



NEWSLETTER  
**Akiba Schechter**  
JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

CHOREF 5773

WINTER 2012

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Learning  
through Play

# CHESED

## LOVING KINDNESS

**BOTTOM:** When Hurricane Sandy struck, the newly formed Chesed Club decided to raise funds for Mazel Day School in Brooklyn, NY. Working together, the Preschool-8th grade raised over \$500.00 in loose change.

Club members pose, below, with the bank-issued check and a bar graph illustrating how much money each class raised.

“Thank you so much for another great visit by the Akiba-Schechter students. It was wonderful to see the efforts to which they went to connect with the elderly, and it was such a pleasure for the elderly artisans to have young people visit them and show such enthusiasm for their work.”

**CHAVA BROWN, YAD LAKASHISH, LIFELINE FOR THE OLD, JERUSALEM**



# 100+

NUMBER OF TOYS THE CHESED CLUB COLLECTED FOR SICK CHILDREN'S CHANUKAH GIFTS

**LEFT:** 5th graders in Mrs. Brackman's class created a menorah made of mitzvah notes.

A “drop-box” and blank notes are affixed to the board as well, so anyone walking past can deposit a note, too.

**FAR LEFT:** 8th graders on the Israel trip always visit Yad Lakashish, a unique community that provides craft work for the elderly in need. The letter at right was sent to Mr. Cohen, Trip Director, in June.

# 327

STUDENTS ENROLLED AT AKIBA-SCHECHTER THIS YEAR

**ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.** According to the Talmud, 613 commandments (Mitzvot) encompass our lives. Why so many? The *Sefer Chinuch*, published in 13th century Spain, points out that by engaging in Mitzvot on a daily basis, we become transformed for the better. With the assertion that, “after our actions, our hearts are drawn,” the *Sefer Chinuch* suggests that even someone not inclined toward good deeds will eventually grow to appreciate and become excited about Mitzvot by first “going through the motions.” Akiba-Schechter's Chesed Club is an example of this consistent focus on acts of kindness and responsibility toward others. Each week, club members identify opportunities to increase their involvement in Mitzvot that will benefit others. By taking the values from the classroom into the world at large, they transform themselves--and our entire community.

-- Rabbi Jeffrey Holman, Director of Judaic Studies

# 500

DOLLARS RAISED BY OUR CHESED CLUB FOR MAZEL DAY SCHOOL IN BROOKLYN, NY

# 700,000

DOLLARS AWARDED IN FINANCIAL AID THIS YEAR





on my mind

# Serious Play

Play is serious business. Just ask any teacher or child at Akiba-Schechter and they will tell you that play is the work of childhood.

At Akiba-Schechter we value play-based learning. We understand what a child is truly learning when constructing a tower out of blocks with friends, resolving a conflict, playing dress-up, or drawing a self portrait.

Mike's Place, our new Preschool playground, is a great example of that. In designing it, we wanted to create a synergy between the learning in our classrooms and the learning occurring outdoors. We strove to extend our classrooms to the playground and intentionally designed a space that is both open-ended and atypical.

For instance, Mike's Place has four different ways to get to the platform/slide area: a traditional stairway, log steppers, a stone climber and a wiggly log climber. Each passage requires different skills and developmental levels to master it.

Other examples of nuanced and out-of-the-box features of our new playground include: musical instruments that teach cause and effect, and the cozy nook where children can be found "driving" on the log benches or signing with friends. Our "outdoor classroom" has a stage with a seatwall for performing plays and celebrating Shabbat. This seatwall



also doubles as a balance beam or a bridge to walk upon. Every part of this playground is creative – built to engage a child in unique ways and encourage children to play and work together.

What's remarkable about Akiba-Schechter is that we don't stop playing just because we finish Preschool. In fact, much of our Day School curriculum is also play-based – otherwise known as experiential. Hands-on. Fun. When the recent election approached, students didn't "learn" about campaigns, they ran one. To understand human biology, they didn't study a book; they watched live open-heart surgery. We learn best when we do.

We thank Roberta and Richard Evans for allowing us to continue that play at Mike's Place, and we thank all of our staff – who continue to place students at the forefront of education.

