Gainesville’s Jewish Cemetery May Be The Oldest ‘Separate’ Jewish Cemetery In Florida

Is it possible that Gainesville has the oldest Jewish Cemetery in the state of Florida?

Yes, according to Ralph Lowenstein, dean emeritus of UF’s College of Journalism and Communications, and chair of B’nai Israel’s cemetery committee for a dozen years. According to Lowenstein, Gainesville has the oldest “separate” Jewish cemetery in the state, dating back to 1871, when a 20-year-old named Abraham Pinkussohn was buried in the cemetery.

“Several other cities claim to have the oldest Jewish cemetery,” Lowenstein said, “but based on my research of the Internet, they are – if you will pardon the expression – dead wrong.”

Jacksonville and Key West have older burial areas, but those areas are sections of a larger municipal cemetery. St. Augustine should logically take the title, but there are no tombstones in the bare area where, guides say, Marranos (Jews who converted to Christianity) were supposedly buried. Ocala has a very old Jewish cemetery, but provides no gravestone proof on the Internet. Lowenstein says he plans to investigate.

Lowenstein said he came across Gainesville’s interesting distinction while preparing information for the $250,000 fund-raising campaign currently under way for the expansion of B’nai Israel Cemetery. This is his listing of Florida’s oldest “separate” Jewish cemeteries:

- Gainesville, 1871
- Pensacola, 1874
- Tampa, 1881
- Miami, 1897
- Jacksonville (not separate)
- Key West (not separate)
- Tallahassee (not separate)
- St. Augustine (authenticity suspect)
- Ocala (age not yet proven)

Gainesville’s original cemetery was purchased for $20 by young Abraham Pinkussohn’s father, Pincus Pinkussohn, and another early Gainesvillian named Gershon Joseph.

Many Thanks To Our Valued Community Partners

The Jewish Council is grateful to these organizations and businesses for their support. Our successful program year was made possible by the relationships we have developed and the resources we shared. Thank you for helping us build the wonderful, dynamic Jewish community of North Central Florida!

Organizations

- B’nai Israel Community Day School
- Center for Jewish Studies at UF
- Chabad of Marion County
- College of the Arts at UF
- Congregation Beth Israel

Inside This Issue

- Stuart Cohn’s History of the Warsaw Museum .......... 3
- The Rabbi’s Pen Pillars of the World ...................... 4
- JCNCF Grant Reports ............................................. 5
- Virginia Brissette Reflects On Five Years With The JCNCF .... 7
- The Music Maven: New Cantor Shlomo Glick .............. 8
- News from Israel - Acro-Yoga is the latest fitness trend .... 11
On Sunday, August 30th, B’nai Israel presents a special opportunity for spiritual preparation for the high holidays. Beginning at 9 a.m., Rabbi David Kaiman, Debby Kinman-Ford and Suzanne Chester will lead education sessions suitable for families and individuals with a focus on meaningfully celebrating the holidays, including traditional prayer and experiences. For families looking to be home by naptime, this will be perfect for you!

Following lunch, participants will be able to take part in various sessions including floral arrangements and tablescape, meditative yoga, cooking for the holidays and Shofar blowing and scotch tasting. You can take one class or you can take them all! Each of these classes will show you how to prepare your home and your heart for the upcoming New Year.

Registration for this event will be available beginning July 1st, but until then mark your calendars and save the date!
The Golden Years were the 15th-17th centuries. Those years were so favorable that Poland was referred to during that time as the “Jewish Paradise.” The good times came to a sudden end in 1648 with the Cossack uprising against the Polish nobles led by Chmielnicky. The defeat of the nobles led to huge massacres of Jews who no longer could count on protection from the nobility. Enormous insecurity existed, which was a major factor in the rise of Hasidism, as many lost faith in traditional ways. This was fertile ground for the “God is found through ecstasy” notion of Ba’al Shem Tov and his disciples. All of this history is wonderfully recreated with visuals, pictures, original writings and interactive stations.

One of the highlights, among many, was a large room that replicated the inside of a wooden synagogue, with beautifully painted walls and ceilings depicting Biblical motifs, and a corresponding painted “bema” in the middle of the room. The ark was against the Eastern wall. During the Torah portion, the Torah was taken from the ark to the bema.

The room also had several computer terminals with interactive software information ranging from description of the painted elements to the nature of the religious services.

