

CIRCA

Newsletter of the Goldring/ Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life

Southern Jewish LifeHacks

Pro-tips for Jewish engagement from The ISJL

6

EXAMPLES OF SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

WAYS TO PRESERVE SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

BONUS

HIT THE ROAD WITH THE TRAVELERS PRAYER



EDUCATION FELLOW SHIRA MOSKOWITZ WITH MALLORY JOY RUBENSTEIN AT CONGREGATION BETH TORAH IN RICHARDSON, TX



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Contents

President and Board Chair Messages 4-5

Education 6-7

Museum/ History 8-9

Rabbinic 10

Cultural Programming 11

Community Engagement 12-13

Southern and Jewish 14-15

On the Road 16-17

Contributions & Tributes 18-23

IN THIS ISSUE OF CIRCA...



We're always looking for new ways to share, celebrate, and explore Southern Jewish life. So for our fall edition of CIRCA, this year we're getting on board with a trend that has kept the internet sharing memes and listicles for years: LifeHacks.

But of course, with us, it's all about Southern Jewish LifeHacks.



In case you've missed out on this phenomenon so far, a "LifeHack" (or its identical twin, the "pro-tip") is a clever way to approach something you do frequently in your life... and "hack" your way in to doing it even better. For example, try the cupcake LifeHack: The next time you treat yourself to a cupcake, don't just bite into the beautiful dessert as-is; instead, cut off the top (all of the frosting, some of the cake), turn it upside down onto the bottom cake-half, and voila—now you have a cupcake sandwich, with less mess and more frosting in every bite!

Hey, you know we love examples taken from food.

Throughout this CIRCA, you'll see ways that each of our departments takes a make-it-better Lifehack approach to our work in the Southern Jewish world. In ways big and small, we're always seeking solutions to take the Jewish aspects of our lives and make them even better, more meaningful, more accessible—in other words, less mess and more frosting in every bite!



From education to service to services, and even when it comes to lasting legacies, there's a Southern Jewish Lifehack for all of y'all in this issue. And of course, from recipes to resources, if you have your own Jewish Lifehacks you want to send our way, please reach out! We love hearing from our readers.

As we approach the end of 2016, we are excited for another year of sharing our Southern Jewish experiences with you. Don't forget to visit our website (www.isjl.org), follow us on social media, and stay in the loop for the latest stories, events, photos, and "pro-tips" for celebrating the beauty that is the Jewish South.



President's Message



ISJL President
Macy B. Hart

“Lifehack” is a part of the modern-day vocabulary now. Defined as “a tool or technique that makes some aspect of one’s life easier or more efficient,” it is a way of doing things better—hopefully leading us to make changes that not only benefit ourselves, but also our communities. This issue of CIRCA is all about our organization’s “hacks” in the Jewish world, all of which are intended to benefit our communities.

For me, some very personal lifehacks have shaped my life and work. First, a confession: I am an accidental Jewish Professional. Many of you know my story. Raised in Winona, Mississippi, by parents Ellis and Reva who were committed to giving us strong Jewish identities and thus drove my siblings and me to Sunday School—160 miles round-trip each week. They encouraged involvement in youth group, civic life, the arts. I became President of the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY). When I graduated from college, I called the legendary Director of NFTY, Rabbi Hank Skirball, to ask if I could come to NYC and volunteer to work for NFTY for two years as I just



Reva and Ellis Hart

had to give something back to the organization. He asked me if I might want to go back to Mississippi for those two years instead, to be at the Jacobs Camp set to open in June of 1970. Two years became thirty spent as Director of the URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp, and the rest, as they say, is history.

In those 30 years at Jacobs, I learned so much about the Jewish communities of the South. They needed support. We needed to be serving them better. And so I came up with a Southern Jewish Lifehack—which is, of course, the ISJL.

As you will see throughout this issue, each of the ISJL’s departments are beautiful examples of how we “hack” Southern Jewish Life and make it a more vibrant, connected collection of communities. From our regional approach to Jewish Education to putting Rabbis on the Road, our world-class Cultural Programming to our life-changing Community Engagement initiatives, and of course our Museum and Historic Preservation efforts, in every area we are always seeking “hacks” to find smarter, more effective approaches to Jewish communal life and service.

While our work is systemic, it always comes back to the personal. My father, Ellis, turned 100 this July; my mother, Reva, turned 92 in September. Mark Twain wrote, paraphrasing, “The older I get, the smarter my father gets.” My parents weren’t Jewish educators, but they were committed parents and dedicated volunteers who did whatever they had to do to ensure Jewish pride and identity in their

children. My brother and sisters and I might have complained during those long car rides back then—but it was the best “hack” my parents had available. Now, my staff hits the road to help families like mine, bringing Jewish programs and education into small communities instead of making them schlep to get it. Looking back, I am amazed at the wisdom my parents had to hack their way into Jewish life and leadership and forge a path for us. They are so smart!

