



## Celebrating Tu B'Shevat



Solomon Schechter Day School eighth grader Barri Wishne takes part in a Tu B'Shevat seder with fellow students and Crown Center residents Bella Sadow, Mei Wang and Thelma Balk last week. The eighth-grade class visited Crown and shared plates of fruits and nuts and cups of juice (taking the place of wine), read from Tu B'Shevat Haggadahs and joined for songs, along with a few impromptu piano performances from students Claire Lisker and Becky Koshner. For more photos, visit [www.stljewishlight.com](http://www.stljewishlight.com). Photo: Mike Sherwin

### LOCAL | NEW MAGAZINE

## 'Light' to honor Unsung Heroes

The *Jewish Light* is pleased to celebrate the addition of its fourth magazine by recognizing Unsung Heroes in our community.

Do you know people in our Jewish community who maybe aren't regularly in the headlines, but are nevertheless making a big impact on the St. Louis region? How about those in the broader community who have made a substantial contribution to the Jewish community?

From now until March 19, you'll have the opportunity to weigh in and tell us who you believe deserves special recognition. Those who are selected will be honored in our new magazine in Spring 2010.

Nomination forms are available in the ad on page 18 of today's paper, and will run for the next seven weeks. The forms will also be

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### LOCAL | CONGREGATIONS

## BSKI, Shaare Zedek discuss potential merger

BY ELLEN FUTTERMAN & MIKE SHERWIN  
EDITOR & MANAGING EDITOR

Two of St. Louis' three area Conservative congregations are exploring a possible merger, according to the presidents of both Shaare Zedek Synagogue and Brith Shalom Kneseth Israel.

Gary Kodner, President of the Board of Shaare Zedek in University City, said his synagogue and BSKI in Richmond Heights convened a 14-member "joint assessment committee," comprising seven people from each synagogue, which met several times from June to November to evaluate the situation and do a feasibility study.

"Last week we went before the boards of both synagogues to have them vote yes or no as to whether we should continue this process," said Kodner, "and the

decision from both is that we should. So we have sent out letters to members of both congregations, explaining everything that has transpired thus far and what the next steps should be."

Gary Kodner and his brother, Rick Kodner, who is President of the Board of BSKI, each pointed out that a recommendation to merge was not put before the boards. That decision would ultimately be brought before the members of both congregations if and when a "comprehensive negotiation process" results in a recommendation for a merger.

"We have a process in place and we will honor it," said Gary Kodner.

"We wanted this to be completely transparent, completely above board," Rick Kodner added.

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### LOCAL | STATE LEGISLATURE

## Lawmakers, Jewish groups set priorities for legislative session

BY DAVID BAUGHER  
SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT

A challenging budgetary environment is expected to cast a long shadow over the new Missouri legislative session that opened earlier this month, according to both Jewish advocacy groups and area legislators.

"The budget reality in Jefferson City clearly is taking front and center but we still are hopeful that there will be some positive bills," said Darien Arnstein of the National Council of Jewish Women. "We are going to really work to hold the line to keep many important programs funded to the fullest extent possible."

Arnstein, the state public affairs chair for the St. Louis section of the group, said that NCJW had its eye on a number of proposals that could come up between now and the session's end in May. Several health initiatives have gained the organization's support, such as one that would mandate informing parents of sixth-grade girls about the availability of vaccinations for the HPV virus and the virus's connection to cervical cancer.

Other bills NCJW will support include a Senate plan to fund prostate cancer screenings for uninsured men, a House proposal to allow physicians to treat chlamydia and gonorrhea in a patient's partner without an existing doctor/patient relationship, and the Prevention First Act, which aims to curb the spread of sexually transmitted infection and unplanned pregnancy through a package of pro-

grams dealing with issues ranging from sex education to assistance for rape victims.

The group will also oppose a host of proposals primarily related to abortion that Arnstein said are designed to impede access to reproductive care as well as other bills that would attempt to create opt-outs from possible federal health care legislation.

However, Arnstein suspects the General Assembly's primary focus may be directed elsewhere.



Arnstein

"I'm not sure how much time the legislature will be able to focus on any of these bills, either the ones that we think are good or the ones that we are working to oppose," she said. "I think they will be spending an inordinate amount of time trying to put the budget into balance."

### Top local priorities

Gail Wechsler, director of domestic issues and social justice for the Jewish Community Relations Council, agrees that the budget paradigm will be a difficult one.

"The JCRC's legislative priorities will include continuing to support efforts

to increase access to quality affordable health care for all," she said. "We also want to make sure that the budget includes funding for necessary social services in the state, particularly for people with disabilities, the elderly and those in poverty."

Locally, Wechsler said

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Friday, Feb. 5, 5:09 p.m.

Shabbat concludes  
Saturday, Feb. 6, 6:09 p.m.



Visiting Jewish Quebec  
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