Every organization strives to stand by their purpose and mission in all things they do and that sentiment was clear at Congregation B’nai Israel when the Board of Trustees voted overwhelmingly to offer free religious school education to students in kindergarten through second grade beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

“Providing Jewish education to our youth is a vital component of what we do at B’nai Israel. We are invested in making sure that every family can provide a Jewish education for their child,” said Rabbi Kaiman.

With this next school year, free kindergarten through second grade education is a benefit of membership at Congregation B’nai Israel.

(Continued on page 12)
The Rabbi’s Pen

By Rabbi Berl Goldman
Lubavitch-Chabad
Jewish Student & Community Center
at the University of Florida

During the weeks between Passover and Shavuot, it is traditional to study Pirkei Avot, Ethics of our Fathers, which espouses character refinement and positive human behavior. Since it is a time when we prepare ourselves to receive the Torah, G-d’s greatest gift to the world, it is appropriate and fitting to put in the effort towards self-improvement and compassion to others. In many communities, it is customary to continue studying these important ideas and ideals throughout the summer, as a continued motivation.

One of the foremost principles emphasized in all six chapters is the concept of loving kindness. It states in Chapter 1, “The world stands on three things: on the Torah, on the service (of G-d), and on acts of loving-kindness.” Furthermore, it is written in Chapter 3, “He whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure. But he whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure.”

The importance of kind-heartedness, benevolence, good deeds, and helping others has been emphasized in recent weeks when tragedy, unfortunately struck Nepal twice, with devastating earthquakes. As human beings and specifically as Jews, who have suffered our fair share of tragedy throughout history, it is incumbent upon us to do whatever we can to help others.

Maimonides writes in his Doctor’s prayer, “Grant me the physical and mental strength to be forever prepared to help the poor and the rich, the good and the bad, my love and my enemy, and may I always see the human in the infirm.”

That is the essence of Judaism’s view on kindness and compassion. Indeed, Israel, one of the smallest countries sent one of the largest delegations to assist in Nepal. On a personal note, we are very proud of one of our alumni, Aviela Weltman, who graduated in 2014 and has spent the past year in Nepal; she is currently very involved in the relief efforts on the ground. Of course, great credit goes to the Chabad-Lubavitch Shluchim, emissaries; Rabbi and Rebetzin Lifshitz for their incredible self-sacrifice in assisting so many Israeli backpackers and local citizens with food, shelter and more. They have been incredibly instrumental in the relief efforts and from day one set their Chabad house as a makeshift shelter. You can learn more about their relief efforts at www.chabadnepal.com.

The Hebrew word for love is ‘Ahava,’ which also comes from the

(Continued on page 10)

The Pillars Of The World

Elias Boada in costume for Temple Shir Shalom’s Purim Celebration.
Grants Reports

JCNCF Grants Fund Ocala Trip To Holocaust Museum And Intensive Workshops At B’nai Israel

As we wrap up our financial year, the JCNCF is pleased to provide two more reports from recent grants recipients that indicate how much good your donations accomplish in the greater North Central Florida Community.

Temple Beth Shalom Ocala Religious School’s Trip to the Holocaust Museum in St Petersburg

On February 22 at 9 a.m. twelve children and 36 adults boarded a bus that would take a trip to the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, FL. A parent accompanied each child. The parents were able to explain some of the background history to their children. This wonderful trip was sponsored by the JCNCF when they awarded a grant for the cost of the bus. The two-hour drive went by very smoothly due to the excellent driving skills of Barbara from the Annett Bus Company.

When we arrived, we were met by the two docents who split us into two groups and talked to us about the museum.

It was close to noon and we all went back to the bus that was parked in front of the museum. Everyone had left their lunches aboard the bus. We were allowed to eat on the bus and were very careful not to leave any garbage. The group was very cooperative.

The two groups then went to different areas of the second floor. There is a new exhibit that has letters from different towns that were invaded by the Nazis. Lomza was one of the towns that had information about it. Group Leader Terri Stein said, “It just so happens that my father and Stan’s (Terri’s husband) maternal grandmother were from that town. Hopefully, one day we will visit it.”

The docent led us around to the other exhibits and explained one where a man had painted people that had been in a concentration camp with him. It was very moving.

After two hours of being led around the museum, we were allowed to revisit areas where we felt we wanted to learn more about the specific sections.

Three o’clock was the time we needed to leave and most of us were ready. There is just so much sadness a

(Continued on page 10)

Israeli Public Radio Journalist Eran Singer answers questions from an audience of nearly 90 people who came to hear his talk on “Israel after the National Elections” on April 23 at Temple Shir Shalom.

