

SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April 23-25, 2010

BOARD FOLLOW-UP

It was a stellar board meeting, particularly from the standpoint of bonding, participation, and solidarity. I'm sorry some of you couldn't be there. I came home tired but very much up, and I hope everyone at the meeting did, too. There's so much work for us to do!

Here is a list of items, gleaned from my notes from the April 2010 meeting of the SHJ board. While they are by no means official or draft minutes, they nevertheless reflect the key items of what you as board members are asked both to inform your communities and to enlist information and participation from your communities. In this way we can work together to cement a strong awareness of, understanding of, and working relationship between the Society and all affiliates. The goal is a stronger, more vibrant movement

We hope that communities will be intrigued by the fact that individuals with a total of 623 years of experience and connection to Humanistic Judaism as members of the Society participated in the April 2010 SHJ board meeting.

Secular Coalition for America:

President Lou Altman reported on the benefits of the Society's membership in the Secular Coalition for America (www.secular.org), which is dedicated to making non-theists more visible and to working on issues related to separation of church and state.

Five members of the Society participated with the Secular Coalition for America in a recent **White House briefing**. The topics covered were:

- 1) Coercive religious climate in the military;
- 2) Amending the current executive orders, regulations, and guidance materials related to the Faith-Based Initiative to ensure that government federal tax dollars fund only secular activities, as well as the withdrawal of a 2007 legal memo regarding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act; and
- 3) Ending privileging of religion in child abuse and child care laws.

Speaking about SCA, Bonnie Cousens added that board members are asked to help educate community members about the Coalition and request that they help support the Coalition on behalf of SHJ, which is not permitted to contribute to a non-tax-deductible organization. Members can do this by sending the Society their donation checks made out to the Secular Coalition for America (SCA); the Society will forward all such checks to the SCA to ensure that all SHJ donations are credited toward our \$2,500 membership obligation.

Amicus Briefs:

The Society is invited, from time to time, to participate in amicus briefs on various issues. In March, the Society joined in filing an amicus brief in support of the City of Philadelphia in a lawsuit filed by the Boy Scouts of America protesting the city's decision to charge them fair market rent for government-owned property, due to their discriminatory policies against nontheists and non-heterosexuals.

SHJ Pooled Income Fund:

Please remind your communities of the SHJ Pooled Income Fund as a way of creating endowment funds for both the Society and an individual's local community. Information about the PIF is regularly available in *Humanorah*, the Society's newsletter, and also from Bert Steinberg and Bonnie Cousens.

Executive Director, Bonnie Cousens and Rabbi Miriam Jerris's written reports included in the board packet, represent much of what is going on in the Society. They will be posted on GroveSite, as important starting places for information.

Rabbi Jerris suggested that each community could benefit from creating a **Facebook page**, which can link to the Society's page. These make useful outreach tools. AJ Chalom has offered to help guide any interested communities in setting up Facebook pages. Please email her: aj@hujews.org.

GroveSite:

The Society for Humanistic Judaism Resources for Congregations website, hosted on GroveSite, has the following login page which can be bookmarked for easy access:

<http://grovesite.com/secure/login.asp?o=shj&s=pub&m=login>,

GroveSite now holds the entire board manual, as well as an increasing amount of other resources, including newsletters and ceremonies, board reports, and minutes. Board members, affiliate board members, and all educators are eligible for access to GroveSite. Please share your community's ads and other materials on GroveSite. Need access to GroveSite, contact Jennifer Grodsky, jennifergrodsky@shj.org

Regarding GroveSite, Lou Altman reminded the board of the care that must be taken with **copyright and permission** in posting anything on the internet, even on this private site. Look for guidelines coming soon that will clearly describe how to handle copyrighted material legally when resources are posted on the internet. These guidelines will be made available for the board manual and therefore on GroveSite.

Guidelines for Affiliating with the SHJ:

The SHJ Board approved New Affiliate Guidelines, which will provide increased support and connection to members seeking to found new SHJ affiliates. (See attached report.)

Humanistic Jewish Role Model for 2010-11:

The board selected **Jonas Salk** to be the Humanistic Jewish Role Model for 2010-11. Background material will be forthcoming for use in learning about and celebrating him. Materials will be posted on GroveSite. The committee said they welcome suggestions for consideration in future years.

Community Service Month:

Please remind your communities that again this year **Community Service Month** will be held during the month of Heshvan, October 9-November 7, 2010. Suggestions for coordinating community service activities during this time will be sent out well in advance.

Public Libraries:

Are books about Humanistic Judaism and by Humanistic Jewish writers available in your local public libraries? An easy project is to ask your members to go to the library to ask for specific books, e.g., *Good Without God*. The intent is to motivate the library to order such books to meet our requests and thus to be available in the library. Please publicize this idea in your community newsletters and other communications.

