

DIGEST | NEWS BRIEFS

French Fridays program for preschoolers offered

Congregation Kol Am and the Alliance Française de St. Louis are partnering to offer French Fridays, a program for preschool-age children and their parents. The class will meet weekly from 2-4 p.m. on Fridays, Jan. 15 through March 19, at Congregation Kol Am, 1023 Chesterfield Parkway East.

The program will be led by Kol Am Rabbi Séverine Haziza-Sokol, a native of Lyon, France, and a staff member from the Alliance Française. Children will be introduced to the French language through music, stories, games and activities. The cost is \$8 per child, per week for Congregation Kol Am members and \$10 per child, per week for the general public. Parents are encouraged to attend and learn along with their children. Weekly handouts and a snack will be provided.

French Fridays are being offered as part of Congregation Kol Am's French Connections program, a year-long exploration of French Jewish culture. The French Connections program will culminate with a trip to France led by Rabbi Haziza-Sokol in June 2010. All programs, including the trip, are open to the community.

To RSVP for French Fridays, contact Rabbi Haziza-Sokol at rabbihazizasokol@sbcglobal.net or 636-519-0082.

'Introduction to Judaism' class begins in February

The spring semester of the Union for Reform Judaism and the Association of Reform Rabbis of Greater St. Louis' Introduction to Judaism class will begin Feb. 9 and continue through June 8. Classes are held from 7 to 9 p.m. at Congregation Shaare Emeth, 11645 Ladue Road.

The 16-week class has an additional day-long Hebrew-reading marathon. The course covers the basic elements of Jewish history, theology, festivals, life cycle events and prayer. The instructors for the spring semester will be Rabbis Lane Steinger, Elizabeth Hersh, Lynn Goldstein and Brigitte Rosenberg.

The class offers Jews and non-Jews an opportunity to expand their Jewish knowledge and explore their own spirituality. The cost is \$260 for an individual and \$285 for a couple, which includes three books.

For more information or to receive a registration form contact a local Reform rabbi or Ellyn Polsky, Introduction to Judaism coordinator at epolsky@urj.org.

Museum of ImaJewnation seeks artists' submissions

The Museum of ImaJewnation, in partnership with the JCC, is calling all artists and art enthusiasts to create a *grogger* for display at the new JCC Arts and Education building as part of the opening exhibit, "Listening For Haman: Sounding Out the Grogger: In time of war, what sound could ease an angry heart?" In commemoration of Purim, artists are challenged to design *groggers* and imagine the sounds they make in response to enemies. The Museum of ImaJewnation is a temporary Jewish museum featuring the works of professional artists and art enthusiasts of all ages. Entry forms are due Feb. 1. Artwork is due Feb.15. For entry guidelines and more information go to www.jccstl.com/index.php/programs/detail/the-museum-of-imagewnation/ or contact Rabbi Brad Horwitz at 314-442-3271 bhorwitz@jccstl.org.

LOCAL | ALZHEIMER'S PANEL

JCC's Ellis appointed to state task force

BY PATRICIA CORRIGAN
SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT

As the director of the Jewish Community Center's Adult Day Center Program, Deborah Ellis is acquainted professionally with Alzheimer's disease. As the daughter of a woman who suffers from Alzheimer's, Ellis is acquainted personally with the disease. Now, Ellis brings her professional skills and her personal experience to the Missouri Alzheimer's State Plan Task Force.

Late last year, Governor Jay Nixon appointed Ellis to the 17-member task force. "I feel very honored," says Ellis, 55. "When I met Gov. Nixon in November at a reception, he said to me, 'Just go out there and be a leader.'"

In a statement from Samuel Murphey, Nixon's executive deputy press secretary, Nixon expressed his confidence in Ellis, saying, "Because of her background in social work, adult care and hospice services, Deborah Ellis will offer important insights as the task force moves forward with its important work."

Alzheimer's disease is an incurable

brain disorder named for German physician Alois Alzheimer, who first described it in 1906. According to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.3 million Americans are living with the progressive brain disease, which is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States.

The new task force is charged with:

- Assessing the current and future impact of Alzheimer's and related dementias on residents of Missouri;
- Examining existing services and resources addressing the needs of persons with dementia, their families and caregivers;
- Developing recommendations to respond to the escalating public health situation regarding Alzheimer's.

A similar task force was formed in Missouri in 1986. "The first task force defined the disease and provided funding for basic services such as respite care," says Carroll Rodriguez, another task force member and director of pub-

lic policy and communications for the Alzheimer's Association of St. Louis. "Now we're taking another look at the disease, at what is going on now, so we can prepare for what's going to happen in the future."

