

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

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Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

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<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 January and February 2014

January

Wednesday January 8, 7:00 pm: TVCJ Planning Meeting. 1817 Sinclair Drive in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

Sunday, January 5, 10:30 am-12:30 pm: Jewish Culture School, at the Ireland's, Castro Valley.

Sunday, January 5, 10:45 am-12:15 pm: Philosphers' Café/Culture Chat 10:45 AM - 12:15 pm, Cafe Rumi, 4799 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley. This month's topic: "What is the role of the secular Jew in the Arab/Israeli conflict?"

Saturday, January 11, 4 pm – 7 pm: General Havdalah and Movie Night, everyone welcome, 795 Meadowlark St, Livermore. A little ceremony, pizza, a movie for grown-ups, and a movie for kids. \$7.00 for adults. Please respond to the evite or call 925-485-1049.

Sunday, January 19, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm: Tu B'Shevat hike and potluck: Los Vaqueros Reservoir, 19 Walnut Blvd Brentwood. John Muir Interpretive Center Phone # 925-240-2440

February

Wednesday February 5, 7:00 pm: TVCJ Planning Meeting. 1817 Sinclair Drive in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

Sunday, February 2, 10:30 am-12:30 pm: Jewish Culture School, at the Ireland's, Castro Valley.

Sunday, February 2, 10:45 am-12:15 pm: Philosphers' Café/Culture Chat 10:45 am - 12:15 pm, Cafe Rumi, 4799 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley. This month's topic: "Can Judaism survive without a strong Orthodox community?"

Saturday, February 8, 6 pm – 8 pm: Havdalah, everyone welcome. At the Coren Home, 720 Willow Creek Ter, Brentwood. A little ceremony, pizza, \$7.00 for adults. Please respond to the evite or call 510-888-1404.

Sunday, February 16, 10:30-12:30: Jewish Culture School, at the Ireland's, Castro Valley.

Message from the President

The Duck Dynasty/Phil Robertson controversy has me thinking about a few things. I don't care about the show, but his bigoted comments bother me. Many have defended his right to make these comments, but there are still consequences. I feel some of the people defending his right to free speech have been intentionally vague about what they are actually defending. Some disagree with him, but defend his right to make the statement; others are not so much defending the constitution as much as looking for a way to find support for their bigoted views. I guess that is the price we pay for our freedoms.

But, on the other hand, some feel that he should face no consequences for his views. He made those statements fully aware of what he was saying and should not be able to hide behind the 1st amendment to avoid taking responsibility for what he said. Does that mean he should lose his job? Paula Deen lost her job as host of a cable TV show when she admitted to using the "n-word" years before. I believe she even apologized, but I don't think she enjoyed the same kind of support Phil Robertson received and she didn't get her job back either. Would Phil Robertson have had the same kind of support if his comments were directed toward African Americans instead of homosexuals? I think not.

The other part of this that really bothers me is his use of the bible in defending his views. I'm not sure why some people think that they can be hateful and discriminatory if they can find a bible verse that they interpret to support their views.

Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404 Ya'el Seid-Green
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612
Webmaster	Noah King 925-371-8585
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	open
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator	– Amy Greenberg
Publicity	open
Movie Coordinator	Wendy Berenson 925-829-0554

TVCJ Thespians

Congratulations to Ella and Adam King for their performances in the Nutcracker!

Break a Leg Emma Greenberg who is performing in the GPA production of Oliver! on January 12th.

Break a Leg Levi Coren who sings "Master of the House" and "Edelweiss" among others in Brentwood Teen Theater's An Evening on Broadway, January 31/Feb. 1.

Mishpokha (Family)

Birthdays

Happy January and February birthdays to Jacky Poulson, Albert Rothman, Tom Green, Kevin Coren, Marisa Castaldini, Levi Coren, and Derek Greenberg

Yortseits

In January we remember Goldie Chavenson, mother of Deborah Grossman.

Thoughts on Tu B'shvat

Jamie Ireland

As we are coming upon Tu B'shvat I am reminded of the first Tu B'shvat seder I attended. It was in my last year at college which also happened to be the first year I got involved with Hillel at SDSU. We were all sitting around a few long tables, talking about the changing of the seasons and how the wine in the cups changes, and tasting the different species of fruit from Israel thinking about how we need to take care of our earth. This holiday was tailor-made for me as I love science and nature, and one of my favorite things to do with people is to sit and eat with them. (That is evident in my other favorite holidays--Passover and Thanksgiving.) So began my love of this Jewish holiday, which up until then was Jewish Arbor Day and planting trees in Israel--which I didn't have much connection to. And ever since, this holiday has become more relevant to me and my life, here and now, giving me another excuse to get out in nature, to talk about ecology, and to eat with my friends. What a wonderful way to express our Jewishness!



