Featuring Special Philanthropy Section P26-35



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סתיו תשפ"ב FALL 2021

# CANADA

WE ARE ASSOCIATED is distributed to members of the AHS community, including parents, grandparents, alumni and friends of the school.

ASSOCIATED HEBREW SCHOOLS Hurwich Education Centre Danilack Middle School Kamin Elementary School 252 Finch Avenue West, Toronto, ON M2R 1M9

**Posluns Education Centre** 18 Neptune Drive, Toronto ON M6A 1X1





**COORDINATOR:** Julie Bergman

\*

CONTRIBUTORS: Rachel Albert, Becky Friedman, Ketty Granite, Jessica Kronis, Rella Margolis, Tova Sabeti, Sandy Seider, Sarah Zarnett-Klein DESIGN: BrandBear Strategy + Design PHOTOGRAPHY: AHS staff members

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#### A message from our Head of School & Board President

#### Ora Shulman & Shawn Goldberg

When three-year-olds arrive at our school, we try to imagine the people that they will be as young adults.

In accordance with our vision, we aspire to educate them to respect every human being. We help them to discover their ability to realize their potential in learning anything, to take responsibility for their actions, to be active in their community, to identify with the Jewish People and Jewish heritage, and to value and feel at home with the Hebrew language and the State of Israel.

As students move from Bet Hayeled to elementary school, and from elementary to middle school and beyond, we acknowledge milestones and accomplishments, and focus on the changes that their next stage of development will bring. But let us reflect now instead on the continuity that the supportive and nurturing environment of a familiar, safe place brings. This functions as the basis for creating a feeling of belonging, of resilience, and of adaptability that constitute resources for dealing with transitions, unprecedented

situations, and unexpected scenarios, at school and throughout life in general.

These are some of the things that develop with us from Nursery through to the end of middle school, and that become a part of who we are:

- Values-based education founded in Jewish tradition
- Social-emotional education and development of life skills:

teamwork, openness to different points of view, relating to failure as opportunity, decision-making, taking responsibility, cultivating relationships in school and in the community (both the Jewish community and the community at large)

Encouraging originality, innovation, and creative thinking

...And all of this is imparted in a joyful learning environment!

Within these pages, you will see a sampling of the vibrancy of our community and the excellence that we provide. We are grateful to our generous donors for supporting AHS's culture of giving and making all that you will read about here - and much more! - possible. You will read about our amazing alumni's exploits on gap years in Israel and elsewhere, and about our incredible Board of Governors Chair Emeritus, Gabi Weisfeld z"l; you will read about the groundbreaking outdoor graduation and Legacy projects to recognize milestones with which we closed the 2020-21 academic year, and about the auspicious start to 2021-22, with our new

Maalot Jewish Studies Stream at the Danilack Middle School. Through articles and photos, you will get to know our Board, our PTC, and some of our excellent staff and families. You will learn about the fantastic extracurricular opportunities we offer, and about meaningful in-class opportunities to connect with Israel and with our Jewish identity. With students' thoughts about their goals for the year and a photo retrospective of AHS's history, we will delve deep into what makes us AHS - past, present, and future.

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# Associated's AnnualGeneral Meeting: Coming Together, Sharing in Gratitude

#### **By: Becky Friedman**

On June 8th, AHS's Annual General Meeting was held with reports shared by Shawn Goldberg, President of the Board, and by Head of School, Ora Shulman. While the meeting was virtual, it was attended by many members of the AHS community, including Board Members, faculty, and parents.

Mr. Goldberg praised our Head of School and the entire AHS team for their continued leadership and commitment to upholding academic and ethical standards in the face of all the changes and challenges that the past year and a half have brought. He also thanked outgoing Board Members for their dedication, and welcomed our newest incoming Board Member.

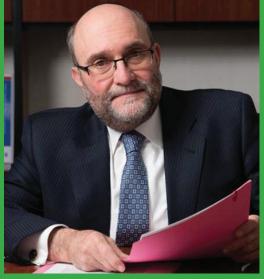
Mrs. Shulman shared a report on current programming at AHS, both academic and extracurricular. She recognized AHS's teaching staff, who rose to the occasion of ensuring that all students continued to be met with an unwavering standard of education, and who have continued to leverage and integrate technology to enhance student learning. Her report included inquiry-based summer learning camps provided at no cost to parents, Bet Hayeled summer get-togethers, virtual community events that reached out to grandparents and alumni, and the Medical Advisory Team composed of parent-experts, who have been supporting the school with their expertise. Both Mr. Goldberg and Mrs. Shulman thanked the Board, the PTC, the faculty and support staff, and the entire AHS community for their dedication, their unity, and their incredible efforts in support of the school.

The Board provided updates on various committees in service of the school, and acknowledged our gratitude to the UJA Federation for their support, including through the new Generations Trust scholarship program.