As the year draws to a close, and you think about the year-end contributions you might make to help and “hack” the world around you, I hope you will consider financially supporting the ongoing help and hacks that the ISJL provides to Southern Jewish communities. We are always striving to make access to Jewish life “easier and more effective,” and we cannot do it without your help.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Macy B. Hart'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Board Chair's Message



ISJL Board Chair
Rachel Reagler
Schulman

As the end of the year approaches, and I reflect on a past year filled with emotional highs and lows, one thing always brings joy to my heart and a smile to my face: My family.

I have learned that my family is not just my two wonderful children, who are definitely (and will always be) the center of my world. However, they are now almost-20 and 23-year-old adults. I proudly see them joining their own various communities excitedly, successfully... and without me. I also see how my "family" is constantly evolving and growing, yet always filling me with love and pride. So here is my very personal reflection on the concept of advice, pro-tips, and "lifehacks" you'll see in this issue.

2016 started out with the loss of my father. I will never forget the moving eulogies given by my son, my brother, and my sister. I will never forget the support of family and friends from the communities I have lived in, from birth until now—and the support shown by friends of my parents, siblings, and extended family. I have only seen this love and support continue as my mother faced health issues during the year.

I think of my niece, age 11, so caring and compassionate that she texted my daughter at college just to say that she had played her voicemail message so their grandmother could hear the message, and then let my daughter know that her grandmother said she loved her. My heart filled with love when I received a copy of the text too. This is what family looks like.

I also think of my ISJL family, and how this family fills me with pride

as it grows and evolves. I felt great pride last year during the high holidays at Congregation House of Israel in Hot Springs, Arkansas, when former Education Fellow, Lex Rofes, came back to act as the cantorial soloist for the congregation after serving as a beloved Education Fellow. I also think of the recent children born to ISJL staff (three babies in the last two years!) and of the excitement I feel for these young Jewish professionals starting their own families. I was so proud to read the article published in our "Southern & Jewish" blog in August by Leah Apothaker, about her Gift of Life bone marrow donation. This, too, is what family looks like.

Although the ISJL Fellows and staff are not "my" kids, the parent in me is inspired by them and proud of them—as people, as professionals, as part of the fabric of Southern Jewish Life.

My advice for the coming year involves family and my children's paternal great grandmother, Eleanor Lesak ("GG" as she was lovingly called by all her Great Grandchildren and family). GG had a saying that she used with her friends and it was "FF." If you were not able to go to the planned movie, dinner or outing

with the group, all you had to say was "FF" because they all knew it meant "FAMILY FIRST." Once you said FF, the group knew that your family needed you for something and you would be taking care of your family until further notice. Nothing more needed to be said. I always loved that code as it lovingly acknowledged the importance of family and was respected by the group at large.

Although families come in many sizes and shapes, from blood relatives to extended families to larger circles or communities that are also known as families, I believe I adhere to the FF tradition today. My FF is my son and daughter, my mom and extended family, and my ISJL family. So that's my Southern Jewish LifeHack – FF: Let's put Family First, and keep supporting our families through the innovative work of the ISJL.

All of you reading CIRCA are members of the ISJL family. Thank you to those of you who have already made contributions to keep our work going, and as the year draws to a close, I urge those of you who have not yet given to consider making a gift now.

With all best wishes for 2017,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel R. Schulman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Max, Sarah and Rachel Schulman



Hack Them With Hospitality!

Rachel Stern and Rabbi Matt Dreffin

ABOVE
Education Fellows Rachel Fraade, Ali Duhan and Leah Wittenberg during a Finding Dory Tot Shabbat in Columbus, Georgia.

One thing we're proud to be known for down South is that special brand of "Southern hospitality." What exactly does Southern hospitality mean? Many people picture being offered a cold glass of sweet tea and a baked treat of some kind, and that's a pretty good representation of Southern hospitality. But Southern and Jewish hospitality is something special, because hospitality is so central to Judaism. We pretty much put together the original pro-tips for hospitality!

The first time we are introduced to the Jewish concept of hospitality is in the Torah, when Abraham invites the three wanderers from Mamre into his tent to rest while he feeds them. From this story we get the Jewish value of *Hachnasat Orchim*, welcoming the stranger.

Because of the nature of our work, the ISJL Educa-

tion Department thinks about hospitality all the time. We not only host speakers at our conference, visitors to our office, and more—we are also guests in someone's home almost every weekend, giving us the incredible experience of receiving a wealth of hospitality. Thus we take a closer look at the concept of hospitality not only because we hope that we will be warmly welcomed into our host family's homes, but also because we strive to be worthy guests. That's part of our Southern Jewish LifeHack approach to hospitality: Whether we are hosts or hosted, we should always be presenting our best selves. We understand hospitality to be a two-way street.

