



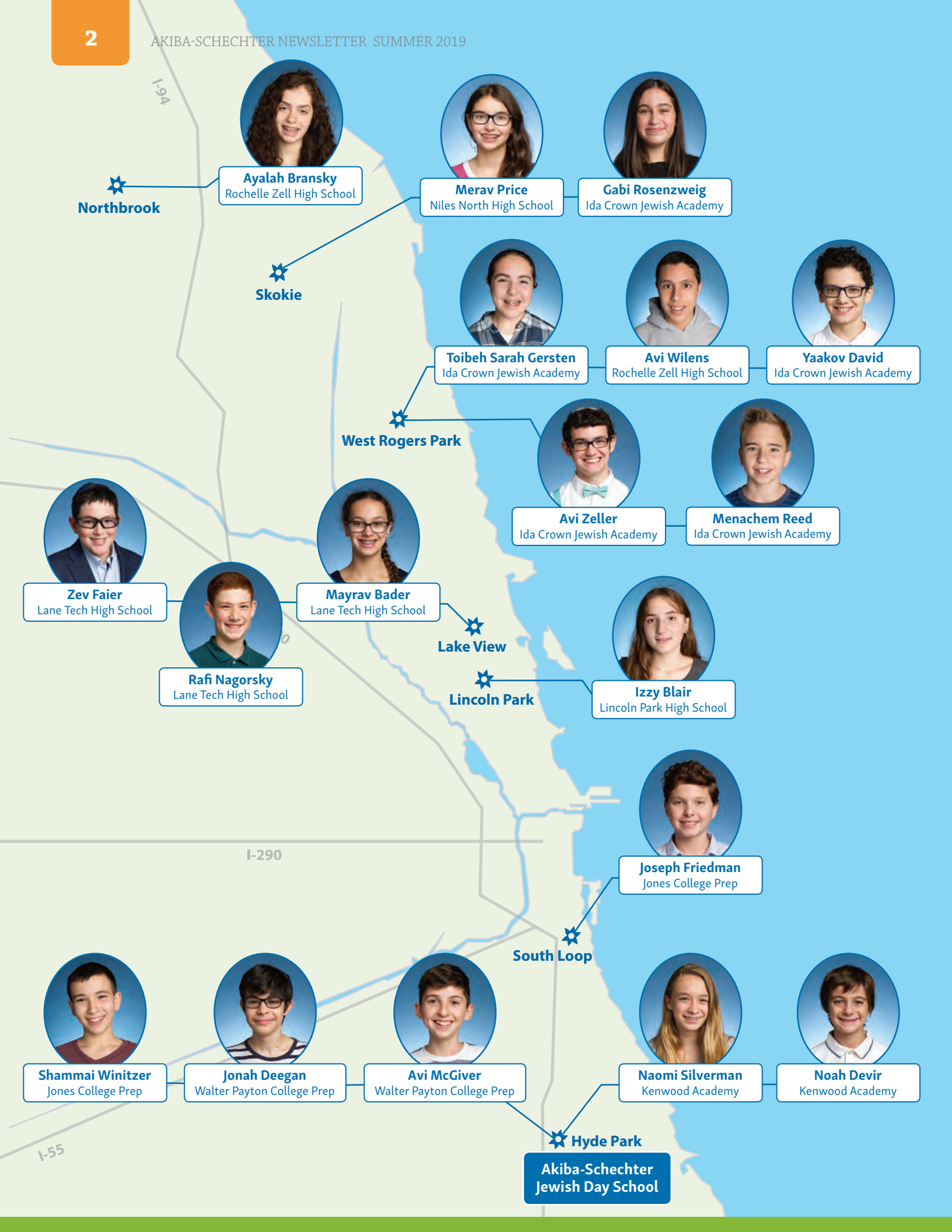
KAYITZ 5779

SUMMER 2019

this issue

- ★ WHAT WE CARE ABOUT 3
- ★ MAKERSPACE DAVENING 4
- ★ BAKING BREAD 5
- ★ DOING HISTORY 6
- ★ MULTI-GENERATIONAL AKIBA FAMILIES 7





