

Remarks from Rick

Rick Concoff, Director Teen Program, Jewish Community Center, Sonoma County

Wow, what a year for Jewish teens in Sonoma County. This has been a great season for our teen programs with many successful dinner gatherings and discussions, great events, campout, Shabbatons, progressive dinner, teen-run Purim Carnival, Talent Evening and more. We thank all of the participants and parents for support of this program, and look forward to another year of great time together. Our teens are currently busy initiating their own Social Action committee and agenda for next year, and a couple of them have been asked to take seats on the synagogue Social Action committee. Some of our students went to a Jewish Teen Conference in Boston. A junior spent a semester studying in Israel. One of our teens created a video of **Lillian Judd**, a synagogue member who has an incredible story of surviving the Shoah. Lillian and her family were honored by our State Assembly in Sacramento at a House session. Our teen groups in the South County, Shorashim and Sonoma Valley Jewish teens continued to meet, and share and celebrate. The year was topped off when over one hundred from our community attended Jewish Heritage Night for the Oakland A's, and

watched our own teen choir perform the National Anthem. Our closing event was a countywide Maccabiah at Camp Newman!

On May 6 we celebrated the graduation of our Senior Class which included 24 seniors, most of those in the original B'nai Mitzvah group. Students gave insightful speeches and the congregation enjoyed a spirited service led by **Rabbi Gittleman** at Shomrei Torah. These students are headed for fabulous futures. The JCC Teen Program will continue to serve Jewish teens from all over the county for years to come, thanks to the support of many organizations and individuals in our community. Thanks to all of the rabbis and spiritual leaders for supporting our program with added wisdom. Thanks to the Chaverim Committee and Chairperson **Deborah Cutler** for another year of support. Finally, thanks for a fantastic job to my colleague, our assistant program director, **Taryn Omran**, who will be moving on to new and exciting adventures after June! Yasher Koach!

Have a great summer.

Protective Bubble Blessing for Teens and Young Adults

- Love yourself while acknowledging the gift of the other.
- Express the gratitude that lives in you to others at every opportunity.
- Ask the right questions before making a decision.
- Own, remedy and fix your mistakes, and then go on.
- Forgive and see the good in those around you. Be willing to offer redemption to yourself and others.
- Be accepting and grateful for small, benign afflictions.
- It could always be worse.
- Dance, sing, laugh, rejoice and celebrate often! Don't forget to cry once and awhile too.
- Practice the religion of "yes and no." Realize that almost everything that comes to you or from you involves saying yes and no at the right time. Think and ask the right questions before every decision, and then go forward with steadfastness. (Make sure your first questions is, "Is this a right thing to do?")
- Acknowledge and feel your sentiment; then listen to your heart.
- Do your best to be truthful, notice and talk about the best in others, and have true equanimity for all.
- Be responsive, reliable, accountable and punctual.
- Before you do or say something negative to someone, ask if it will get a result that is righteous and positive.
- When you are not sure, ask for guidance from "higher places."
- Listen to your dreams, morph them into goals and believe you can make a difference.
- Know that there is a reason for your life, and that it is inherently a "miracle."
- Remember that your body is on loan to your soul, honor it and take care of it.
- Love and regard your family and friends.
- Take care of your loved ones, but don't "caretake".
- Don't try to change others, you can only change yourself.
- If you are going to worry, you might as well pray!
- Never stop growing and learning.
- As the V'ahavta says, "love God." Don't worry about whether or not you believe.

This is a blessing I offered to the graduating teens which seems to capsulize our curriculum in this program. May it apply to all of us. Mindful attention to the advice given here establishes your protection, safety and well being, while allowing for mistakes, lessons and imperfections.
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