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<td>Toys</td>
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Mitzvah Minute

You Can Be The Helping Hands At The Clinic

By Debra Trione

I boiled the long pasta and carefully combined just the right ingredients—ricotta cheese, spinach, nutmeg, garlic salt, oregano.

I wanted the women who ate this lasagna at the Helping Hands Clinic on Thursday to get more than a good meal. I wanted them to also feel encouragement through the food.

For the last two years the Jewish Council of North Central Florida has been engaging volunteers from across the community to provide a hearty meal once a month to hungry and homeless women at the Helping Hands Clinic in Northeast Gainesville.

The clinic sits next to the First United Methodist Church in Northeast Gainesville. In fact, someone had told me it was in the church, so when I got there I headed straight for the office.

“I’m part of the Jewish Council,” I began, “here for the charity meal.”

“Uh, I’m pretty sure we don’t provide charity meals for the Jewish Council,” said the befuddled secretary.

“No!” I exclaimed. “I’m providing the meal!”

When I finally made it to the correct dining room, “clients” started trickling in. I was new to this place, but they weren’t. Their banter could have been heard in any coffee shop; it was all about kids, clothes, acquaintances, where to find this or that.

“I’m so hungry,” said one older woman suddenly. Still, they waited for their turn and the blessing to be said. Then they stood in line for the salad, the lasagna, and the bread. We also had gooey brownies and cookies for dessert. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I heard that from everyone there.

In line for the meal, one woman collapsed suddenly to the floor. She lay in a heap for a long moment before others rushed over to help. I tried to imagine what circumstance had brought her to this place. Was she sick or injured, demoralized or depressed? Later, I observed her crying in silence over her food. Whatever her burden was that day, I was glad to have been able to provide some small respite with the gift of our food.

The First United Methodist Church of Gainesville sponsors the Helping Hands Clinic, which provides food, clothing, and basic medical services to indigent men and women. On the fourth Thursday of every month, the Jewish Council coordinates a dinner for approximately 40 homeless and hungry women at the Helping Hands Clinic. Volunteers are asked to provide one or more of the elements of the meal.

For more information about this ongoing Mitzvah project, please contact JCNCF at office@jcnf.org or 352.371.3846.

Please Support The Chronicle

One of the many services supported by donations to the Jewish Council’s annual campaign is The Chronicle. If you are not a donor to the campaign, we ask that you support The Chronicle by sending $36 to:

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Thanks For Five Years Of Learning, Living And Loving Jewish Life In N. Central Florida

By Virginia Brissette
JCNCF Executive Director

July 2015 will mark five years that I have worked for the Jewish Council of North Central Florida. Instead of another program year wrap up article, I would like to offer some reflections and thanks for the opportunities and support I have received while on this journey.

First and foremost, I am incredibly blessed to have full time employment working for a Jewish organization. When I decided to leave public education in 2010, the American economy had yet not recovered from the recession of 2009, and many people were searching for jobs. I was fortunate to secure a position that summer and I was doubly blessed to find a job working specifically for the Jewish community. I still am.

I came to know JCNCF through volunteering on the planning committee for the first ever Mitzvah Day. I was impressed by the committee’s enthusiasm for large scale community event planning and their deep commitment to tikkun olam.

That same spring, I also got involved with the JCNCF group responsible for organizing the Israeli Independence Day event. Again, I appreciated the creative, hard-working team drawn from many different streams of Jewish life in our community.

JCNCF advertised for a program director in the spring of 2010 and I immediately knew that, given the opportunity, I would love doing this work. The year before I joined the JCNCF team, I had been invited to enroll in a Jerusalem based program to train as a Jewish educator. For a number of reasons, I decided not to attend, which was a very difficult, but necessary, decision.

I struggled with that decision, as moving to Israel was the goal that I had been working toward for a number of years. Saying “no” to that opportunity was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, and at the time, I didn’t fully understand why I didn’t go, but something nagged at me that said, “I’m not ready to leave Gainesville yet.”

As I look back on that time and connect the dots of my path to Jewish community engagement, I have a better understanding of what drove my decision.

Yes, I wanted to live in Israel where I imagined I could “be Jewish” all the time. But when I looked into my heart and focused on what I really wanted to do with my life – what I still want to do with my life – I found a desire to serve my community through learning and teaching. The goal of the program in Israel was to train me to work in Jewish education in the United States and, as I see it, I made it to that destination, just down a different path.