In fact, our being good guests very much determines how much we will be utilized and welcomed into a community. Meeting people's families and even pets, sitting down to a meal, watching a movie, and

even just relaxing and chatting makes us feel like we are more than guests, and instead are truly part of the community. We may arrive as strangers on a first visit, but we are quickly welcomed, and *Hachnasat Orchim* is beautifully embodied in our communities.

The relationships we make with the communities we serve are long lasting. These face to face moments are what sets us apart from other programs and what we love best about the job.

Over the years we have come up with some great pointers for hospitality that guide us in being the best hosts and guests we can be. Here are just a few:

1. Always have a plan. Whether you are the guest or the host, it's always nice to know what's happening. Be open about what meals you will be having together and brainstorm some fun things to do together during free time.

2. Never come empty handed. When we visit our communities, we always bring a host gift such as fresh baked challah, a fun magnet for the fridge or even a cool flashlight. As a host, you can also have a special treat for your guest too.

3. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Hosting visitors is always a great excuse to tidy up your house. It shows your guests that they matter. We also make sure to tidy up after ourselves after visiting someone else's home. It shows our appreciation for staying there.

4. Make sure to introduce everyone. When visiting a new place it can be overwhelming if you are the only stranger. Make sure to introduce everyone

Lawrence Magdovitz: Legacy and Meaning

to your guest so that everyone is involved in welcoming and hosting. You can even make nametags or seating labels to make it fun and decorative.

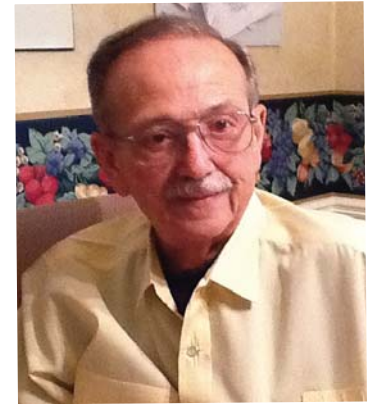
5. When in Rome. When we are in someone else's home or community, we may eat different foods, experience different customs, or be there for traditions that may feel foreign to us. It's important to recognize that as guests, we have to be open to what others share with us and view everything as a new experience.

6. Saying please and thank you matters. Saying please and thank you go a long way in any host/guest situation. We send handwritten thank you notes after every visit to our hosts. It may seem old-fashioned, but we want the people we meet to know how appreciative we are for the chance to be with them.

As we look back to the ancient example of Abraham welcoming the guests, we are reminded that this first story of Jewish hospitality is still embodied in the Southern Jewish hospitality we promote today. People still want to meet each other, to care for others, to be taken care of, and to know that they made a difference. That's what hospitality is all about—and whether we are hosts or guests, the ISJL Education team is committed to continuing to embody the values of Southern Jewish hospitality and we're happy to share with you everything we have learned and loved along the way!

To learn more about the ISJL Education Department and all of the ways they can help and "hack" Southern Jewish Life, email Rachel Stern (rstern@isjl.org) or Rabbi Matt Dreffin (mdreffin@isjl.org).

The life of Lawrence Magdovitz is a truly inspiring Southern Jewish story. Born in 1937 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, he was welcomed into a family active and central in their community. The Magdovitz family operated Mack's Department Store for several decades. An Eagle Scout, baseball player, and dedicated student, Lawrence graduated from Clarksdale High School and then went on to Vanderbilt University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts followed by a Bachelor of Legal Letters and Juris Doctorate. He passed the Tennessee and Mississippi bar exams in the same week by taking the Tennessee bar exam in Nashville, then driving that night to Oxford to sit for the Mississippi bar exam the next morning. After briefly working in Kentucky, Mr. Magdovitz returned home to Clarksdale and opened the Law Offices of Lawrence Magdovitz in 1962; his law practice would span 52 years.



Lawrence Magdovitz

In addition to his respected legal career, Mr. Magdovitz was an accomplished businessman who became a real estate aficionado. He maintained his professional passions for all of his life: He was a licensed attorney in Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee, a residential contractor and real estate broker in Mississippi, until the day he died May 24, 2015 after a long illness.

Though he dedicated vast time and attention to his professional pursuits, even becoming the largest single owner of post office buildings in the United States, second only to the United States Postal Service itself, Mr. Magdovitz also prioritized his family and community. He was preceded in death by the love of his life, Kerin Northrup Coffey, whom he married in 1972 in a ceremony at Temple Beth Israel in Clarksdale; he was devoted to his children, Beth Ann and Lawrence M. "Larry" Magdovitz II, and adored his four grandchildren. He gave generously to various charities including the Boy Scouts and the ISJL, and ensured that good work would continue through the Lawrence M. & Kerin C. Magdovitz Foundation.