Going into the community

By the end of January, the task force will begin traveling to five different cities – St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, Cape Girardeau and Columbia – to meet with the public to find out what issues concern people the most. "Over time, we will come up with recommendations for a state plan," says Ellis. "Then we will work to implement some of those recommendations over the next two years." Members of the task force receive no compensation.

Ellis, who lives in Wildwood, has directed the JCC's Adult Day Center Program for the past two and one-half years. The program currently serves 50 individuals. Lynn Wittels, president and CEO of the JCC, has high praise for Ellis. "Deb has been a terrific addition

ELLIS | PAGE 8



Ellis

LOCAL | Q&A WITH JAY UMANSKY

Rubbing shoulders with Mideast royalty during AJCongress mission trip

BY ROBERT A. COHN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF EMERITUS

by Iran.

On a recent Middle East mission trip, the local head of the American Jewish Congress traveled to Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Kingdom of Jordan and met with a plethora of dignitaries — including the King and Queen of Jordan.

Jay Umansky, a local attorney and president of the St. Louis Region of the American Jewish Congress, was part of a group that included Richard Gordon, president of the national AJCongress, and co-executive directors Marc Stern and Danny Grossman.

Umansky said the AJCongress has long been an ardent supporter of Israel, and maintains close ties with the Israeli government while also reaching out to moderate countries in the Middle East. The group has long since established a dialogue with Jordanian officials both in Washington and Amman, he said.

Umansky recently spoke about the trip with the *Jewish Light*.

Give us your impressions of James Cunningham, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

I found the ambassador to be bright, energetic and absolutely forthright with us. He spoke of his love of Jerusalem, but expressed frustrations with both Israeli and Palestinian officials, and his concerns over the nuclear threat posed

What did you learn about Israel's security and defense concerns in your meeting with Amira Dotan, the first woman brigadier general in the Israel Defense Forces?

Now a grandmother, Dotan brought a different perspective to our discussions about finding peace in the region. At one time a kindergarten teacher, her approach to the Palestinian stalemate was more creative. Rather than having the parties discuss issues like settlements and the (Palestinian) right of return, it was her belief that a positive first step would be a conference on post-traumatic stress syndrome and how it was impacting both the Israeli and Palestinian children directly impacted by the conflict.

It was her sincere belief that finding an issue on which both parties could agree, one that had no political ramifications...was critical towards a greater understanding and possibly a solution in the area.

What about other Israeli officials?

Later in the trip, we also met with Amos Yadlin, the head of the Israeli Military Intelligence Directorate. Each of the IDF members who spoke to us expressed significant concern about the danger a nuclear Iran presented to the region. While he indicated a confidence in Israel's ability to protect itself, it was my sense that Yadlin hoped a political solution could be reached which would avoid a military confrontation with Iran.

AJCONGRESS | PAGE 21



Umansky

JProStl announces 2009 honorees

JProStl, the professional association for staff in the St. Louis Jewish community has announced its 2009 honorees. They will be recognized at a community-wide staff luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Jan. 28 at the Jewish Community Center's Staenberg Family Complex. JProStl is an association dedicated to supporting professionals working at Jewish organizations in St. Louis. The 2009 honorees are:

- Nikki Goldstein, Executive Director of the Gladys & Henry Crown Center for Senior Living, for Career Achievement
- Ronnie Brockman, Program Director of Shaare Emeth for the Mentor Award
- Inclusion coordinators Shelley List of Torah Prep and David Weiner of the JCC for the Caring Award
- United Hebrew Administrative Assistant Nancy Motchan for the Dedication Award
- Cyndee Levy, Director of Adult Education at CAJE, for the Educator Award
- Rabbi Shmuel Wasser of Missouri Torah Institute for the Emerging Leader Award



Goldstein

- Kathleen Sitzer, Producing Artistic Director of the JCC's New Jewish Theatre, for the Visionary Award

The luncheon is free of charge for staff who work in Jewish organizations, agencies, congregations and schools. Guests are \$20 per person. JProStl is part of the Professional Excellence Project and all programs are made possible by generous support from the Lubin-Green Foundation, a supporting foundation of the Jewish Federation of St. Louis. For more information, go to www.jewishinstlouis.org/jpro or contact Marci Mayer Eisen at 314-442-3810 or meisen@jfedstl.org.



Sitzer