

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

(925) 485-1049

Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

CulturalJews@aol.com

<http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/>



Affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Our mission statement: "A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion."

Upcoming Events for April 2012

Sunday, April 1: Jewish Culture School -10:30 a.m. in Castro Valley

Sunday, April 1: Culture Chat/Philosopher's Café. 10:45 AM - 12:15 pm, Cafe Rumi, 4799 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley. Our topic: "What did you learn from your parents? What didn't you learn?"

Wednesday, April 4: Planning meeting, 7 p.m. - 1817 Sinclair Dr. in Pleasanton. All members welcome. Please call 925-485-1049.

Thursday, April 5: Reservation deadline for the seder! If you want to come and have not reserved your spot yet, please call Jamie at 510-888-1404 and let her know you're coming and discuss what you'll bring for the potluck.

Saturday, April 7: Community potluck second seder, 5:00 p.m. at the Bothwell Center, 2466 8th St. in Livermore. We use our non-religious haggadah, sing a lot, and enjoy a potluck dinner. Child-friendly. We will also be collecting non-perishable food for the food bank. This is a great way to introduce friends to our community. Guests and non-members are \$10/adult (over 13). Free to members. Reservations required – see above (April 5).

Saturday, April 14: Family Havdalah at the Coren home, 720 Willow Creek Ter., Brentwood. Please call 925-240-5612. A little ceremony, pizza and hanging out, everyone gets home in time for bed. \$7 for adults, kids eat free.

Sunday, April 22: Jewish Culture School 10:30 a.m. in Castro Valley

Saturday, April 28: Levi Coren's Bar Mitzvah! Levi will present what he has learned; the JCS kids will lead singing. 11 a.m. at the Bothwell Center, 2466 8th St. in Livermore. All welcome, but please let us know you're coming. Please call Kevin and Marisa at 925-240-5612. Non-religious ceremony followed by a vegetarian potluck lunch. Please bring a vegetarian dish for 8 to share.

Pesakh

It doesn't take much critical thinking to see that the Pesakh story, told in Exodus, doesn't hang together. The ancient Hebrews are enslaved in Egypt. The ruler decides to reduce their population. What? Slave owners typically want more, not fewer slaves. Why would they kill the baby boys who could grow up to be strong physical laborers? And then there's the golden calf. When Moses is up the mountain for 40 days, listening to God tell him exactly how the priest's dress should be trimmed, how the ark should be decorated, what kind of animals must be sacrificed on which occasion (this takes about 40 days to describe, actually – it's *long*), Aaron tells the people to take their gold earrings off to make an idol. That's right – the slaves have gold. The story, told several times in Exodus from different perspectives – each with different facts (and again in Deuteronomy), can't be taken seriously as history. What is it good for, if you can't believe it? Well – come to the community second seder and find out the meaning we can draw out of our culture's foundational myth.

Hello From CSJO

In honor of what Sholem Aleichem wrote, and my favorite holiday season, I will quote from my family Hagada... "The wonderful time, the most joyous time of the year has come...the sun is high in the sky...the air is free and fresh, soft and clear. On the hill are the first sprouts of spring grass – tender, quivering, green. With a screech and a flutter of wings a straight line of swallows flies overhead, and I am reminded of the Song of Songs. 'For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing is come.'"

For those of us who live in cold winter climates, this is certainly happily true, and unexpected, at this time of the year! And preparing for Peysakh is not a chore, but an excitement!

CSJO wishes all of our affiliates and associate members a fraylekhen Peysakh...Joyous Passover!!!

All the best,

Rifke

Message from the President

I think Passover has always been my favorite Jewish holiday. Possibly because our seder was more than just a family gathering. I remember my grandparent's house filled with people spanning four generations, with my grandfather leading it and my brother and I next to him as the two youngest, unless my cousins were visiting from Israel. At the time, I'm not sure what I believed religiously, but now, as a Cultural Jew, the memory I have is exactly what is important. It is tradition we had that was important and I will always have that memory. As we have aged, moved on, and moved away, we will never recreate those times we had, but each year we get a chance to create new memories and new traditions.

Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Ed Looney 925-803-0574
Webmasters	Noah King 925-371-8585 Solomon Ireland 510-888-1404
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	Phyllis Looney
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator	– Jamie Ireland
Publicity	open
Movie Coordinator	Wendy Berenson 925-829-0554

Jewish Culture School

Last JCS we studied Jews of Persia. We learned that they were makers of mosaics and we tried our hand at making some of our own. We also learned that the Persian Jews, like those around them, hand-made Persian Rugs. We spent time learning songs for Levi's Bar Mitzvah and the four questions for Passover. The year is flying by as we continue our studies of "Jews around the World."

Mishpokha (family)

April birthdays:

Michelle Coren, Allison Berenson Schiffman,
Jake Peinado and Sam Witters

Yortseits: Regina Seid, Grandmother of Judith Seid

Purim

Our Purim celebration was a smashing success this year, and we'd like to thank a few people for helping to make it possible. Amy Greenberg did all of the pre-festivities shopping for the things we'd need. Carol King made our incredibly tasty hamentashen dough and organized kids' games and crafts, while Solomon Ireland worked with the kids on those crafts. Derek Greenberg baked the hamentashen with a watchful eye on the cook timer, making sure they came out of the oven perfectly. And the Coren family also stayed afterwards and helped clean up the Bothwell Center after we were done.

Also thank you to Noah King for planning this year and for creating the hilarious parody sing-along that told the story.