I-94

Northbrook



Ayalah Bransky
Rochelle Zell High School



Merav Price
Niles North High School



Gabi Rosenzweig
Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Skokie



Toibeh Sarah Gersten
Ida Crown Jewish Academy



Avi Wilens
Rochelle Zell High School



Yaakov David
Ida Crown Jewish Academy

West Rogers Park



Avi Zeller
Ida Crown Jewish Academy



Menachem Reed
Ida Crown Jewish Academy



Zev Faier
Lane Tech High School



Mayrav Bader
Lane Tech High School



Rafi Nagorsky
Lane Tech High School

Lake View



Izzy Blair
Lincoln Park High School

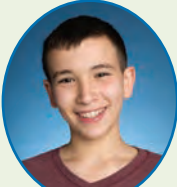
Lincoln Park

I-290



Joseph Friedman
Jones College Prep

South Loop



Shammai Winitzer
Jones College Prep



Jonah Deegan
Walter Payton College Prep



Avi McGiver
Walter Payton College Prep



Naomi Silverman
Kenwood Academy



Noah Devir
Kenwood Academy

I-55

Hyde Park

**Akiba-Schechter
Jewish Day School**

WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

BY DR. ELIEZER JONES



Dr. Eliezer Jones, Head of School

This year at Akiba-Schechter we focused on building our community. We introduced Shabbat Onegs across our neighborhoods, hosted Sunday and after-school gatherings, and offered events like the “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” evening co-sponsored with Anshe Emet and JCFS. As the year went on, what we care about rose to the surface: **We care about each other.** As a community preschool made up of families of different faiths that respects all of humanity, and as a Modern Orthodox Jewish day school that cares

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

~ Margaret J. Wheatley,
Organizational Behavior Specialist

about and accepts all Jews, we are indeed a unique community.

Our focus on community reinforced who we are and the work we must continue to do to ensure all families have a place in our preschool, and all Jews have a home in our day school. Judaism is not an all-or-nothing religion, nor is it one-size-fits-all. It is a beautiful mosaic made of different sizes, colors, and shapes of tiles. This is our community, and this is what we care about.

We believe that our love of all humanity and focus on Jewish unity prepares our students to become active and engaged adults. Individual attention and our belief that our students are capable of great things

build their confidence. They grow stronger in their personal and family beliefs as we support and care for the whole child. They are comfortable with those who are not like them thanks to the respect provided to all our students and their families.

We also know that we are not done, not even close. We look forward to strengthening our community even more and ensuring that we graduate young men and women who are uniquely equipped to make a significant difference in the world and their local communities. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once said, “Tomorrow’s world is born in what we teach our children today.” As I reflect on how our school and our families teach our children today, I am confident in a bright tomorrow.



▲ On March 31, at our Annual Brunch, we honored alumnus Jason Loeb (Class of ’97), longtime preschool teacher Sharon Vadeboncoeur, P.E. teacher Sara Price and board member Peter Price.

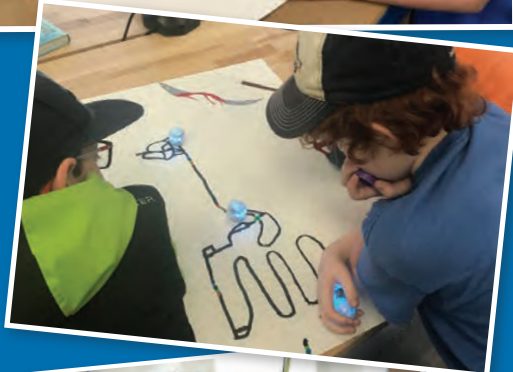
◀ The 8th graders at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem during their trip to Israel in May.

EXPLORING THE RAIN FOREST

Learning about the rain forest permeated everything in the Kindergarten this year. Sometimes it even led to an interesting connection to Jewish studies. For Purim, the Kindergarteners created masks inspired by the indigenous Amazon people and their customs. The children used real life images as a reference. Through this project, the class learned about the native people's customs and rituals, for example the way they express gratitude. They also learned how they use make up to express their feelings or their appreciation for animals. In creating their colorful masks, the children demonstrated a remarkable ability to take their time, persevere, and be creative.



▲ Early on, vines took over the Kindergarten classroom. Here the kids experimented with glow-in-the-dark face paint.



MAKERSPACE DAVENING

As a school, we are driven by teaching children, not subjects. We apply that same personalized focus to Tefillah (prayer), where we offer options ranging from traditional Tefillah to Tefillah discussion groups. This year we introduced an experiment called “Maker Davening,” taking place in our new Makerspace. It has three elements: Tefillah, learning about specific Tefillot, and engaging in hands-on maker activities to build meaningful connections to the learning.