Mr. Louis Greenbaum, a member of the Board of Governors, delivered a touching tribute to David Wm. Brown, g"l, who passed away in February 2021. Mr. Brown served AHS in many capacities over many years, including as a past President of the Board. He was a dear friend to Associated, and a dedicated and committed volunteer. He showed us all what it means to share time, passion and wisdom. We are all grateful for David's contributions to our school and community.

Many thanks to all who attended the AGM, and we look forward to sharing updates and celebrating even greater highlights, hopefully in person, at next year's AGM.





David Wm. Brown z"l

# Gabi Weisfeld z"l: A Legacy of Friendship and Giving

By: Rella Margolis & Jessica Kronis

While we are all born with the same potential to care for others, Gabi Weisfeld g"l was a special person who truly embodied the spirit of tzedakah, sharing whenever she could to help others. She was truly in a class of her own. We were saddened to hear the news that Gabi passed away Monday, October 18th, 2021 / 12 Cheshvan 5782. Her loss will be deeply felt by the entire Associated community.

A long-time friend and staunch supporter of Associated, Gabi was known for her forthrightness and honesty. She was a person who stood strong in her convictions, and worked hard to turn her visions into reality.

Gabi served on the Associated Board of Directors for decades, and was appointed Chair of the AHS Board of Governors. Gabi served as a dedicated and valued member of the Scholarship & Endowment Committee, and was also on the former education committee, Va'ad Hachinuch.

Born in Germany in the 1930's, Gabi's parents had the oresight to leave and relocate to Palestine, where Gabi was a member of the Haganah and fought in the War of Independence. She then moved to the United States and eventually settled in Canada. As a young widowed school teacher, she met her second husband, Louis Weisfeld g"l in 1971. Louis was involved with many charitable institutions and philanthropic endeavours, and it was he who introduced Gabi to AHS. Gabi fell in love with Associated and joined the Board of Directors.

Philanthropy played an enormous role in Gabi's life. She was a major donor and annual supporter of Associated, as she was for many other charitable organizations. Gabi established a number of Endowment Funds at our school, and was a dedicated Associated ambassador.

Gabi had a deep passion for Jewish education and was a powerful supporter of our school. She cared deeply about equitable access to Jewish education, and took great joy over the years in joining the Bet Hayeled in their Rosh Chodesh celebrations. In Gabi's words, "there is nothing more important than the future of our community, and the future of our community sits in the school system".

Her legacy at Associated will live on through her five grandchildren who are AHS Alumni: Reuven '04, Alissa '09, Devin '07, Arieh '13 and Mati '16 Abrahami.

The Associated community is grateful to have had Gabi's friendship and strong example of leadership, dedication, and commitment to helping others. She will be deeply missed.

#### Experiencing Associated By: Tova Sabeti

There is nothing like coming to pick up our children from a day filled with learning and love, seeing not only our own children with their bright faces, but the familiarity of other parents feeling that same pull to our school. The energy in the air fills the parking lots with this intense ruach, a feeling of belonging, a feeling of community. Over the past year, we have missed the sounds of mass chatter and laughter. We have missed the sights of kids high-fiving and fist-bumping their friends and their teachers.

The pandemic has brought classrooms into homes all across the world, and more than ever, families have become ultra-aware of our educational options. Through virtual schooling, students were not the only ones that were part of the classroom learning, as parents, grandparents, siblings and nannies all became learners in the shared spaces. For our 2021/2022 school year, families are choosing Associated not only for our mission and values, but for the peak education and community.

My absolute favourite part of parent engagement is bringing prospective families into our school for in-person tours, and having them experience the learning in real-time, along with the students and the teachers, unravelling critical thinking and hearing curiosity at its core. As of March 2020, that first step into our learning and those precious in-person experiences, needed to be adapted. Over the course of this past year, we have adapted our exploration of our campuses by using two main methods to have families feel as though they have "experienced the school" without even setting foot inside the buildings. In addition to offering 360° online virtual tours, we have also been holding personal virtual tours, which closely mimic our in-person tour experience. Over Zoom, prospective families have an intimate and interactive experience inside the classes and shared spaces to be immersed in the learning happening before their eyes.

Hearing the gratitude from new families is always rewarding. "This is a huge parenting leap of faith and you helped make the decision so easy, even though we have not been in the space where our children will be every day," one prospective parent shared. Another told me, "There is definitely a special feeling at AHS, even over the screen." By adapting to our new world, and allowing the broader community to have a glimpse into our hallways and classrooms, we have showcased ourselves in a way that we never thought possible. We hope that in the near future we will be seeing many more families back in our buildings, but until that time, we continue to adapt, innovate and use technology thoughtfully to shine a light on our vibrant school community.

