number, so many of our members are ambassadors for Judaism and for our congregations.

**My vision/hope for our Jewish community:** I hope that our numbers will grow and our commitment to continuing Jewish life in our community will remain strong.





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