At the ISJL, we are most grateful that the legacy of this Southern Jewish legend will continue specifically through his support of the ISJL Education Department and our Education Fellows. The Magdovitz family is honoring the memory of Lawrence Magdovitz through the naming of two of our Education Fellows after their patriarch: Two of the ISJL Education Fellows are designated as the Lawrence Magdovitz ISJL Education Fellows, and their work is supported in honor of Lawrence Magdovitz z"l. The Lawrence Magdovitz ISJL Education Fellows will embody the commitment to hard work, dedication, and preserving Jewish identity that shaped Mr. Magdovitz's life and work. His legacy lives on through the work the Fellows will do educating thousands of Jewish children throughout the South. For the two year period of 2016-2018, Rachel Fraade and Leah Wittenberg are the designated Lawrence Magdovitz ISJL Education Fellows.



Rachel Fraade and Leah Wittenberg

We are honored and humbled to know that by serving Southern Jewish communities, these Lawrence Magdovitz Education Fellows will play a role in ensuring that Mr. Magdovitz's memory will continue to be a blessing throughout the Southern Jewish world.

To learn more about legacy giving and supporting the ISJL, email kander@isjl.org.



Ann Gerache leading a tour in the Anshe Chesed Cemetery in Vicksburg, MS

Strategies for Celebrating Southern Jewish History

Rachel Myers

While we work hard to write articles for this magazine, to prepare descriptive grant narratives, and to produce blog posts for our Southern & Jewish blog – it’s still sometimes hard to do justice to all of the work that goes on here at the ISJL. When I meet someone new and they ask me “what I do,” I always make a quick assessment of my audience to determine which answer I’ll give. My most common is simply “I teach about Southern Jewish history.” This often follows with a chat about education, Jewish life and culture, the one Jewish person we have in common, or a quick nod before they move on to a different topic. There is a wide range of reactions—and some of the hacks I’ve learned to employ help me engage in the most meaningful way possible with everyone I encounter in my role as Director of Museum Programs.

For the ISJL’s Museum Department, teaching about Southern Jewish history not only means sharing the rich legacy with students young and old, but also supporting congregations in their efforts to preserve and

present their own important stories and artifacts. Looking back on those who came before us enables us to reflect on our own lives and practices. Learning about Jewish immigrants to America, how they traveled, what they did to make a living, how they built congregations and eventually became influential community members is essential to promoting strong Southern Jewish identities and appreciating the legacy of those who came before us. That is our departmental Southern Jewish Lifehack: Making the Southern Jewish experience relevant to all of our audiences by understanding our material and conveying it in ways specific and special to the various demographics we reach.

Over the years I’ve come up with a few strategies on how to best preserve and present Southern Jewish history in ways that fulfill the mission of this department. These include:

Open House

Our region is home to so many

beautiful historic synagogues, and all too often, other than the Jewish citizens, most members of the local community have never been inside! By making an effort to publicize welcoming Shabbat services, facilitating public programs, teaching courses about Judaism, putting together a food festival, or inviting members of other interfaith congregations to tour the building and learn about your congregation’s history, you can preserve and promote the legacy of the Jewish presence in your community. Think of it as an “open house”—finding a reason to throw wide your building’s doors and usher the whole community inside! Be sure your website is up to date with information about when the synagogue is open and accessible to the public. We’ve been working with historic synagogues that are open for tours by appointment (like Temple B’nai Israel in Natchez) and whose volunteers are happy to be liaisons for Jewish life, greeting guests and ensuring that the legacy of the congregation is not forgotten.

Create a Pop-Up History Exhibit

Ask your community members to pull out their boxes from their attic, and donate something that represents their own take on Southern Jewish life to create a temporary exhibit. Ask them to write a brief explanation of their artifact. Set the exhibit up in a public area for the whole congregation and community to enjoy. By using local artifacts like Judaica, photos, letters and scrapbooks, community members will have access to an in-depth, direct connection to the past. They may recognize faces of older congregants and rabbis or names of older businesses they are familiar with around town. This can also be an appropriate time to collect oral histories. It’s such a fun intergenerational and creative activity opportunity! Use the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities as a resource to highlight the history of your congregation and/or others like it in your state. Make a list of places and names that your congregants are familiar with and engage in a scavenger hunt to find buildings, photos or memorial plaques that contain those names.