The World of Podcasts

Carol King

At my house, we are Podcast People. This is, of course, a far cry from pod people, although we will attempt to make you one of us. We listen to podcasts while exercising, driving, doing chores, and suffering from insomnia. Podcasts are a fun way to stay caught up on your favorite news and entertainment programs, hear great stories, and even learn something new.

You can search for podcasts in the iTunes store, or there are several downloadable apps (both free and non-free) available for iOS or Android. Once you subscribe, they will download automatically to your smart phone, iPod, or tablet, usually about once a week. You can also download past episodes. Don't forget that even the finest shows can have a dud once in a while, so it's good to give them a second chance to win you over. Here are a few of our regulars:

From NPR (much easier to listen to at our own convenience):

This American Life: Amazingly well-researched, detailed, entertaining stories. Hands down, the best radio program-turned-podcast out there. "Squirrel Cop" is our favorite story ever.

Freakonomics: By the authors of the book. I would call it "economics made interesting" if I wasn't afraid of offending someone. Maybe everyday economics for the layman?

Fresh Air with Terry Gross: Beware – it can be hard to stay caught up on this one, as the podcasts pour in and then stop if you don't get to them within a few days.

Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me!: A quiz show about the week's news. Paula Poundstone's rants about "so-called studies" are not to be missed.

Non-NPR:

The Moth: People telling stories from their own lives, performed on stage around the country.

Snap Judgment: Also stories performed live on stage, but by performers - more produced with sound effects.

Radiolab: Creative stories about science and big ideas. (Also shows up on NPR, but we discovered it as a podcast first.)

Star Talk: Neil Degrasse Tyson talks science, usually with a couple of comedians and some famous folk call-ins. Timely science talk made fun (we think Neil can be a little self-aggrandizing sometimes, but he's probably earned it).

The Ted Radio Hour: If you're familiar with Ted Talks, this puts them together around a theme, with interviews of the speakers.

Point of Inquiry: This is an interview with a journalist, author or scientist. It's not nearly the glossy, well-produced podcast as all of the above, but I still have to recommend it because it's so engaging and I always learn something new.

The Thinking Atheist: A former Christian radio broadcaster who saw the error of his ways and now hosts a radio program for other heathens. He speaks to my frustration of the religious world. Sounds like home-produced talk radio. The host talks to a variety of authors, etc. from the atheist movement.

Be warned – podcasts can be a bit addictive. We get a bit cranky when we're done listening for the week and have to wait for new ones. This is not the complete list of what we listen to, and not even close to what's out there and recommended – try a Google of "best podcasts" and start experimenting.



Michelle Coren

To get my volunteer hours for my Bat Mitzvah I signed up with H.A.R.P, homeless animals' response program. I help set up kitten cages and I hang out with the dogs. All the animals that are up for adoption are strays that are fostered. All animals are spayed/neutered and are up to date with shots. After a few weeks of volunteering we decided to foster kittens. So far we have fostered 6 kittens and 4 have been adopted. We have Lucy and Lotus now. All the kittens we have fostered have come between 6 and 12 weeks. Lucy is 15-16 weeks and Lotus is 6-7 weeks. I go to all the adoptions with the kittens and the first time one of the kittens got adopted, Armani, I thought it was going to be hard but I realized that she was going to a good home and there are lots more kittens out to foster. Cookie, Armani's sister (not littermate), got adopted a few weeks later. We got Frederick in those few weeks and they were best friends. Frederick got adopted soon after. Jeremy and Lucy, our next batch, were found in someone's backyard and Jeremy got adopted 12/28. We got Lotus the next day and we have been fostering those two girls. Every time I show up at adoptions it counts towards my hours so I will probably be done soon. But I will continue. 😊

Ella King

For my Bat Mitzvah I chose to do four big projects. My first project, which I completed a while ago, is an essay on Jews in the ballet. I chose and researched four different famous Jewish artists: Alicia Markova, Jerome Robbins, Marc Chagall, and Aaron Copland. I just finished my second project in school, choosing a research topic in our study of Ancient Egyptians. I wrote an essay on the enslavement of the Israelites, including the story of Passover and Moses, among other things. I turn twelve in a couple days, so that means I am allowed to start volunteering for shifts at Open Heart Kitchen, a Tri-Valley organization that helps feed needy people. I am looking forward to volunteering at the Livermore library soon, as well as reading my Torah portion. I can't wait until my Bat Mitzvah!