I am grateful to have found work that allows me to “be Jewish” all day, every day. Through the work of the JCNCF, nearly every conversation I have, every task that I do in the course of a day’s work, is connected to building our Jewish community. It is often a great challenge to compete for the time, talent and treasure of the Jewish community in 2015. With the endless number of social, intellectual, physical and spiritual pursuits available to our community, it takes more persistence and creativity than ever to engage people and to hold their attention.

But this is important work and the payoff is great. Through JCNCF, I have been privileged to meet great minds and know great hearts and to witness their incredible dedication and endless generosity. Those who work and volunteer in congregations, federations, or any other form of Jewish communal or organizational life are on the front lines of service to the Jewish people and I am honored to be counted among them.

The ability to fulfill the mission of the Jewish Council has been made possible by your support since the 1970s. My ability to carry out that mission, and by extension, my professional Jewish development, have also been generously supported by you over the last five years. To the Officers, Board and donors of JCNCF and all of my colleagues and friends in North Central Florida’s Jewish community, I will always be indebted to you for this opportunity. I am here because you inspired me, empowered me, encouraged me and supported me. I am grateful beyond words and will close with all that is left to say - Todah Rabah!
Worth Listening To
By Howard Rothman, The Music Maven

There is yet another new and relatively young cantor that is well worth listening to. Cantor Shlomo Glick was born in Jerusalem and is 43 years old. His grandfather was a chazzan at Shaarey Chesed in Jerusalem.

As a child, Shlomo became a soloist in the Jerusalem Cantorial Choir conducted by the famous Binyamin Glickman. He began his formal cantorial studies at the Haifa Cantorial Institute and continued studying with Cantor Naftali Herstik at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute.

Further studies were with Eli Jaffe the conductor of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue and with Dr. Mordechai Sobol who along with his son Ofir is doing much to foster an interest in many Golden Age cantors by re-mastering the old recordings.

The CD’s title is Mikolot, From the Voices, which is a quote from psalm 93 which is recited as the Psalm of the day on Friday mornings. Cantor Glick has a powerful tenor voice and uses it with true feeling and understanding of the words and prayers that he is singing.

He is accompanied by the Kol Rina Choir which includes among its members a brother of Cantor Noam Rakovsky who was our High Holy Day cantor. The little foldout booklet accompanying the CD is entirely in Hebrew except for his biography and some personal thoughts on this recording and his collaborators.

There are nine songs on the CD composed by Moshe Koussevitzky (2), Maurice Ganchoff, David Werdyger, Moshe Stern, Samuel Heilman, Shlomo Carlebach and Y. Singer.

Some of my favorites are Stern’s Ezrat Avoteinu, The help of our ancestors. The prayer said just before the Shacharit Amidah, Ganchoff’s R’tzei, Be pleased, from the Amidah prior to Modim Ananchu Loch, We thank You, Singer’s Zohreinu L’Chaim, Remember us for life. This is a combination of Yiddish and Hebrew and incorporates the traditional High Holy Day melody.

I also like Werdyger’s Shma Yisroel, Hear O Israel, from the Musaf Amidah’s Kedusha prayer and Yehoshua Wieder’s Mimkomcha Malkeinu, From your Abode sung during the Shacharit Amidah’s Kedusha. One of the most beautiful prayers is Heilman’s L’kel Baruch N’imot Yiteinu, To the blessed God we offer melodies found in the Shacharit service and most beautifully sung by Naftali Herstik in a CD called The Best of Naftali Herstik which was reviewed in the Summer 2012 Chronicle.

The Carlebach song is interesting. It includes, from Psalm 90, Moshe V’Aharon B’Kohanov, Moses and Aaron among His priests, and continues with Psalm 29, Mizmor L’Dovid Hovu Lashem, A Psalm of David, give to the Lord. These two Psalms are said on Friday evenings, eve of Shabbat just before L’chah Dodi, Welcoming the Sabbath Bride.

The CD will provide much listening pleasure. I’ve checked and this is his only CD as of this time and it is available at both mostlymusic.com and amazon.com.

JCNCF Caregivers Support Group
Meets Monthly At Temple Shir Shalom

The next meeting of the Jewish Council of North Central Florida Caregivers Support Group will be at 7 p.m. June 3 at Temple Shir Shalom.

The program meets monthly on the first Wednesday of the month.

For more information, or to confirm dates for July and August, contact Lori Waxenberg at loriwax@gmail.com.