For a virtual tour of our schools, please visit https://www.associatedhebrewschools.com/virtual-tour

# PTC Chair: Esther Rozenblit, A Model of Volunteering By: Jessica Kronis

Under the leadership of Esther Rozenblit, the PTC has been providing fun, community-driven events that bring people together in creative ways, playing a vital role for our students and families and providing an incredible source of pride and stability for the entire AHS community.

Esther and her team didn't miss a beat when confronted with stringent COVID protocols, and pivoted to offer the inaugural AHS drive-in movie in August of 2020. The event was a huge hit, selling out and filling our property with families who watched the films from their cars, safe and together. The event was so popular that the PTC organized a Drive-in Movie again this year.

PTC volunteers play a vital role in our school operations. We are fortunate to have the PTC coordinate the hot lunches program and the textbook store, providing students with a delicious lunch during the school day, and alleviating stress so that parents are able to order books and supplies in the summer while fundraising for our AHS.

#### Q: Did anything unexpected happen as a result of COVID protocols that had a positive outcome?

A: Esther Rozenblit: COVID forced us, the PTC, to think outside the box, as traditionally all our events, fundraisers and activities were in-person. Everything from lunches to cookie dough to family events and even our comedy night had to be rethought. It took a team effort between the committee, the school, various vendors, and our amazing community to make it all work. As a result, we became more creative, more resourceful and more adaptive.



Some of the creative fundraising solutions offered by the PTC included a Comedy night featuring comedian Jessica Kirson with a kosher meal delivery, the addition of holiday gift boxes for Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah and Purim, along with the launch of spirit wear. The PTC virtual 90's Trivia Night was so successfully promoted that it concluded with an impromptu costume contest as many participants took dressing up to heart and really embraced the 90's theme, it was a blast.

#### **Q:** Of what event/initiative/program are you the proudest?

A: Esther Rozenblit: I am proud of all the events, initiatives, and programs run by the PTC. I am even prouder of our dedicated committee and our enthusiastic ad-hoc volunteers. We were unsure about everything last year, as COVID was affecting every aspect of our lives. Instead of giving up, our team did just the opposite. We started new and sustainable initiatives, opportunities to fundraise, and to engage our community, with regular holiday offerings, Comedy night, Trivia night, and Drive-in Movie nights.

Thank you to Esther and all of the PTC volunteers for your hard work, dedication and commitment to creative innovation. You have helped the Associated community flourish by remaining connected and engaged.

#### Israel Bound By: Julie Bergman

This Fall, a large number of grade 12 graduates ventured to Israel to enjoy a year (or more) of studying in Israel. A record 17 of those graduates are AHS alumni. We asked several of the students where they will be studying and their reasons for going. Here are their stories along with their favourite AHS memories:



I am learning in yeshiva at the Gesher Program at Aish HaTorah in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. I chose to spend a year learning in the centre of the Jewish world, directly across from the Kotel, to connect myself to the true depth of our shared heritage. Though there are a lot of memories from my time at Associated that I fondly recall, like the school musical- The Lion King and the 7th grade Shabbaton, having my bar mitzvah at the morning minyan is something I will certainly never forget.



I am studying at Yeshivat Hakotel in Jerusalem. I am in Israel for a gap year to apply my Jewish education in a real life setting and to continue my Jewish learning at a higher level. My favourite memory from Associated is the grade 7 Shabbaton



I am studying at Kivun, World Bnei Akiva, in Jerusalem. I am choosing to go to Israel because I believe it is important for all Jews, especially young Jews, to foster a profound connection with our ancestral homeland. Israel is such a culturally and historically rich country, and being able to live there for a year and absorb all of the tremendous experiences is truly a gift. Lag Ba'Omer color wars were definitely a highlight of my time at AHS.



I am attending Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem followed by IDC in Herzliya. I am looking forward to growing and learning in the holy land for the next three years. My favourite memory from AHS was starting up many new clubs, whether it be news or theatre related.

#### We wish you many meaningful and memorable experiences!



I am studying at a seminary called Baer Miriam in Har Nof, Jerusalem. I am craving a year in Israel to immerse myself in torah learning and mitzvot in order to connect with my Jewish roots and enjoy a year surrounded by Judaism before stepping into the diversity of university. It is difficult to pick just one special AHS memory. I especially loved the grad trip in Ottawa and the Shabbatons!



I am currently studying at Midreshet Torah V'Avoda in Jerusalem. The program includes chessed each week, tiyuls to learn and experience Israel, and special programming including a Poland trip, Kibbutz, teaching English in a development village, and internships. I am choosing to go to Israel to further my knowledge and love for Judaism and Israel, gain new life skills and experiences, meet new people, and challenge myself by stepping out of my comfort zone to try new things. My favourite memories from AHS include Lag Ba'Omer, the grade 5 Sukkah Sleepover, and the grade 7 Shabbaton.