Movie Night

This month we watched *The Chosen*, a movie based on Chaim Potok's novel of the same name. It follows two young men -- one a member of the Hasidim, the other the son of a reformed Jew -- who become friends in spite of their differences. An insightful conversation that focused on personal opinions of the formation of a Jewish state in the 40's, how we deal with the loss of a loved one, and how people can overlook certain differences in order to get along followed during our potluck dinner. If you'd like to join us for our next movie night, keep your eyes on the newsletter and website for information about when and where you can join us.

Why a Secular Bar Mitzvah?

Watching Levi these past months as he worked on his projects for his bar mitzvah, unwillingly at first and then with more interest as he delved into it, I've had to ask myself, "Why exactly are we putting our kid through this?" Except for being on stage in plays, he hates being the center of attention and didn't even want a 13th birthday party. What kind of parents are we? Fortunately for us, Levi tends to go with the flow and while like any 13 year-old, he doesn't jump at the chance to do extra work, he doesn't fight it either. I've seen some reluctance on his end with each project he started. But then he got into it, found his groove, made it his own, did well and dare I say, actually enjoyed it. His radar for noticing when a director, author, actor, historical figure, etc. is Jewish is more "on" than it had been. He'll say with a source of pride, "did you know that person is Jewish?" Levi is not one to explore new things, he likes his comfort zones. The things he did for his volunteer work, being a camp counselor for five year olds at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, taking our dog to visit the residents at the local convalescent hospital, were definitely outside of his comfort zone. But I've seen the pictures from camp and I saw times at the convalescent hospital when he enjoyed it and more importantly, he saw the positive effects his actions had on others. Without the Bar Mitzvah projects pushing us as a family, I don't think he would have experienced these things. We are very proud of his willingness to try these new things and he's done some pretty darn cool powerpoints.

I am grateful that we were able to find a group that celebrates this side of our kids' heritage without the religious aspects that we are not interested in. They also have Danish, and as my grandmother called it, "Connecticut Yankee" in their heritage as well. Levi's name, after all, is actually from my fourth great-grandfather, whose great-great grandfather fought in the Revolution. I love genealogy and love instilling a curiosity and appreciation for the past generations. I think raising the kids with a Jewish identity gives them something a little more tangible than the Scottish or Italian from my side that is from so long ago. I do wish my 98 year old grandfather, who was raised and bar mitzvahed in a Jewish Orphanage in Philadelphia, but doesn't give a hoot for religion, could make it in April. He's planning to fly from Connecticut to California for three weeks in August, and we'll see him then. I think he'd appreciate the simplicity of the ceremony, the continuation of a tradition that goes back generations. In the end, in some ways, I realize that this is what this bar mitzvah is about -- it is, simply put, tradition, and that's okay.

We hope to see you there ~ Marisa (mom)

Supplies Needed for Women's Recovery Program

The Magnolia Women's Recovery Program recently received a grant to have a room added onto their house to be used as a therapeutic play room. They've just finished it! However, we have very little to put in it just yet in the way of furniture, storage, and toys. This room will be used for family therapy.

We would so appreciate the following items:

- *Gently used book shelves that are no higher than 3 shelves tall. Nice wooden ones as opposed to plastic stackables, etc.
- * Two cushiony, nice chairs for adults attending family therapy.
- *A small wooden desk for a small space for paperwork, etc.
- *A small locked file cabinet of some kind to keep art supplies locked up when not in use, or play therapy toys that aren't appropriate for all children.
- *Small wooden toddler or preschool size bike that doesn't have pedals
- *Toddler push and pull toys, preferably wooden
- *Fluffy blankets, quilts, and sitting cushions for our Mommy and Me infant massage groups.
- *Child size chairs for art work at a table. 3-4
- *Toy storage shelves with titled bins (it's ok if the bins are plastic).
- *Wooden doll house with multicultural doll house dolls.
- *Baby dolls representing different ethnic groups - 3-4
- *Small child size circular table.
- *Wooden toy food.
- *Soft infant books, rattles, and other infant toys (preferably not plastic)
- *As always, art supplies for both parent's art therapy, and the kids' art work.

Thank you!

Kathryn Winogura

Coordinator, Volunteer Services

Jewish Family & Children's Services of the East Bay

1855 Olympic Blvd. #200 Walnut Creek, CA 94596

2484 Shattuck Ave., Ste. 210 Berkeley, CA 94704

(510) 704-7475 or (925) 927-2000 -- ex. 529

kwinogura@jfcs-eastbay.org

www.jfcs-eastbay.org

San Francisco Bay Area Monthly LGBTQ Mixer

Come join us **April 11th, from 6:30-8:30** for the **Jewish LGBTQ monthly Bay Area mixer at Blush**, a nice quiet wine bar with cozy decor and cool ambience in the Castro. Every 2nd Wednesday come make some friends, and catch up with old ones. Although it is a no-host bar, we will have 25% off glasses of wine and a reserved table in the back.

A big thank you to Congregation Emanu-El, Sha'ar Zahav, Jewish Federation's LGBT Alliance, Nehirim, A Wider Bridge, Keshet and Be'chol Lashon.

The address for Blush Wine Bar is: 476 Castro Street
(between 18th St & Market St) - Questions? contact us dakotta@jewishlgbtnetwork.com

DID YOU KNOW.... You can now choose to "follow" the TVCJ website/blog and automatically receive email notifications and updates whenever we add new and important information. To do so, simply visit our site at <http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/> and click on the "Follow" button in the lower right hand corner. You'll be prompted to enter an email address. That's all there is to it, and from now on you'll never miss an important update again.

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews
1817 Sinclair Drive
Pleasanton, CA 94588