Exhibit coming to Museum on Main

Excerpted from The Pleasanton Weekly:

The Museum on Main's next exhibit, opening Jan. 8, is "Multiply by Six Million: Portraits and Stories of Holocaust Survivors," showcasing photographer Evvy Eisen's histories of Holocaust survivors living in California.

The Pleasanton museum is bringing the exhibit even closer to home by adding photographs and stories from Tri-Valley residents whose families were impacted by the Holocaust. The museum is still looking for people to share their stories.

If you or someone you know has a story to share, contact Museum on Main by emailing education@museumonmain.org.

"Multiply by Six Million" was organized and toured by Exhibit Envoy; it will be at the Museum on Main from Jan. 8 through Feb. 28. For more information, visit www.museumonmain.org or phone 462-2766.

The museum is located at 603 Main St., open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1-4 p.m.

A note from Idit Klein, Executive Director, Keshet

With a heavy heart I write today to share the news of the passing of a personal hero, friend, and giant of the Jewish community, Edgar M. Bronfman.

I first met Edgar when I was 16 years old, a few months after returning from the Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel, a program that Edgar created. I shook his hand in a posh, paneled room in what was then the Seagram's Building. I watched his eyes light up as my friends and I told him how our time together in Israel had transformed our lives.

Edgar was a leader who used his power for profound good in the world. Among his many accomplishments: he led the fight to secure more than a billion dollars in restitution from Swiss banks for Holocaust victims and their heirs, he campaigned for Soviet Jewry during the Cold War, he provided the funding to launch MyJewishLearning.com, and as president of The Samuel Bronfman Foundation, he provided crucial support for Keshet and many other important causes in the Jewish world and beyond.

Edgar was also someone for whom doing the right thing was obvious and intuitive. He embodied human dignity, and had an unshakable commitment to the dignity of others. I will never forget one story he told me years ago:

In the early 1970's when he was the CEO of the Seagram Company, the director of human resources marched into his office and recommended that he fire one of the brightest executives at the company. The HR director revealed, in a hushed tone, that the young man was "a homosexual." So Edgar did what he had to do. He fired the HR director!

I told him how moved I was that he took a stand for the gay employee, especially during an era when many LGBT people did not feel safe to be out. His response delights me to this day: "Of course I fired him. Why on earth would I have fired the other guy?"

He didn't share this story publicly until June of this year, when he penned an op-ed in support of equal marriage. I will always be awed by this man, who stood up for the LGBT community, not because he had a vested interest in it, but simply because discrimination in any form was not to be tolerated. He was a true ally and inspiration.

On behalf of the Board and Staff of Keshet, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Edgar's family, the staff of The Samuel Bronfman Foundation, and his broad network of friends and colleagues. I know that I join countless others all over the world who mourn the loss of this extraordinary soul. May his memory be a blessing.

B'Shalom

Events: keshetonline.org Keshet 290 Dolores Street | San Francisco, CA

01/11/14 Generation to Generation, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, *San Francisco*

The Q: The Queer Teen Group at the [JCCSF](#), in collaboration with Keshet, is hosting an inter-generational LGBTQ dinner at [Congregation Sha'ar Zahav](#)

1/19/14 Tu B'shvat in the Redwoods, Roberts Regional Recreation Area, *Oakland*

Keshet is excited to be celebrating Tu B'shvat with our friends at [Wilderness Torah!](#) Keshet's own David Robinson will be leading a queer teaching

01/21/14 Keshet Silicon Valley Inclusion Training, Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley, *Los Gatos*

A training to help leaders of Silicon Valley Jewish organizations begin their journey of creating more LGBT inclusive organizations.

02/06/14 Screening and Panel Discussion of *Bully*, Oshman Family JCC Palo Alto. A free screening of *Bully* followed by a thought-provoking panel discussion (including Keshet's own David Robinson), and separate teen discussion lead by experts in the fields of bullying and counseling. This event is for teens (ages 13+) and adults

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