I am studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion in the town of Alon Shvut in the Gush Etzion Bloc. I am choosing to go to Israel for a gap year in order to learn about and connect to my Jewish roots and heritage in the land of our forefathers and people. My favourite memory from Associated is the grade 7 Shabbaton.



I am studying at Midreshet Torah V'avodah in Jerusalem. I decided to go on a gap year because it is an amazing opportunity to grow as a person before starting university. I have always wanted to live in Israel, and I want to learn more about Israeli society and culture in a hands-on way. I am excited to experience Israel as a local and to feel even more connected to the land and the people of Israel! My favourite memories from Associated are the sukkah sleepover in grade 5, the Grade 7 Shabbaton, and gym class with Mr. J!

#### **Teacher Spotlight** DARA INDIG By: Julie Bergman

They say there is strength in numbers. No one agrees more than Dara Indig, the head of Danilack's math department. An AHS graduate ('00), Dara was hired by the school straight out of university and has been teaching at Associated for the past 13 years.

Let's learn a bit more about Dara Indig...

When did you know you wanted to be a teacher? I always wanted to be a teacher - I was "that" student in class who always volunteered to help. I also taught swimming, and spent several summers as a camp counsellor. I loved being around and helping kids.

#### Why did you want to be a teacher at AHS?

I wanted to go back to the community in which I grew up. When I came to work at AHS, it felt like I was coming home. Teachers that had previously taught me came up and embraced me. It was such a warm community to come back to.

#### Why did you choose to teach math?

I love how math is analytical, structured, black-and-white, right or wrong. Math was the most engaging subject for me. Even as a kid, I always valued math challenges and puzzles. I also love the idea that in math there are many pathways to an answer, yet there is only ever one correct answer.

#### What grades do you teach?

I teach grade 6 Math and Science and the grade 8 SLC (Student Learning Centre) class. The SLC is a smaller class that needs additional support and a customized learning program.

What kind of technology do you use in your classroom? For many years, we have worked with Mathletics, and this year we are bringing in an Israeli program called Tailor-Ed. Tailor-Ed customizes math lessons and assessments for each individual student and teacher.

#### What do you like best about teaching?

There is nothing more rewarding than when a student says "I get this now!" I love seeing success in kids, especially when they see it in themselves. It is so gratifying when a student tells



me how confident they are about math after being in my class, or when a parent gushes over their child's improvement.

communication. I also utilize higher enrichment activities such

How do you engage your students in their learning?

Above all, I motivate students with verbal positive

#### when they can apply what they have learned to new activities. I make sure that there are different activities at various levels on hand for everyone.

as logic questions or Sudoku. Students feel very successful

#### What is the biggest lesson that you have learned from your students?

My students have taught me that everybody learns differently and at different paces. I always work to try and meet the needs of all of my students and teach them not to get stuck on one hard question or concept, as math is "real world".

What do you like to do when you are not teaching? When I'm not teaching it is all about family. I am the proud mom to Maya and Jenna, who are in Grade 1 and SK respectively at the Kamin branch. We love travelling (before COVID), being outdoors, going on picnics, skating, and swimming.

### Stepping into Jewish Studies: AHS's New Maalot Stream By: Becky Friedman

AHS is excited to introduce the new Maalot Jewish Studies stream at the Danilack Middle School. The Maalot Stream teaches beginner-level Hebrew, and presents all Judaic Studies classes with English-language instruction, in order to make Jewish learning and heritage studies accessible for all students.

As a community school, the Maalot stream aligns with the AHS mission and values to make Jewish studies available to a wider range of Jewish families in the Toronto Jewish community. It provides parents the opportunity to send their children to Associated while overcoming the potential language barrier for students unable to learn "Ivrit b'Ivrit". Maalot Stream students then merge with their peers for the high-quality and cutting-edge general studies classes for which AHS is known.

Maalot Stream students in Grades 6-8 will participate in AHS's vibrant and welcoming community, develop meaningful connections with their Jewish identity, and thrive in a Jewish peer group where they can achieve their personal best. Grade 7 student Talia Storger immigrated to Canada from South Africa this past August. With no prior Hebrew speaking or writing knowledge, the Maalot Stream offered her the opportunity to learn Hebrew at her own pace and level. "I never felt anxious being in the Maalot stream as from the very first day, I received individualized support. The teachers are going at a pace that I feel comfortable with, in a very patient way, giving me encouragement and praise for the progress that I am making. Creating this stream has given me the opportunity to learn how to read and write Hebrew, something I believed would not be possible because I missed out on that opportunity in my initial years at school."

The Maalot Stream sets Middle School students who are new to Jewish Day School up for success, both at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies that they will be engaging in during these formative years, and for Jewish life in high school and beyond. It will help guarantee a sustainable future for Toronto's Jewish Day Schools and community, and will allow an ever-increasing number of families to become a part of AHS's proudly diverse and welcoming community.