Wishing you the best for 2013!

*Carla Goldberg*

Carla Goldberg  
Preschool Director

## FAMILY TIES

"The only thing bigger than his smile was his heart. It overflowed with kindness and compassion," said Rebecca Klaff about her former classmate, Michael Evans. His friends fondly remember his compassion, love of life, and speed during races on the playground.

Michael's parents, Richard and Roberta, live in Hyde Park and have been staunch supporters of Akiba-Schechter for well over 20 years. Michael's family generously gave to the playground as a way to honor his memory.



Roberta continues to support Akiba-Schechter through service on the Board of Directors and Endowment Committee. Richard and Roberta led what was an incredibly fast campaign to build Mike's Place. Their generosity led the way for our community to finish fundraising in just six weeks!

**Above: Roberta Evans and Millie Miller hug at the dedication of Mike's Place.**

# Q>A

## 5 Questions with...

Sharon Vadeboncoeur, Preschool Teacher

**Q>** You've been at Akiba for 16 years, and you've always taught 2 year olds—except for during the summer, when you taught Big Guys on the Go. What's the difference between the age groups?

**A<** I love the big guys, but the little guys are little treasures. They're delicious. The Yellow Room is their first experience at school—and the first experience for their families, as well. We're evolving on this journey together.

**Q>** What's the funniest moment you've experienced in the classroom?

**A<** The funniest moment was yesterday. The funniest moment will be tomorrow. Every day is hilarious. The kids are so sophisticated, so knowledgeable, so inquiring. They say what they see, what they feel. They're uncensored. Anything can happen at any time.

**Q>** What's the most challenging part of teaching this age?

**A<** The beginning. Separation. And it's hard to know who's sadder--the child or the parent? But, it's a process. You don't say, "Don't cry." You validate and affirm their feelings. For the child, it's "Your mommy loves you." For the parent, it's "He's okay. He's happy." You nurture, assure them, and build a routine. It helps to know what's coming next.

**Q>** Growing up a Catholic, did you ever think you would know the words to every Jewish holiday song by heart?

**A<** You know, we've had [non-Jewish] families ask about Jewish culture and my response is just, we're all in this together. We do things a little differently but it's all the same. We're all God's children.



After telling the story of "Five Little Monkeys," Sharon helps put the monkeys to bed.

I remember one Chanukah when I had the kids make a Chanukah-to-Go kit out of cigar boxes. We had everything: candles, dreidles, you name it. And one Jewish parent said to me, "You know, you gave me one extra candle." I said, "Man, don't you know about the shamash?!"

**Q>** What do you like most about teaching at Akiba-Schechter?

**A<** Having all of this family has been integral to my healing process. When I tell my brother about the folks at Akiba, he says, "Sharon, this is more than friends at work. This is family." And it is. Everyone's got your back. How lucky am I that I have a job I love, teaching young children? This is a place to grow—spiritually, intellectually, socially. I've grown up here. I mean, I'm still working on it, but I really have. It's a beautiful thing. It really is.

**BELOW:** 1ST & 2ND GRADERS STUDIED HERO RATS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE, NAMELY, DETECTING LAND MINES AND CURING TUBERCULOSIS. (NOTE THE THERMOMETER AND RADIOACTIVITY SYMBOL.)



# PEACH PIE



In November, the 4 and 5 year olds in the Peach Room participated in the South Side Pie Challenge. First, they sold cookies to raise the \$25 contest entry fee. The bake sale was so popular that they ran out of cookies within 30 minutes.

While operating their cash register, the kids queried customers on ideas for pies to bake. For the contest, they baked a chocolate chip cookie and a chocolate pie (named "Peach Room Chocolate Extreme"). Their pies didn't win prizes, but they were hits with those in attendance as both pies were gone in no time, and the kids won fun books about pies.

Much learning took place throughout the project: The children were exposed to literacy through written recipes and labels, they followed procedures and recorded their steps, and measured and counted ingredients. They hypothesized, observed, and reached conclusions about the combination of ingredients; cooperating and communicating with each other and their teachers. They took turns and saw the importance of everyone contributing towards a final product. Nutrition and food choices were discussed; cause and effect were observed with the mixing of ingredients. And of course, all that messing around offered a sensory-rich experience through touching, smelling and tasting ingredients. Most importantly, however, the kids saw that the fun is in the process and in working towards a goal.