The first fifteen minutes of Maker Davening are focused on davening (praying) together. We choose some of the Tefillot (prayers) to say out loud and some to say quietly. After that we focus on learning specific Tefillot. The teacher explores what the students already know, shares the translation, discusses the

meaning, and engages in a discussion about what the Tefillah means to the students. Then students participate in a maker-activity that is related to the Tefillah they were learning.

A maker activity is a hands-on project. It is generally driven by student creativity while building collaborative, communication, problem-solving, and sometimes technical skills. This year, for example, students learned how to solder and express gratitude around the prayer Modeh Ani, a prayer of gratitude. When learning about Netilat Yadayim, a prayer requiring the washing of hands, they built a water filter and learned about water purification in the third world. They 3D-printed an object to make someone smile when learning about Ashrei, a prayer about happiness.

BAKING BREAD IN THE PURPLE ROOM

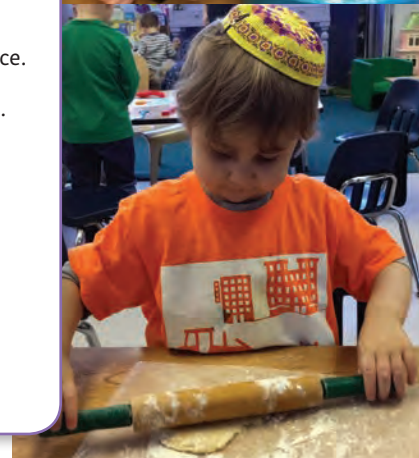
This fall, at their Friday Shabbat celebrations, the Purple Room kids wondered about the challah. How was it made? Incidentally, teacher Kristine Greiber was taking a class on the Project Approach, which stipulates that classroom projects should be generated by the children. Thus began the Purple Room's bread baking adventure.

First, the class broke baking bread into its parts: What are the ingredients? What do they do? What is the difference between sugar and salt? The kids loved examining and sifting flour, grating cinnamon sticks and nutmeg, or sticking butter into loaves. Along the way, baking builds skills such as math (measuring), science (liquids/

solids), fine motor (crack an egg!), and even social skills like taking turns.

Parents were asked what kind of bread they eat at home and to provide a picture of their child eating it. Kristine then assembled a memory-game-style board with the pictures, and the kids enjoyed lifting the flaps to see which child ate that bread.

Consulting experts is part of Project Approach, so one student's master baker parents contributed sourdough starters and shared how to make your own yeast. This introduced the kids to a slow process, unlike the fast process they had to employ when they wrapped up this unit by making their own matzah for Passover.



PURPLE ROOM SPECIAL: One Dough, Many Kinds of Bread*

This is the Purple Room's favorite easy bread recipe and can be used to make different kinds of bread. Here's the flatbread version:

3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour,
plus extra for working the dough

¼ teaspoon dry yeast

2 teaspoons salt

1½ cups water

Olive oil

Flaky sea salt

*as featured in *Fanny at Chez Panisse* by Alice Walker

In a medium-size bowl, mix the flour, yeast and salt. Add the water and mix with your hands for about a minute until a wet and sticky dough forms. Cover the bowl and let the dough rise for 12 to 18 hours at room temperature. The dough is ready when it has doubled in volume and little bubbles are forming on its surface.

To make the bread, lightly oil a sheet pan and sprinkle with salt. Moisten your hands with olive oil, scrape the dough out of the bowl and plop it onto the pan. Gently tuck under all scraggly ends. Spread a little more olive oil on the dough and shape it into a disk about ½ inch thick and 1 foot across. Sprinkle the top with more salt. Lightly press on the surface with your fingertips to create little dimples. Let the dough rest for 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 500°F. Bake on the center rack for 12 minutes. The bread is done when it is a light golden brown.

WHY I VOLUNTEER:



Ruth Czarnecki-Lichstein

Zosia (4th), Avi (2nd), Benjamin (preschool)

This is our family's first year at Akiba-Schechter. When Jill Kohl reached out asking for parent reps, I was excited to volunteer. I had done this at my kids' previous school. My kids always enjoyed it, and I was able to participate in their school life in a way that I wouldn't normally be able to with work schedules and all that. It's been a great way to get to know their teachers, Jaime Leonard and

Cindy Friedman especially, and the other parents. You can have great conversations while checking in families for the Chanukah party or Family Game Night! I am also glad to have the opportunity to support a school that in this short time has become so very important to my children and our family. Zosia and Avi have formed lasting friendships and blossomed as learners in the grade school and the preschool has been such a gift for Benjamin. I'm looking forward to many more years of volunteering!