JCNCF Caregivers Support Group
Meets Monthly At Temple Shir Shalom
UF Hillel Works Matches Students With Internships

By Hannah O. Brown

It was late on a Thursday during finals week, but college-induced fatigue was not enough to keep a lively discussion from taking place in the UF Hillel conference room. The students shouted out phrases one at a time: dynamic, tight-knit, community-oriented.

These students were describing their impressions of the first-ever UF Hillel Works Fellowship program. The beta cohort consists of about 10 students, who went into the experience knowing that their input would help to shape the future direction of the program.

UF Hillel Works is a fellowship program that provides leadership development for students as well as the opportunity to work a summer internship in their field of study. The program was launched this April as a way to offer services that could make a real difference in student lives.

The program’s leadership development seminars are composed of round table discussions and presentations from accomplished professionals who serve as mentors, sharing tips they’ve learned from experience.

In this summer’s session, Arnie Sair, vice president of quality and regulatory operations at Signature Brands, spoke to the group about how to make a good first impression in the business world. Founder of Willow Tree Media Cindy Bennett led a discussion on marketing, both for individuals and businesses. Students re-worked their resumes, critiqued a mock interview and explored what it means to be Jewish in the professional world.

Now our UF Hillel Works Fellows are engaged in summer opportunities around the globe. During their internships, they are tasked with considering the role of social responsibility in business, and when they come back in August, the group will reassemble to share their ideas and experiences. Fellows will also write blog posts about what they have learned, which will be posted on the UF Hillel website later this summer.

UF student Trevor Youshak joined UF Hillel Works after working as a UF Hillel intern during the spring semester.

“Having four UF Hillel Works sessions under my belt helped me understand what it looked like to be a leader and how to get there,” Youshak said.

Youshak joined the program hoping to get experience in the legal world. He was matched with Three Rivers Legal Services, a non-profit organization that provides free legal services to low-income clients throughout North Florida.

“I will have the opportunity to experience family law head on and decide if it is something I am interested in pursuing,” he said.

Next summer, UF Hillel Works plans to include even more internships and students. The program will begin in early spring in order to allow more time for students to become a solid cohort by incorporating community service activities and leadership development seminars throughout the semester.
Grant Reports

(Continued from page 5)

person can take in two hours. We needed time to process all of the information. The bus ride home was very quiet. Our strength and emotions had been strained by what we saw and had explained to us.

Everyone who went was very appreciative of the beautiful and comfortable bus that was provided by JCNCF. Thank you very much.

Day School Teachers Enjoy Judaism Up-Close and Personal

Thanks to a grant from the JCNCF, the staff at B’nai Israel Community Day School were able to participate in monthly intensive workshops learning in depth about Judaism. The workshops included a dinner, text study, guest speakers and a craft activity for adults. The workshops were themed around various Jewish holidays and Israel. The staff were also given a copy of two large Jewish resources to keep. The JCNCF grant paid for the resources and the guest speakers.

The school covered the remaining costs including paying staff for attending the workshops held in the evening. The workshop was a hands on program using YouTube videos, text study teaching about the origins of the holidays and then experiencing the activities first hand.

The staff participated in a full Seder for Passover and studied the texts of the Passover story. Staff were able to ask questions and decide for themselves how to take the information they had learned and apply it in their classes. The staff enjoyed the workshops so much the school is currently working on how to extend the program into next year.

Museum

(Continued from page 3)

tolerant environment. Remarkably, in post-communist Poland there is now a rebirth of Jewish identity, reflected in the Museum’s last segment of videos by current leaders in the Polish Jewish community.

The museum gives more than a marvelous panorama of Jewish history. It is inspiring and by its presence and programming is making an enormous contribution to Jewish identity and non-Jewish understanding and tolerance. The museum was quite busy on a Wednesday in February when I was there. Most of the visitors were not Jewish and there were several school groups. It is fast becoming one of the must-see places in Warsaw. I highly recommend to anyone a trip to Poland, with this museum as the centerpiece.

Pillars

(Continued from page 4)

root word, ‘Hay,’ meaning, ‘give.’ True love is expressed through giving, and when we assist others, it is the best way to love and help ourselves. The Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory emphasizes this idea as being especially relevant in the summer months when Jews mourn the destruction of the Temple. Our Rabbis teach that the Temple was destroyed because of unjust hatred and will be rebuilt through unwarranted acts of love.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement taught that a person could live an entire lifetime, with the sole purpose of doing a favor for someone else. Tragedies of great magnitude are a stark reminder of what is important and what our priorities should be. Every person is an important part of the great picture. We are each needed to take care of others, not only on the other side of the world, but in our own communities and most certainly in our homes.