### A First for Associated: Grade 8 Outdoor Graduation

By: Julie Bergman



It may not have been the kind of ceremony anyone could have envisioned prior to the pandemic, but the Grade 8 graduation of 2021 was an event no one will soon forget. As car horns blasted and cheers erupted, the 116 graduates – adorned in caps, gowns and masks – joyously celebrated their unique commencement, and not even COVID-19 could spoil the magic of this special evening.

The venue was the parking lot of the Prosserman Jewish Community Centre, and as night fell on June 22, carloads of arriving graduates and their families were greeted with gift bags filled with water, treats and glow sticks to brighten the scene. Decorated with balloons and congratulatory banners, the drive-in event was adorned with mega screens and television monitors for easy viewing. Featuring a blend of live presentations and video footage, the celebration was live-streamed so family and friends from around the world could take part.

Topping off the evening were speeches, music and entertaining videos, and valedictorians Miriam Weinstein and Daya Lenga addressed the crowd before the graduates were called onto the stage to receive their diplomas. Our Head of School, Ora Shulman, also addressed the graduates, speaking about the power of choice that each individual holds. To further the meaningful "bonds" between the students, their AHS community, and their Jewish identities, the school was pleased to gift each graduate with an Israel Bond. The week leading up to the graduation ceremony was equally exciting, as the students enjoyed an assortment of fun activities and online events – beginning with AHS teachers driving by all 116 student homes to deliver lawn signs and smile cookies. The following day, graduates dropped by the school to walk the red carpet, pick up their swag bag filled with supplies needed for the week, and take pictures with their families. Each student was presented with a beautiful kiddush cup, courtesy of the PTC, and had the opportunity to collect their AHS logoed gear.

The graduation banquet brought graduates and teachers together virtually to enjoy a delicious PTC-sponsored dinner with an evening program that featured a slide show production created by the Danilack student council, words of wisdom from alumni, and the academic and athletic awards presentation.

The days that followed featured a whirlwind of activities for our graduates. First up was an online games extravaganza, where students were pitted against their teachers. Then came a sweet sushi workshop and a challah baking activity. The week rounded out with some of our talented Grade 8 artists creating a legacy mural in the hallway at Danilack, a seminar with motivational speaker Josh Sable, '86 and a graduation cake baking and decorating session. What a fantastic graduation experience! Mazel Tov to the class of 2021. We wish you much success in high school and in all of your future endeavours. **B'hatzlacha**!

# Graduations Through the Decades

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Torah)

תאוד תורה באראצת הטום הראשן. אבת, התניצו

The Associated Hebrew Schools of Toronto is celebrating its 70th ing class of the Toronto Hebrew Free School, (better known as

חגיגת הסיום Graduation Exercises

The Junior Day High School The Associated Hebrew Schools

ביום ב' ריח כסלו, תשליר כיו לתרות ישראל בשעה 100% בערב באולם בית הספר

סנאנ רחי בטהורסט, טורונטו Monday, November 26th, 1973 8:00 p.m Charl Am

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#### חגיגת הסיום מחזור כד

Graduation Exercises of THE COMMUNITY HEBREW ACADEMY OF TORONTO

האקדמיה העברית ביום ראשון, אור לכיט תשרי תשליט

ליא לתרות יעראל בשעה ססול בערב באולם החית, רח' בעהורסט סנ6נ SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29th, 1978

8:00 p.m. in the School Auditoria 3630 Bathurst Street Toronto

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Associated Hebrew

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ביום שני כי סיון. תשסייח

ששים לחרות ישראל

בשיעה 2000 בערב בבית המסק בית אמת בית יהדה

Monday, June 23, 2008 8:00 p.m.

2008

Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Lynagogue

The Association of the School

### From Israel, With Love: Yachad Zeh Chosen By: Ketty Granite

Dr. Edna Nahon, a mother of an AHS alumni who now lives in Israel, approached AHS to establish a connection between our students and student-teachers at Hemdat HaDarom – College for Education in Jewish Studies, Science and Humanities in Netivot, Israel. AHS happily accepted her unique initiative and made the program available to our Posluns' Grade 5 students. These Israeli student-teachers and our students met regularly to share knowledge of Israeli and Canadian cultures.

In addition to the classes, students had the opportunity to participate in a workshop about COVID-19. In this session, moderated by Dr. Nahon, the students and student-teachers prepared models of the virus parallel to understanding how the vaccine works.

The program coordinator, Dr. Shai Mamo, reported that the epidemic has blurred boundaries and allowed teachers and students from different places to connect and learn together. Consistent with the innovative pedagogical thinking, learning becomes an organizing theme when each teacher brings his/her area of expertise to the teaching. Teachers feel proud that they can contribute their knowledge and learn simultaneously from students.