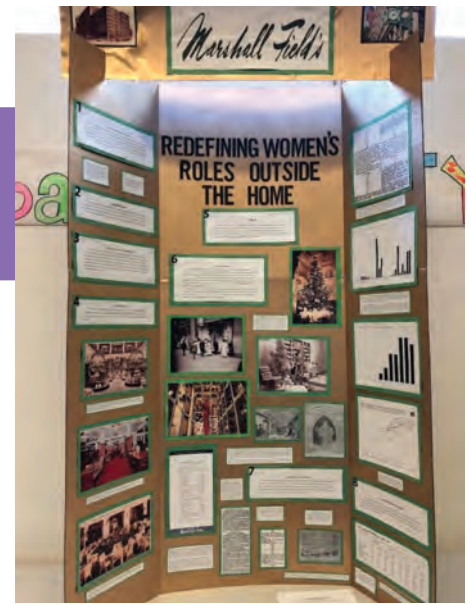
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “DO” HISTORY?

by Alicia Chipman and Benjamin Seigle,
Humanities teachers

This question inspires and guides Akiba’s participation in the National History Day competition, the epitome of student-led learning. 7th and 8th graders selected a topic from Chicago or Illinois history that piqued their interest. Then they did hands-on research. We teachers guided or coached, providing the tools and structures for success, but the students did the hard work of developing and communicating their ideas. History Fair was at times challenging, but the students really gave their all to produce their best quality work. They:

- developed initial wonderings into critical and thoughtful research questions.
- sought out, read, interpreted and evaluated both primary and secondary sources from websites, databases, archives, libraries, and museums.
- did in-the-field research, contacting experts, such as an archivist at the Union League of Chicago or a docent at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. They visited a women's cooperative art gallery or the Auditorium Theater.
- had myriad "aha" moments, when they found a perfect image, a just-right quote, or a new angle on their topic that took them down a new path.
- refined their thinking by writing (and re-writing) their thesis statements until they had developed a thorough and complex response to their research question.
- curated images, charts, graphs, and quotes to tell an engaging and evidence-based story.
- crafted multiple pieces of analytical writing, sought feedback, incorporated that feedback and polished their writing so that it best articulated their argument.
- independently managed deadlines and organized copious amounts of materials.
- collaborated, offering support, guidance, feedback, and cheerleading to each other.
- uncovered hidden corners of Chicago history and taught themselves, each other, and us more about this city we live in.

Finally, on March 30, fourteen students brought twelve projects to the UIC campus for the city-wide competition. These projects were three-dimensional exhibits,



▲ Project board on the role of Marshall Field's in Redefining the Role of Women Outside the Home by 8th grader Toibeh Sarah Gersten

websites, papers, and a documentary film, on topics ranging from Maxwell Street to the Union League Club, and from the Chicago Blues to Chicago's birds. Remarkably, ten of these students' projects advanced to the state competition in Springfield on May 2, where all of the Akiba projects were awarded ribbons for excellent and superior achievement. The trip was a fitting conclusion to a wonderful intellectual journey!



▲ Project board by Ezra Erlebacher (7th grade) on Modernizing Chicago Architecture

◀ Akiba's ten competitors traveled to Springfield, IL, in May to compete in the State History Fair, and all ten of them received either a superior or excellence award.



WE WENT AND OUR KIDS GO



▲ Peter and Alyssa Wood with their daughters Bella (Yellow Room) and Lucy

Peter Wood (Akiba preschool 1993 and 1994)

"I made a lot of friends at Akiba, felt safe and cared for. I remember spending a lot of time outside and I liked that a lot." His wife Alyssa adds: "We decided to send our daughter to Akiba because we knew she would be 'seen' and respected there. We thought it would be a good experience because of the amazing teachers Peter had. Akiba has only grown and become even better since 1994. It is beyond believable that Bella had the same preschool teacher as Peter in her first year: Barbara Simon. It was so welcoming when we brought Bella to her first day of school, and her teacher was telling us stories about her dad, aunt and uncle!"