Press Releases and Promotional Materials:

Sample press releases have been included in the board manual, but additional resources are always needed. Please ask your community to send publicity materials to Cornell Jaray for posting on GroveSite and thus for sharing. In addition, the Society can create media lists for communities and assist in the creation of camera-ready ads.

Photos:

The photos taken during the board meeting by Cary Shaw are available from the SHJ for communities to use not only for publicity purposes but also to help local affiliates understand the activities of the board.

Programming resource:

Check out vimeo.com -- <http://vimeo.com/libraryshj>. Through the generosity of the Milan Foundation, Vimeo, an online video library, contains a developing list of classes by Rabbinic Candidate Natan Fuchs, both Bible study and history.

Educators' Email Group:

Please remind school directors to send the names of departing teachers to be deleted from the educators' email group to Deb Godden, and then as replacement teachers are secured, to send their names and email addresses for adding to the email group.

Pen Pal Project:

To help connect children with one another before they become eligible as young teens for youth group and conclave activities, the Education Committee has been offering a pen pal project over the last couple of years. Please ask your school directors about how they are making use of this resource. The idea is to create ever-increasing bonds between the young people in our movement, bonds that will sustain over a life time: Humanistic Jewish continuity.

Sunday School Curriculum/Models Survey:

The Education Committee is looking to develop a comparison of Sunday school frameworks or themes to help schools plan curriculum and program. GroveSite already holds topic-related bibliographies, which the committee will look to expand for pre-school through grade 7. Please let school directors know they will be asked to help with this comparison study. A guide for connecting Humanistic Judaism concepts to the wider school topics and themes, particularly for younger children is in the planning. Rabbi Jerris has posted children's services in the Holidays section. These will be made available also through the Education section of the library.

Possible National Ethical Concerns Issue:

Please be on the lookout for what might become a national issue: the right of individuals in public schools to wear religious garments.

Fundraising:

More than 200 fund raising phone calls to members were made during the board meeting weekend, with the result that more than \$15,000 in pledges was raised for our 2010-2011 Annual Campaign. We learned that seventy percent of all non-profit income is from individuals; only 9% comes from foundations. Only fifty percent of the

SHJ budget is met by assessment and dues. The balance of our operating expenses must be raised through donations.

Youth and Young Adults:

Please share the HuJews Youth/Young Adult written report (attached), distributed during the board meeting, with local community leaders, including school directors. It also will be uploaded to GroveSite.

2011 HuJews Conclave:

The 2011 HuJews Conclave for Teens and College Students will take place in Chicago, March 25-27, 2011. The theme will be “What Can You Do, HuJew?: Tikkun Olam/Social Responsibility in Humanistic Judaism.” The main thing that makes Conclave work is community support and community encouragement of teens to attend, at least the first time. Conclave attendance is for ages 13 (minimum 8th grade, post-mitzvah) to 22. There is some scholarship money available. Some local communities pay the registration fees and also help teens raise money to pay expenses. Some Jewish Federations have scholarships to enable teens to attend conferences, so communities should help connect their teens to this resource. SHJ sends every mitzvah student a \$25 discount certificate to help pay for their first Conclave. Seasoned teens and young adults are willing to make contact with prospective new teens.

A Conclave video is being developed for use in communities to educate teens and their parents about the value of Conclave. Board members should use this resource to generate interest in youth activities.

High School Graduates?

Please get permission from teens who are graduating from high school and going on to college to provide their names and email addresses to SHJ so that SHJ outreach materials can be sent to them at college and SHJ also can our youth when they are attending the same school. Please remind parents that student memberships (\$25/year) are available; students receive all publications sent to adult members plus holiday gift packages. Many of our movement college students find these packets invaluable when they receive them, and some use the materials to educate their Jewish friends about Humanistic Judaism – valuable for retention as well as outreach.

Unity Conference 2013:

SHJ is participating in an exploratory committee to determine interest in a Unity Conference that would bring together humanist and nontheistic organizations to be held either in April or October of 2013 either in Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. Rabbi Jerris is SHJ’s representative on this committee; if you would like additional information, please contact her.

Future Meeting Dates:

The dates of future board meetings appear on every agenda. Please save these dates and put them on your community calendars. Some of these meetings may be held in conjunction with other movement events (Unity Conference, Colloquium). Changes in dates and locations will be announced well in advance.

- A. Fall Board Meeting - October 21-24, 2010 -- Detroit
- B. Spring Board Meeting - April 28-May 1, 2011-- Detroit
- C. Fall Board Meeting - October 27-30, 2011 -- Detroit
- D. Spring Board Meeting - April 26-29, 2012 -- Detroit
- E. Fall Board Meeting - October 25-28, 2012 -- Detroit
- F. Spring Board Meeting - April 25-28, 2013 – Detroit