**ABOVE:** Peach Room children show off their Bake Sale sign and tally the money it earned, all in preparation for the Pie Challenge. **RIGHT:** 7th grader Tahlia works with a model of the human heart at the "Live From the Heart!" surgery.

## Matters of the HEART

For the second time in three years, the 7th/8th grade science classes have culminated their human Biology unit with a special program called "Live From the Heart!," in which the students watch live as open-heart surgery is performed on a patient. Students connected via satellite feed at the Museum of Science and Industry; other classes, such as the 12th grade anatomy class in Orland Park, connected at their own schools. The entire process took almost three hours, during which the students chatted with the surgeon as he worked, asking him and the other OR personnel any questions they had. This patient happened to be a 67-year-old man with diabetes and coronary heart disease who had recently suffered a heart attack. Here are some of the students' reactions to the experience:



"It was really awesome. We got to see what a real heart looked like. We got to see them stop the heart. And we got to see them saw open his sternum." — Jonathan, 7th

"It was incredible to see it live. I now know never to get fat because I know what a fatty heart looks like." — Eliana, 8th

"It was very graphic. Grosser than I thought." — Talia, 8th

"It was really cool how the pericardium exploded when they popped it and the yellow fluid leaked out." — Tomer, 7th

"It was bloody. But how cool was it when the laser pen touched the blood and it gave off steam? And did you notice how the fact that his back was arched made it much harder to conduct the surgery?" — Rivka, 7th

"The heart really put up a fight to be stopped. It clearly wants to be beating. It also looked like it was soaked in chicken fat. But can you imagine—they turned a vein into an artery?" — Tova, 7th

# Election Fever!

As politics waged outside, students came together to learn how democracy works



The entire school caught election fever in the weeks leading up to the general election. For instance, the Purple and Green Kindergartens held an election for a special snack. First, each classroom organized a primary to determine which two snacks would be “competing” in the general election. Popsicles won in the Green, and Oreo cookies in the Purple Kindergarten. Next, the kids created a ballot box and ballots. On election day, each child voted for their “candidate.” Popsicles won!

The Peach Room pondered the qualities a leader should have, and came up with this list: good listener, patience, gives good speeches, knows about the government,

cares about all people, protects and is experienced.

In the grade school, several classes visited a polling place to watch the voting process and talk to judges. Ms. Kass’ 3rd/4th graders used the election to solve Electoral College math problems. They were surprised to find that a candidate could win the Electoral College vote (and thus the Presidency) and only win in 11 states!

Ms. Gorosh’ 3rd/4th graders created election handbooks with the laws and rules of the general election, such as that the President and the Vice President cannot be from the same state, or that a candidate must be at least 35 and a natural-born citizen.

5th graders examined the large role “swing states” play in the election, and 6th graders focused on the persuasion techniques used in campaigning by creating their own multi-media commercials for fictional candidates. Then, of course, they voted.



In addition to all these classroom activities, a general cat election held by the 7th/8th graders infected everyone with election fever. Organized by *B’not Sherut* Esty Ackerman and Zahava Zemel, all students voted for a cat representing a different city in Israel. A group of 7th/8th graders campaigned for each cat; the hallways were plastered with posters, and lunchtime became quite spirited with “campaigners” popping in to deliver “campaign speeches.” Ashkelon won, but that was of less relevance than the creative skits and rap routines the students used to champion their candidates.

**ABOVE:** 7th and 8th graders represent their respective Israel cities after “campaigning” for the rest of the school. **INSET:** The Purple Room created collages about the candidates. Noah (left) says, “Don’t forget to vote!” **LEFT:** The Green Kindergarten learned extensively about how to draw self-portraits—even down to the color of a hairbow. **RIGHT:** Preschoolers made turkeys of all sorts of materials for Thanksgiving. This one is made from Play-Dough. **FAR RIGHT:** Kitah Alef made Origami flowers in Art.