Spend A Day in the Cemetery

Since many Jewish communities started first as burial societies, our region's cemeteries are some of our most historic sites. Many are maintained by dedicated congregational committees, or as I've come to hear as a common refrain – the "one guy with the records." Do you know who is managing your congregation's cemetery? If so- you should thank them! Then ask how you can help. Honor the early members of your congregation by participating in a cemetery preservation service day. But what happens when the congregation isn't around and there isn't anyone left to give the tour, to mow the grass, to open the gates? Here at the ISJL, we consult with congregations considering de-consecrating their synagogues on how to take care of their artifacts and archives.



Celebrate the Anniversaries

Many of our Southern Jewish congregations have been around for more than a hundred years, and there is no better way to get energized about celebrating Jewish history than with an anniversary!

Planning a homecoming weekend, publishing a memory book, honoring community leaders in a public ceremony—all of the efforts put into a 100th or 150th or 200th anniversary celebration will greatly benefit future generations of Southern Jews. A favorite practice of mine is to create a time capsule. Write letters to future congregants that describe the state of the community today and what we hope for the future. Store the letters somewhere safe in the temple building marked with a date to open them—and maybe add some contemporary Judaica, photos, and more!

Activities like these aren't my personal Southern Jewish Lifehacks—they're the sort of incredible events and activities that are driven by enthusiastic and dedicated congregants throughout the region. I am lucky to work with these individuals and institutions. Teachers and students that are excited to learn about history by implementing our Jewish Immigrant Traveling Trunk Program, congregations that embrace and celebrate their unique history, visitors who come down South for Southern Jewish Heritage Tours... the list of those taking advantage of all we have to offer is almost as long as the list of tips, tricks, and terrific programs we implement all year long!

To learn more about the ISJL Museum Department and all of the ways it can help and "hack" Southern Jewish Life, email Rachel Myers at rmyers@isjl.org.

Highlights from Southern Jewish Historical Society Conference Natchez, MS November, 4-6 2016



Sam Gruber speaks about synagogue architecture in historic Gemiluth Chassed in Port Gibson, MS



SIHS participants enjoy lunch in the historic B'nai Brith Club in Vicksburg, MS



150 SIHS participants filled the pews in Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, MS, throughout the three days of engaging sessions.

The Traveler's Prayer: A Southern Jewish LifeHack To-Go

Rabbi Jeremy Simons

What advice or “hacks” will the Rabbinic Department choose to share? Some pro-tips on prayers and blessings, naturally! Here’s how to get even more out of your daily experiences through the power of intention and the inspiration of blessings.

Open any prayer book and you’re bound to find blessings. Most of us are familiar with the prayers we recite over candles, meals, and holidays. But that’s just scratching the surface! Dig a little deeper and you’ll discover specific blessings for unique events like seeing the first signs of spring, meeting a distinguished scholar, and even for hearing good news.

Tefilat Haderech, often called the Traveler’s Prayer, is a blessing meant to be said at the start of a journey. There’s an obvious reason for the prayer: journeys were (and still are) often dangerous. Setting off into the unknown carries a certain amount of risk that could be avoided by staying home. It’s no surprise that our ancestors found comfort in asking for God’s protection before taking those first steps.

But there’s another theme in the prayer that we might not expect. This is the true “pro-tip” we can glean if we look closely: In addition to praying to God, we’re also, in a sense, praying to ourselves. We pray that we have the strength to

succeed in our travels, and find meaning in our journeys. Before setting off, we don’t just pray for a safe trip, we pray for a meaningful one.

Tefilat Haderech has a special significance for the Rabbinic Department. Covering over 43,000 miles last year, and visiting 26 communities, safety is a real concern. But so too is meaningful travel. We accomplish our best work when we are in communities teaching, praying, and meeting with our region-wide congregation. Yes, there are tangible markers of success measured in the numbers we serve and how we serve them. However, our real success is in the intangible. It’s in the connections made over the Shabbat table, the social hall, and the temple parking lot.

The prayer isn’t just for traveling rabbis. It’s for all of us, in all of the work that we do and on all of the trips that we take. Before setting off on a journey, long or far, take a moment in preparation. Think about the purpose of the trip and how to achieve it successfully. A journey that isn’t worth such preparation probably isn’t worth taking.

May we find success, fulfillment, and divine protection in all our travels— and I hope to see you soon in mine!

To learn more about the ISJL Rabbinic Department and all of the ways we can help and “hack” Southern Jewish Life, email Rabbi Jeremy Simons at jsimons@isjl.org



Rabbi Jeremy Simons leading services at Congregation Beth Israel in Gulfport, MS.