Hodaia Sheffer, an Israeli student in the program, says: "We meet with a group of students every week. We had learning sessions on a variety of topics throughout the year. During the sessions, we saw great interest among the students regarding what is happening in Israel, from the differences between the weather in Canada and in Israel to the discourse on the common denominator that we all carry due to the effects of COVID-19. The initiative gave us the right to create cross-border connections and allowed us, the teachers of the future, to experience teaching from a different culture."





From Hemdat Darom College

The grade 5 students shared their sense of success and interest that this project summoned for them. Sentences such as "I liked learning with the teachers from Israel because that's how I

learned not only Hebrew but also about a culture that is a little different from my own" are shared along with a common wish that this year be the first year among many.

In May, 2021 due to the fighting in Israel, the grade 5's at Posluns prepared a collaborative support board in which they sought to lift the teachers' spirit and demonstrate support and solidarity with Israel.

Yashar Koach to Dr. Edna Nahon, Dr. Shai Mamo, the studentteachers from Israel, and the Grade 5 students for their shared contribution to this project's success.

### Forging Classroom Connections: Social-Emotional Learning By: Sandy Seider

Over the past eighteen months, more than ever before, we have come to recognize the importance of taking time to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) into day-to-day practice in our classrooms. As educators, we have come to realize the need to address our students' basic need for safety and belonging before focusing our efforts on classroom lessons and academic tasks. Research has demonstrated that if we incorporate social-emotional learning into what we do every day as teachers, we are likely to achieve better outcomes than if we focus on academics alone. This means prioritizing personal connections with our students and helping them to attain an inner sense of calm that prepares them for learning.

Throughout the past year and a half, teachers at AHS have successfully integrated SEL learning in classrooms across all grades. Through ongoing professional development and CDL initiatives, teachers have been provided with a 'toolkit' of social-emotional strategies to implement in their classrooms. Campus-specific, age-appropriate programs have been developed and delivered in our classrooms.

Staff are focused on developing students' social-emotional skills, creating a strong sense of community, and establishing a classroom culture in which students build healthy relationships with their teachers and peers. Teachers are equipping students with the tools to ask for help and manage the stressors in their lives. We are seeing the benefits of SEL as students express their sense of belonging, and staff are able to identify students who need additional support, providing them with tools to navigate challenges.

A variety of strategies have been put in place to ensure that SEL is a part of the daily classroom experience. Consistent and continuous SEL provides staff and students with a common language to discuss the varying emotions that happen throughout the school day. This common language is an important part of building a sense of community here at Associated. It also empowers teachers to better support students, and helps students advocate for



themselves. implemented in the classroom is promoting an "attitude of gratitude." When students feel stressed, they can become critical of themselves and their learning, hindering their progress and their willingness to take risks. Through discussions and journaling, teachers provide opportunities for students to reflect upon and identify the many things they are grateful for, and to embrace those positive feelings. When transitioning from class to recess or from one subject to another, teachers engage in mindfulness exercises, including movement activities and breathing exercises. Most recently, teachers have had the opportunity to invite more moments of playfulness into their classrooms to practice SEL. We know the importance of play and the role it plays in students' lives. By engaging in SEL games, students build their active listening skills and their social skills. A recent Middle School initiative to acknowledge World Mental Health Day had students learning about the powerful impact that positive affirmations can have on self-esteem and frame of mind.

Throughout the school year, we plan to continue exploring opportunities to develop our SEL program.



#### A Return to School By: Julie Bergman

The beginning of 2021 was a challenging year for both students and teachers alike. The Covid pandemic not only closed our doors, but shut down our spirits as well. This school year, we are thrilled to once again be together and learn in-person.

We asked students what they missed most about learning online and what they are most looking forward to this school year. Here is what they had to say: "While on zoom, I missed my friends and being in the positive school environment with all the teachers and students. I am really excited to take part in many leadership activities, especially in my last grade at Danilack." *Mara, Grade 8* 

"I really missed seeing all of my friends. I missed some of my specialties like Robotics and Gym. This year I am looking forward to enriched math." *Arie, Grade 3* 

"What I missed most about being at school was the interaction with my peers. It wasn't the same socializing with my friends through a screen. This school year, I'm so excited to be back in school with all my friends and teachers. I'm looking forward to doing all the fun activities grade 8's usually do like the grad trip, graduation, and more!"

Libby, Grade 8



"I missed Gym because I missed doing Pizza tag with my friends." *Ofra, SK* 

"I mostly missed hanging out with friends and I am really looking forward to literacy and social studies this year *Theo, Grade 7* 

"The thing I missed most during the time I was away from school was that I wasn't able to be with my friends. I also missed not being able to enjoy the spirit days, special activities and other things to their fullest. This school year I am looking forward to being able to celebrate events and special days. I'm also looking forward to having regular classes and doing activities with my class because it will be a lot more fun than learning on zoom!" **Natalie, Grade 7** 

"I missed being in school because I like learning in real life and online school isn't that fun. I am looking forward to learning a lot of stuff and using google classroom!" *Leonard, Grade 3* 

#### "I am excited to learn to read with my teachers." *Zahara, SK*

"I missed feeling like I am a part of a group as well as social interactions. This year, I am looking forward to expanding my horizons, taking calculated risks and helping others."