# Where are They Now?

## One on one with Akiba alumni

One of Doug Glick's favorite activities while a student at Akiba-Schechter isn't one that any of today's students is likely to experience--mostly because it would be illegal. His science and math teacher, Randy Mazura, loved bird watching. "And," says Doug, "like Akiba teachers today, he went beyond the classroom." Mr. Mazura had a little green Fiat and at 6:00 a.m., he would take interested students to Wooded Island in Jackson Park to go bird watching. "There we were, three or four kids jammed into this tiny Fiat with no back seats, let alone seat belts... they wouldn't allow that nowadays."

But Doug doesn't seem any worse for the wear. In fact, he sees this as an example of what he loved most about Akiba—an intellectual curiosity that was "infectious to us."

Ultimately, it wasn't science that Doug pursued as a career; it was finance. Doug graduated from Cornell University in Economics and Asian Studies and, after living in Japan for several years, returned home to earn a law degree from the University of Chicago. He practiced for several years in both Chicago and Tokyo. Eight years ago, about the time he married his wife Jennifer Uson, he switched careers,

becoming a financial planner and investment advisor.

His skill sets have come in handy many times over the last ten or so years that Doug has sat on the Board



of Directors—a tenure that predates the birth of his daughters Nina and Annabelle. "I've been involved with Akiba since the planning of this building," he says, gesturing at the walls around him. "And being on the Board has helped me see the fantastic strides this school has made since I was a student, pursuing and achieving its mission year in and year out."

As the third of four Glick children—all of whom graduated from Akiba-Schechter—Doug's years on the Board are not his first exposure to serving the School. His parents, Jerry and Sherry, have been longtime supporters of



the school—ultimately donating the school's library. Doug's older sister, Bonnie, who lives in Maryland with her family, also maintains close ties. She donated the library's computers and has also contributed hundreds of

volumes to the library in honor of the *b'nai mitzvah* of her two sons.

So how does his experience as a student compare to his daughter Nina's, who's in 1st grade? "Some things are different—like the multi-age classrooms—but not the sense of ownership the kids have for the school. Older kids caring for younger kids. Those things have stayed the same over time."



**ABOVE RIGHT:** Doug Glick (Class of '82) together with his wife, Jennifer Uson; and daughters Nina (currently in 1st grade) and Annabelle, who will start Kindergarten in the fall of 2013. **MIDDLE:** Doug and other alumni pose with a photo of Michael Evans (z"l), also Class of '82, at the Dedication of Mike's Place.





## SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Benefit Dinner  
& Silent Auction

**Honoring Dr. Avy & Yisraela Dachman**

March 3, 2013 @ The Palmer House

**Honorary Co-Chairs:**

Matis & Ronit Blisko ■ Dr. Yigal & Donna Yahav

# Honoring...

**A**vy and Yisraela Dachman have given countless hours to ensure the success of our school. Avy has served on our Board of Directors for over seven years. He has worked tirelessly to grow and professionalize our Development department, including hiring professional staff, creating development and alumni committees, and setting the groundwork for long term success. Avy has also been instrumental in growing our grant program and securing meaningful gifts for our school. Yisraela has volunteered her professional services in accounting at Akiba-Schechter for several years, working on payroll, billing, and other critical functions. "Yisraela brings a positive attitude and tremendous energy to her efforts on

behalf of Akiba-Schechter," says Robin Lisak, Akiba-Schechter's controller. "She is quite simply a delight to work with."

In addition to volunteering their time to Akiba-Schechter, Avy and Yisraela have had incredible professional success. Avy is a nationally renowned radiologist, best known for his work in abdominal imaging, including expertise in virtual colonoscopies and computed tomography. Yisraela is a certified public accountant and has used her expertise in many professional settings.

Avy and Yisraela have been true leaders for our parent body. Both are generous with their time and expertise. More importantly, they embody the values of community, academic excellence, and *derech erez* that are



**DR. AVY & YISRAELA DACHMAN**

core to our mission at Akiba-Schechter. "Avy and Yisraela have been true pillars of Akiba," says Miriam Schiller, Principal. We are fortunate to have them as part of our community." Eliana, their youngest daughter, will graduate from Akiba-Schechter this spring.