

## Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Program launching with help of Tanenbaum Intern

By Malkie Schwartz, Director, Department of Community Engagement



This summer, the Department of Community Engagement was fortunate to have Mara

Benenson join us as the first Jay Tanenbaum Social Justice

Intern. Mara, a high-achieving student at the University of Texas, is dedicated to social justice issues.

Her experience working at non-profit organizations in Austin, TX, her interest in education and her creativity contributed to the incredible work that she produced over the summer.

The Department of Community Engagement has focused on developing a Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Program that will be made available to schools and after-school programs, beginning in Jackson, MS. During the last academic year, we introduced a Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Program at Blackburn Middle School in Jackson. I worked with the staff to train a cohort of peer mediators who will

begin to help students solve their conflicts during this academic year. Mara was instrumental in formalizing the program and developing valuable resources, particularly the curriculum and workbook, which can benefit schools throughout the region.

"We look forward to full and complete implementation of this program at Blackburn Middle School," said Blackburn Principal Marietta Carter. "We believe it will be instrumental in our holistic approach to the development of our students into well-rounded individuals who will be able to resolve conflicts in a positive manner."

Bridget Harkins, a Blackburn teacher and coordinator for the Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Program, said: "As an educator, I am so excited about initiating this type of program in Blackburn Middle School. Life skills such as conflict resolution are so very important to the development of young people."

The internship is named for Jay Tanenbaum, the ISJL Immediate Past Chairman, in tribute to his efforts toward establishing our Community Engagement Department and to recognize the legacy of the Tanenbaum family as an example of Southern Jews who actively supported their community. For four generations, the Tanenbaums recognized many needs in Dumas and throughout Arkansas, and stepped forward to address them. By creating or supporting initiatives in health care, education, combatting poverty and in working to end racial segregation, the value of *tikkun olam* (repair of the world) was a part of the Tanenbaums' Jewish life. This Internship will help the ISJL address additional needs within our communities.