#### Daniel, Grade 8

"I missed having Gym class in person because I really like exercising and taking part in the fun games Mr. J plans. I also missed Library on Wednesdays because I love to read books. I missed playing with my friends at recess. This school year I am most looking forward to learning new things. I am also looking forward to finding out if I am getting into math enrichment."

#### Joelle, Grade 3

"I missed music because I missed Mr. Lavner." *Emilia, SK* 

#### Senior Pen Pals By: Rachel Albert



At AHS, our students learn about caring for others and about the importance of community. During the recent time of physical and social distancing, long-term care homes have restricted their access, leaving residents feeling more isolated than ever. On account of this, the Danilack Student Council found a creative way to alleviate some of the social isolation experienced by many seniors in our community. We called it "Letters to Seniors: A Pen Pal Program." This program is one example of how the students at our school put their learning into practice, by getting involved in the community and caring for others.

The program was initiated by Rachel Albert, Grade 6 and 7 art teacher and Student Programming Coordinator at Danilack. Rachel says, "I started the program because my own grandmother lives in a long term care residence." After losing her husband to COVID in November 2020, Rachel's grandmother was feeling really low, as were many other long-term care residents who were similarly isolated. Rachel wanted to give them something to look forward to and to help connect them to the outside world.

After experiencing the realities of isolation during the lockdown at the start of the pandemic, students were inspired to reach out

and write letters to some of the most solitary members of our community. The response has been incredible. More than 30 students have taken part in this initiative, and have mailed dozens of letters to older adults living in our community.

"Having a senior pen pal is really amazing," says Ella David, a Grade 8 student. "I get to hear all about his life story, and he can hear mine. We can discuss whatever we want, and it is just so exciting to receive a letter in an old-fashioned way." Ella says this experience has really put into perspective what life is about. "I hope that one day I am able to share my story with someone else when I am old, and inspire them like my pen pal has done for me."

The pen pal program enables long-term care residents to interact with young people in a meaningful way, while also offering an opportunity for both the residents and AHS students to contribute to the future of their community. Handwritten letters are a tangible way to share stories and memories and create new friendships in a time when social distancing has challenged us in creating important connections. Rachel adds, "We hope to inspire others and show that there are many ways in which we can show support and empathy to those who need it most."

#### Making the Connection: **The Friedberg Family** By: Julie Bergman

Listening to their 5-year-old son, Samuel, humming Jewish tunes as he plays is a dream come true for Kim Smiley and Matthew Friedberg.

While the couple has always valued the importance of a formal Jewish education, neither of them attended Jewish day school – yet it is a path they wanted their kids to follow. So when evaluating schools for their children, a meaningful Jewish experience was essential. Last year their son, Samuel, began JK at Associated Posluns and this Fall his sister, Maya, followed suit.

When looking at day schools, the Friedbergs said they were drawn to AHS's vibrant community, finding the school to be a warm, caring and inclusive space where their children could thrive. "Associated's philosophy and way of teaching were simpatico with our own beliefs and character," Matthew said, explaining that it seemed like a natural choice.

Speaking with fellow parents assured Kim and Matthew that others in the AHS community shared their ideals. They found parents to be down-to-earth, relatable and very welcoming. In their words, the school and parents are very "haymishe" and both the couple and their children have already made strong friendships.

Though they have only been a part of the AHS family for a short time, it brings Kim and Matthew much joy to know that their children are learning about their religion, heritage, and ethnicity, which gives them a calming sense of continuity. They appreciate that Associated is steeped in tradition.

Attending synagogue every Shabbat, Kim and Matthew delight in knowing that Sam, who is currently in SK, is proud to be Jewish. "His sense of Jewish identity as well as his knowledge and confidence has increased tremendously," Matthew said, adding that nothing makes them happier than listening to Sam talk about what he learned that day or overhearing him singing the Birkat Hamazon while playing with his Lego.



Now that their kids are school-aged, observing Shabbat and Jewish holidays brings the family new meaning. Sam is no longer simply an observer, say his parents – he is now an active participant in all of the rituals. "While we always put up a sukkah, this year Sam was more involved in the process. He was so proud of everything he learned about the holiday and was eager to get involved with the decorating and celebrating."

The Friedbergs are thrilled to be a part of the AHS community and look forward to meeting many more families and learning many more things. Here's wishing Kim, Matthew, Sam and Maya a wonderful and meaningful future at Associated!