On behalf of Chanie and our children, we extend best wishes to the entire community for a safe and enjoyable summer.

Note: The articles written or published by the Lubavitch-Chabad Center are primarily based on Chassidic insights, discourses, letters and talks by the Lubavitch Rebbe of righteous memory. Periodically we present articles and thoughts from Chabad.org and its contributing writers. We thank Chabad.org and its staff for allowing us to publish and share its inspiring articles.

Cemetery

(Continued from page 1)

The cemetery was expanded in 2000, and the current expansion will enclose the cemetery in a complete city block, bounded by Williston Road, E. University Avenue, SE 12th Street and SE 1st Avenue.

The cemetery gates will be open every Sunday for the remainder of the year, Lowenstein said, for anyone to tour the cemetery.

Otherwise, the code for the gates’ combination lock is 1818.

Abraham Pinkussohn’s grave will be marked with a special sign for the benefit of visitors.

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For information about advertising opportunities in The Chronicle, contact Ed Hunter at (352) 379-5802 or e-mail: chronicle@jcncf.org
Israelis Flip For Acro-Yoga

By Rachel Solomon
Israel21c.org

As I walk through Tel Aviv’s HaYarkon Park on a gorgeous day, I watch people enjoy nice, normal activities like soccer, running, rowing and yoga. But that’s not what I’m here for. No, I’m at the park to join a weekly meet-up of people who balance, flip and maneuver each other in a series of gravity-defying poses called “acro-yoga.”

Even though I don’t know a soul, I instantly recognize the acro-yoga group. They are all partnered up; the “bases” lying on their backs with the “flyers” balancing on top of them.

Within minutes of joining them, I meet Yair Chuchem, a computer programmer who’s practiced these strange yet fun-looking moves for more than three years. When I tell him that I’m writing an article about Israel’s growing acro-yoga craze and ask for an interview, he responds, “The best way to understand acro-yoga is to do it.”

The next thing I know, I’m trusting Chuchem — a complete stranger — to balance me upside-down with my shoulders planted on the soles of his feet. Surprisingly, Chuchem doesn’t feel like stranger for long. After all, we are literally in a position that requires us to communicate and cooperate clearly and patiently with each other.

“This is what acro-yoga is all about,” he says after carefully lowering me back on my feet. “It’s trust and teamwork, and it bonds people.”

In terms of the physical dynamics, acro-yoga is a practice that combines acrobatics and yoga moves between the “base” and the “flyer.” But, as I learn from my first experience, it also involves cooperation and some fearlessness, which perhaps is why Israelis are going absolutely crazy for it.

“Acro-yoga is a really fun practice with lots of social components to it,” explains Ofir Gothilf, an established acro-yoga instructor based in Tel Aviv. “It’s a warm community that uses touch in a safe, secure way, and everyone is looking for that human experience — maybe Israelis more than others.”

While acro-yoga (or acro-balance) is an international practice — with the trademarked AcroYoga school founded by two Americans in 2003 — it has grown leaps and bounds in Israel, which is recognized as one of the strongest, if youngest, acro-yoga com-

(Continued on page 12)
Third through seventh grade will continue with a tuition based system as the curriculum becomes more intensive. “Jewish education is about community, Jewish pride and identity. Our Chavaya program is meant to instill a strong lifetime relationship with Judaism and the Jewish people.” says Rabbi Kaiman.

Chavaya is Hebrew for “experience” and is meant to underscore the idea that lifelong Jewish experience is our goal.

**Acro-Yoga**

(Continued from page 11) munities worldwide.

“[The community] started out as just 10 friends wanting to jam and get together in the park,” explains Eitan Padan, an Israeli acro-yoga instructor with six years of experience. “And now in just two years, it’s grown to over 4,000 members.”

Beyond recreation and fitness, acro-yoga also has therapeutic applications, says Jerusalem-based instructor Ayo Oppenheimer, who taught in the US before immigrating to Israel.

“Acro-yoga is a tool for happiness, self-awareness and empowerment,” she says. “In addition to teaching my regular practice, I’ve taught here [in Israel] at a women’s shelter for victims of domestic violence and at a hospital for teenage girls at risk.

“I don’t see myself as a fitness instructor. For me, I really believe that acro-yoga can improve people’s lives,” she says.

**Editor’s note:** Article and photo courtesy of www.Israel21c.org.