The Traveler's Prayer

תפלת הדרך

T'filat Haderech

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
וְשִׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַדְרִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,
וְתַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמַחֲזֵ חַפְצֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וְלְשִׂמְחָה וְלְשָׁלוֹם,
וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכָּף כָּל אוֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב בְּדָרְךָ, וּמִכָּל מִינֵי פְרָעִיּוֹת
תְּהַמְתִּירָגְשׁוֹת לְבוֹא לְעוֹלָם, וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה בְּ(כָל) מַעֲשֵׂה
יְדֵינוּ, וְתַתְּנֵנוּ לְחֵן וְלְחֶסֶד וְלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל רַ
וְאֵינוּ, וְתִשְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּן
אֲתָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה

Y'hi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, shetolicheinu l'shalom v'tatzideinu l'shalom, v'tadreichanu l'shalom, v'tagei-aynu limchoz cheftzaynu l'chayim ul'simchah ul'shalom. V'tatzilaynu micaf kol o-yev v'o-rev baderech, umikol minei furaniyot l'chein ulchesed ulrachamim beinecha uvaynay chol ro-aynu, v'tishma kol tachanuneinu, ki el shomei-a t'filah v'tachanun atah. Baruch atah, Adonai, shomei-a t'filah.

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, to lead us to peace, direct our steps to peace, guide us to peace, and bring us to our desired destination in life, joy and peace. Rescue us from any enemy or ambush on the way, and from all afflictions that trouble the world. Send blessing to the work of our hands, and let us find grace, kindness and compassion from You and from all who see us. Hear our pleas, for You are a God who hears prayer and pleas. Blessed are You, Adonai, who listens to prayer.

Cultural LifeHacks: Looking In, Reaching Out

Alachua Nazarenko

Here we are, y'all! We made it through another piping hot summer, a calendar-packed fall, and now as the weather gets cooler and the High Holidays move further into my rear-view mirror, I am starting to think about the amazing opportunities for winter and spring programming. That's my personal favorite way to "hack" Southern Jewish life in a truly dynamic way: By bringing the best of the best of Jewish performers and programs to the South.

What better way to celebrate Chanukah than with a meaningful film followed by engaging conversation over some delicious latkes? How much more enjoyable could an evening at your congregation become with a comedian? How much more meaningful might a Yom HaShoah remembrance program be with a concert, Jewish music filling the building and stirring everyone in attendance? You get the picture.

But while programming enhances events, the costs associated with great programs can be intimidating. That's the Southern Jewish Lifehack the ISJL's Programming Department offers you: A way to make these programs accessible, cost-wise as well as content-wise.

As Director of Cultural Programming at the ISJL, I work hard to set up tours for our artists to help defray the cost of expenses for any one community that utilizes our services. With these tours, artists typically book a gig through us at one big "anchor" congregation and then travel within four hours of the anchor congregation for multiple events. This is a great system, and one that I certainly try to employ whenever possible. But it's not the only programming hack out there.



Jane Larkin presents to a group at Congregation Beth Israel in Houston.

There's another way to afford programming: By looking in your own backyard.

What tremendous talent do you have locally? Who else can you involve in a larger-scale program? Call a church down the street, your local Jewish Federation, the other Jewish congregation in town, or even a university. Ask them to partner with you to make programming happen – and consider bringing in an ISJL performer or presenter. Our programs are suitable for all ages, faiths, and interests, and I can help you decide on the best presenter to fit your particular audience and occasion. Additionally, I am happy to assist in contacting local folks with whom you'd like to partner. It is a great way to save money while getting to know your neighbors.

This year, I'm encouraging our partners to stick a little closer to home when it comes to funding programming. It's a great way to reduce cost and foster connection (interfaith and otherwise) within your community, and who knows...you may even make some new friends! Look inward, reach outward, and when you need some help making programs happen, your easiest hack is just to drop me an email or give me a call.

To learn more about the ISJL Programming Department and all of the ways it can help and "hack" Southern Jewish Life, email Alachua Nazarenko at anazarenko@isjl.org.



Repairing the World: Jewish Values in the Secular Sphere

Dave Miller and Rachel Glazer

In our Community Engagement programs, fundamental Jewish values anchor everything we do. That doesn't mean all of our programs serve Jews, or are overtly Jewish; but the values of Judaism and our commitment to repairing the world are central to the concepts and skills that we seek to impart through our community engagement initiatives. That's our "hack": Making community service stronger by infusing it with Jewish ideals.

One idea that drives us in our work shines brightly in both our peer mediation program, Talk About the Problems (T.A.P.), and our literacy initiative, Read, Lead, Succeed: *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh l'reicha kamocho*, or communal responsibility. This value in itself is multifaceted, embracing aspects of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *kavod* (respect), *tzedek tirdof* (the pursuit of justice), and many more.