#### ALUMNI PROFILE: Jake Offenheim By: Julie Bergman

Jake Offenheim ('12) has been passionate about gaming since the day he could grip a remote. Never, though, did he imagine that his favourite pastime would lead him to his dream career – yet that's just what happened, thanks to a combination of the pandemic and his AHS education.

Jake – who graduated from Western University in Spring 2020 – was slated to attend law school last Fall after spending the summer at Camp Ramah. When Covid struck and camps were cancelled, he used his time in lockdown to develop a Jewish curriculum for the camp within the realm of Minecraft, creating a six-week program for kids to enjoy summer through virtual games, shopping and visiting buildings and cabins inside the camp.

A promotional video that was created to advertise the program found its way to the Jewish gaming not-for-profit, Lost Tribe Esports, which immediately offered Jake an internship. Putting his law school plans on hold to pursue what he calls a "once in a lifetime opportunity," Jake hasn't looked back since. He boasts, "I am thrilled to be connected with a company that makes being Jewish 'cool."

Lost Tribe Esports is a self-described safe space for Jewishgamers to connect with each other. The organization's mission: "to create a durable and dynamic Jewish social network for teens and to increase their participation in Jewish life, thereby strengthening their Jewish identity." It partners with Jewish organizations globally to bring relatable Jewish content to kids worldwide.

As a content creator, Jake develops creative and exciting applications built on Jewish customs and holidays. Programs include Minecraft camps, holiday and Shabbat themed challenges and a virtual Kotel, where users can "put notes" into the Western Wall. Jake also spearheads the organization's TikTok platform, where Lost Tribe currently boasts almost 20,000 followers.

When thinking back to his days at Associated, Jake fondly credits the Lag Ba'omer and Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations for instilling his love of and connection to Judaism. When he was in middle school, he said he often questioned the value of his Judaic studies, but ironically, now uses what he learned every single day. He laughs at how his mother now lovingly wags her finger at him and says, "I told you so."

We wish Jake good luck in all his future endeavors and offer a Minecraft salute "that all the mods give him redstone in the Nether."

More information on Lost Tribe Esports can be found at www.losttribeesports.org.

#### Measuring Milestones By: Rella Margolis

Students and their families celebrate many milestones during the course of their years at Associated. Two of the most memorable are completing grade 5 at Posluns or Kamin and graduating grade 8.

Typically, these students' parents and grandparents are proud of their accomplishments and are grateful for the deep roots, strong foundation and the resilience that Associated has instilled in their children and grandchildren. They want to celebrate this success and mark these significant milestones together. Each year, a group of grade 8 parents get together to mark this occasion and raise funds for a project of their choice at the Danilack Middle School. This year, for the first time, a group of grade 5 parents at both the Kamin and Posluns branches joined in the initiative.

Daniella Samuel '92, a grade 5 parent and Chair of the 2020 grade 8 project says, "Our years at Posluns have been filled with warmth, community and growth, and we were so proud to contribute to the grade 5 project, in honour of Coby's upcoming graduation from Posluns. The school has certainly shaped him, and all of the amazing students in his year, and it felt wonderful to be able to give back to the school, in a way that honoured this significant milestone."

The grade 8 AHS GRAD-itude Gift 2021/5781 raised muchneeded funds for the STEAM programme at the Danilack Middle School. Thank you to parents Naomi Rifkind Mansell '89, Stacey Shapira, Amy Elmaleh, Sidura Ludwig, Melissa Komlos '91 and Jessica Spodek who spearheaded this initiative.

"We have had kids at Associated for over a decade, and as each of our three older children has graduated, we felt it was appropriate to show our deep gratitude to the school, teachers and AHS leadership, by co-chairing the Graduation Gift Committee and making a gift to mark this milestone. Being involved with the school has been very rewarding and we are proud to be an AHS family," said Naomi Rifkind Mansell.

The grade 5 Project 2021/5781 at both Kamin and Posluns raised funds for Outdoor Enhancements at Kamin and Posluns. Thank you to grade 5 parents and coordinators Shawna Samuel, Jennifer Singer, Cara Pasternak, Marilee Krinsky and her mom Sylvia Krinsky, Lisa Frisch '88, Ava Sammeroff '91 and Gina Zur.

Lisa Frisch declared, "It was an honour to collaborate on this committee with various parents from both schools. Together, we were able to form the wonderful Class Project to help current Kamin and Posluns students enrich their curriculum and learning. Kol Hakavod to all."

When your child is in grade 5 or grade 8 and you would like to join this tradition, please contact Rella Margolis, Development Manager, at 416-494-7666 x 261 or **rmargolis@ahschools.com.** 

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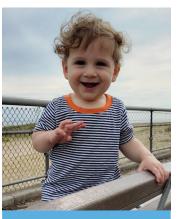
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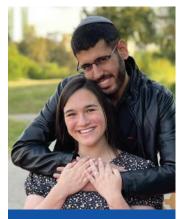
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