Jessica Allender (Class of '84)

"I joined Akiba in 7th grade. It was wonderful to be in a situation of real learning, with teachers who had the luxury of time for each

Mia Rubenstein (at Akiba in the 1980s)

"My experience at Akiba was very positive. I loved school and my friends. I felt a sense of pride in Akiba. Growing up in Hyde Park, I value the diversity of the area. Akiba is a special place and I want my daughter to have the same school experience. Akiba has certainly changed—the building and the people have changed. But it still has a strong Jewish foundation and small family feel. The classroom still feels exciting, and the school is a special place to learn, grow and develop young people."



▲ Gary and Mia Rubenstein with daughter Golda (3rd grade)

Doug Glick (Class of '82)

"I loved Akiba. I started as a 3-year-old and stayed through 8th grade. My siblings also went to Akiba. The small size of the school meant I pretty much knew everybody. The school builds lifelong bonds among the students and staff. Some of my best friends in life I made at Akiba. We wanted that for our children. We also appreciated the school's great balance of Judaic and General Studies. Many facets of the school have changed over the past 37 years, but the preschool building where I had classes is the same. Sadly, with the passing of Millie Miller (z"l), the key link between several generations of Akiba was lost. Nevertheless, the spirit of the old Akiba-Schechter lives on in the new. There are plenty of connections to the past, if you look for them."



▲ Jennifer Uson and Doug Glick with their daughters Annabelle (5th grade) and Nina (7th grade)

◀ Jessica Allender with Coco (1st) and Martin (preschool)

student. We made a production of 1776 and created a musical of the story of Ruth—I can still sing songs from each! I learned a lot about life and how to approach work while staging those productions. I learned that a lot of learning happens outside of the classroom—and it's just as valid. I started coming back to Akiba when I did pickup for a friend in '09. The first time I came, Millie recognized me and asked about my family. The 34 years since the last time I'd seen her just disappeared. When

it came time to send Coco to preschool, I based my decision on Akiba being home. People at Akiba have always been compassionate and welcoming. Mainly, Akiba has changed physically. Every time I park in the north lot I feel weird because I'm driving through what used to be my classrooms and the playground. The teaching hasn't changed—it is still exceptional and student-focused. The energy hasn't changed—it is still vibrant and scholarly. The times, the technology and so many of the faces have changed and that's as it should be."



Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School
5235 S. Cornell Avenue
Chicago, IL 60615
www.akibaschechter.org



WHY I VOLUNTEER *continued*

Elli Goodman

Stuart (1st), Meira (preschool)

When I was a student at Solomon Schechter Day School, my mom was the consummate volunteer. She helped with the school play, served hot lunch, organized phone trees, and more. I am so thrilled that Stuart and Meira are following in my day school footsteps. As they do, I am following in my mom's. Chaperoning field trips, helping at the school picnic, and serving as parent representative allow me to be part of the Akiba-Schechter community just as much as the kids. I love getting to know the parents, teachers, and staff who make our community so special. Akiba has given Stuart and Meira a



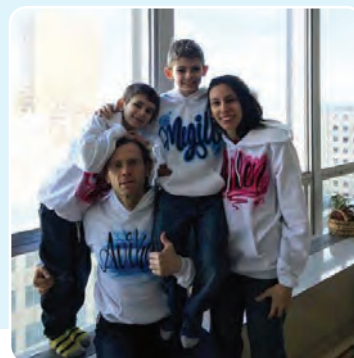
place to play and learn as they grow into their best selves. Our amazing school thrives with parent participation, and I am thrilled to support it however I can.

WE WENT AND OUR KIDS GO *continued*

Helen Bloch

(Akiba 3rd-6th grade, early '80s)

"4th grade at Akiba was wonderful—I had friends, and we had a fabulous English teacher, who allowed each kid to decorate a bulletin board any way they wanted. However, Akiba was a different school then and it was socially difficult for me and so I left. When my brother went to Akiba, the leadership had changed and he had a more positive experience. I send my kids to Akiba because of the unique learning opportunities I feel it gives each student, from both a secular and religious perspective. I want a school that teaches in a way consistent with Halacha, yet is open to Jews from diverse backgrounds, and will educate my kids in secular subjects that is consistent with non-Jewish quality schools. I love the warm environment my kids have experienced. I feel the school instills a sense of pursuing one's goals and persistently advocating for oneself."



◀ *Helen Bloch and Avikam Hameiri with their children Ron Lev (2nd) and Megill (4th)*