In T.A.P., students are chosen to be mediators precisely because they are respected by their peers and can,

in return, make the disputants feel respected and listened to, rather than disciplined or judged. Ultimately, we seek to create a culture of respect which helps students actively seek peaceful solutions. By reinforcing these skills during mediation, disputants learn to replace tense or inappropriate dialogue with discourse driven by positive mutual regard. Feeling like what you do matters to someone else and that your actions can make a difference is a powerful lesson for us to impart to these students—and our own Jewish understanding of *tikkun olam*, *kavod*, and *tzedek tirdof* help us teach these concepts.

At the recent T.A.P. Summit, during which 80 student mediators, site coordinators, and administrators from across the state met and trained for the new school year, we heard from a panel of notable leaders from the Jackson, Mississippi community. Mayor Tony Yarber, Chief of Police Lee Vance, School Board President Beneta Burt, and School Board Member Jed Oppenheim engaged our participants

in a complex discussion on conflict, peace, race, class, and their duty as citizens, reinforcing the importance of the mediators' role in their schools and communities. They empowered the students to step up in their communities as leaders sooner rather than later, called upon them to speak up to their peers about cyber-bullying, and challenged them to recognize that, as Mayor Yarber put it, "Your net work is equal to your net worth." In other words, you earn your keep by working to improve the space you share. By bringing together members of various ethnic, age, and interest groups who already have investment in their sub-communities, we can combine their efforts to reach across these boundaries in the interest of the greater community.

Read, Lead, Succeed had a successful summer partnership with Jackson State University's 21st Century Program "Call Me Mist'ers," a group of young black men studying early childhood education. These inspiring role models for students to look up to were tremendous partners in our work. Supporting and partnering with this group meant connecting with educators committed to early childhood education, known to be a key time for early interventions and positive long-term outcomes—providing us all with a stronger future. Cultivating readership and leadership is what we strive for in this endeavor, and working with Call Me Mist'ers was another great step towards constantly achieving this goal.

We don't always have to talk about social justice in Hebrew terms to make a difference Jewishly. The values we hold dear and the opportunity to pass them along to our surrounding communities are all around us and without limits. As Jews, it is our duty not just to teach, but to inspire a love of learning; not just to serve, but to inspire a love of service. That's something the Community Engagement Department at the ISJL strives to do every day.

To learn more about the ISJL Community Engagement Department and all of the ways they can help and "hack" Southern Jewish Life, email Dave Miller at dmiller@isjl.org.



Read Lead Succeed with Call Me Misters volunteer.



Panel Discussion during this summer's TAP Training.

Jewish Social Justice LifeHacks

Get active!

Engaging in Jewish Social Justice doesn't need to be a big operation; it can be as simple as:

- Volunteering at a food shelter
- Cleaning a park
- Volunteering at a help line
- Making dinner for someone who had a tough day
- Visiting or sending cards to someone in the hospital
- And more!

Read about it!

There are a lot of books that have been written about Jews and Social Justice. Some of the ones we recommend are: *God's To-Do List*, *Judaism and Justice*, *Where Justice Dwells*, *Shared Dreams*, and *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*.

Talk with young people!

Don't wait until the ISJL's 7th grade curriculum to get your students talking about Jewish Social Justice. You can start teaching them about *Kavod* (Respect), *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh* (Communal Responsibility), and *V'havta L'Reiacha Kamocho* (Loving your neighbor as you love yourself) at a very young age.

2016 ISJL IMPACT

283 visits made to **85**
Southern Jewish Communities

187 visits made by ISJL
Education Fellows to
Southern congregations

60 Rabbinic visits to
26 different communities
in **10** states

32 Cultural programs held in
15 cities in **7** states

232 visitors traveled **5850** miles over **47** days
on Southern Jewish Heritage
tours of **16** Southern cities

92 students serve as trained peer
mediators in **8** partner schools

More than **150,000**
visits to our website

Tens of thousands of shares of our
"Southern & Jewish" blog posts



Ellis Hart's 100th Birthday Celebration with family and friends.

Keeping it 100: Southern Jewish Centenarians

Ellis Hart

What does one hundred years of a Southern Jewish life look like? All you have to do is spend a few minutes with Ellis Hart to get the answer to that question. Ellis turned 100 this July, and was able to celebrate this magnificent milestone with friends and family from near and far. His wife Reva, their four children, fourteen grandchildren, and twenty-one great-grandchildren are the heart of Mr. Hart's legacy. From his youth in New Orleans to serving the United States Army in World War II, courting his bride, joining the family business in Winona, Mississippi, and making his own name in the retail world, Ellis has spent his life in the South; and through the long drives to get his kids to Sunday School to celebrating simchas for all those great-grandchildren, he has instilled a strong Jewish identity in his Southern family. Mazel tov and many more, Ellis—thank you for being such a shining example of Southern Jewish strength!



David Solomon

When David Solomon reached his one hundredth year, hundreds of his friends, family, and neighbors braved the heat of July in the Delta to gather and recognize one of their favorite folks. Mr. Solomon has long been one of Arkansas' most respected attorneys. A native of Helena, he left Arkansas to earn a bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and his law degree from Harvard—and then returned to Arkansas. Always a major figure in his local and regional Jewish community, Mr. Solomon is another ISJL patriarch: Rayman, his son, is a past ISJL Board Chair, and granddaughter Claire is a former ISJL Education Fellow. His position of honor in both the secular and Jewish community was testified to as he sat for more than two hours this summer in his hometown, greeting a steady stream of visitors who wanted to wish him well and show their affection for this Southern and Jewish stalwart.



Lasting Legacies: Supporting Southern Jewish Life

In this issue, you can see the updates from each ISJL department, learn from our “Southern Jewish Lifehacks,” and also read the stories of three inspiring Southern Jewish luminaries – Lawrence Magdovitz, Ellis Hart, and David Solomon. These are all representative of the vast impact and importance of the work the ISJL does, sharing stories, celebrating and supporting Jewish life, and ensuring a vibrant Jewish future.

As the year comes to a close and you contemplate your year-end giving, we hope you will remember the ISJL. Your tax-deductible gift supports the work we do each and every day, and without donors like you, we would not be able to have the impact that we do, throughout the South and beyond.

We also hope that when your thoughts turn to long-term giving and to your lasting legacy, you will also think of the ISJL. Planned giving in the form of donor-advised funds, charitable remainder trusts, wills and estates can help not only to support our ongoing work but also to ease your tax burden while providing a gift for future generations through your vision and commitment to a bright Jewish future.

To give a gift right now, visit www.isjl.org/donate or call us anytime at 601-362-6357.

We would also love to discuss legacy gifts and planned giving options. Email information@isjl.org to schedule a conversation or send your questions our way.

Thank you.



Chanukah is soon and The Peddler's Cart can help!



Shalom Y'all T- Shirts \$20

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Your purchase supports the ISJL's work!

Snapshots from the Road



1

1. GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

Education Fellow Elias Chajet celebrates Havdallah with the Goldberg family.



2

2. ROME, GEORGIA

Education Fellow Rachel Fraade engages in a discussion about Tisha B'av with Rodeph Sholom congregants.

3. TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

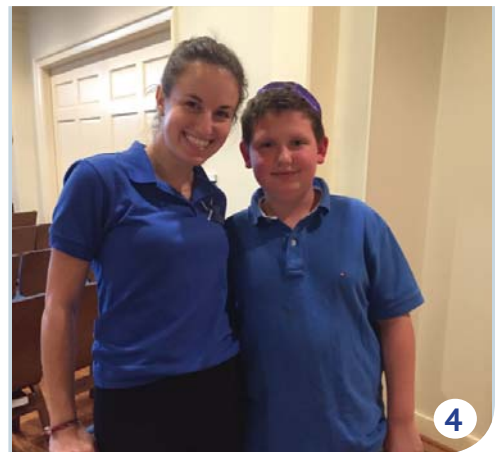
Education Fellow Gabi Cohn and families from the Shomrei Torah religious school.



3

4. WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Education Fellow Leah Wittenberg and Jake Podolin share a smile in matching polo shirts during Temple Beth El's family Sukkot program.



4



5



6

5. CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

Education Fellow Shira Muroff and students from Congregation Beth Israel show off their decorations for Sukkot.

6. JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

URJ Mitzvah Corps students visited the ISJL offices during their two week Civil Rights Journey through the Deep South.

7. HOUSTON, TEXAS

Students at Beth Yeshurun became Pokemon masters during this fun Havdallah program with their Education Fellow Gabi Cohn.



7

Thank You to Our Supporters!

In these CIRCA pages, you can see the impact our education, history, museum, cultural, community engagement and rabbinic programs have on thousands of people just like you. With deep appreciation, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life extends thanks to everyone who made a contribution or pledge from January 1- September 30, 2016 to enable our important work.

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Sylvia Goodman - becoming a
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Sidney & Lynn Morris
Syl Benenson
Sandy Kahn
Michele & Ken Schipper
Susan & Macy B. Hart
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ISJL Ed Fellows who come to
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Bettye Sue Kline's one year
anniversary of successful lung
transplant
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Dena Levin becoming a Bat Mitzvah
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Susan & Macy B. Hart

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Jackie & Jerry Bendorf

Leanne & Alan Silverblatt's anniversary
Susan & Macy B. Hart

Leanne Silverblatt's theater debut
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NC
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Randle Beavers
Darla Newman
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David Solomon's 100th Birthday
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Jay & Bz Tanenbaum
Laney Gradus
Anne & Mike Sepanic
Susan & Macy B. Hart
Reva & Ellis Hart

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