14TH ANNUAL NJOP DINNER
Aleph to Tav: The Gateway to Jewish Life

Start polishing your shoes and trying on your evening gowns in preparation for NJOP’s Fourteenth Annual Dinner that will take place on Tuesday night, February 5, 2008, at Manhattan’s historic Waldorf-Astoria hotel, beginning at 6 pm. The event will honor a number of outstanding individuals and families who have helped the National Jewish Outreach Program fulfill its mission to bring positive, joyous Jewish experiences to all Jewish North Americans and Jews throughout the world.

Scheduled to be recognized for their efforts at the 14th Annual Dinner are: Judith Weil and Lloyd Epstein, The Lebwohl Family (in tribute to the establishment of the Zachary and Jennie Lebwohl Endowment), and Tali and Ron Yeffet. This year’s Leslie Nelkin Special Service Awardee is NJOP’s Hebrew Teaching Specialist, Florence Wiener.

For more information, or to make a reservation, please contact Rachael Erlichman at 646-871-0111 or rachaele@njop.org.

SAA/C Once Again Sponsored by the Melohn Family in Honor of Mrs. Martha Melohn

On March 7, 2008 tens of thousands of Jews across North America will come together to eat, drink, relax, dance, enjoy, debate and celebrate. Save the date!

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA/CANADA

READ HEBREW AMERICA/CANADA!

This past November, which marked the Tenth Annual READ HEBREW AMERICA/CANADA, 865 Hebrew classes were offered at 612 locations, 69 of which offered an NJOP Hebrew class for the first time! This is a significant increase over last year’s RHA/C, at which 792 classes were offered at 556 locations. In celebration of the 10th anniversary, NJOP designed a new flyer that featured a Hebrew eye chart with the words: “If you can’t read this, you need classes.” To arouse broad interest in the program, NJOP once again utilized multiple media advertising and marketing venues. NJOP’s internet advertising featured an extensive e-mail campaign and creative banner ads on such sites as Ha’aretz, Debka, Virtual Jerusalem, Forward, Blueprint, Israel Insider, Jewsweek and The Shmooz. Network radio advertising was also critical, and this year, in response to our evaluation of the effectiveness of various networks, NJOP placed additional advertising on the Air America network.

The following article, forwarded to us from the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, is an excellent reflection of what READ HEBREW AMERICA/CANADA is all about.

Hebrew Course Piques Iranian Jews’ Interest

By Karmel Melamed, Contributing Writer

“You teach me Persian, and I’ll teach you Hebrew,” quipped Rabbi Hillel Benchimol to the crowd.

Nearly 150 Iranian Jews of various ages had gathered at the Nessah Synagogue in Beverly Hills on Oct. 29 for the third session of a free five-week crash course in Hebrew.

Also known as “READ HEBREW AMERICA,” the course has been picked up by nearly 700 [ed. note: over 2,000] synagogues in North America during the last 10 years through the National Jewish Outreach Program (NJOP), a nonprofit organization based in New York. The objective is to (continued on page 3)
FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!
NJOP’s Sixth Annual Food & Wine Tasting Extravaganza

What do you get when New York City’s best kosher eateries gather together in one place? A culinary carnival of uncountable pleasure! On November 12, 2007, 500 young Jewish professionals experienced just such a delight at NJOP’s Sixth Annual Food & Wine Tasting Extravaganza and Silent Auction.

Held at a new location this year -- the Altman Building, a landmark building in Chelsea (Manhattan) -- the evening was brought to a new level of sophistication by NJOP event coordinator Rachael Erlichman. This new space not only allowed for the creative display of the sumptuous edibles, but also offered greater visibility for NJOP’s elegant Silent Auction. Over 50 fabulous prizes were up for bid -- everything from designer sunglasses to a Caribbean cruise!

NJOP would like to offer its special thanks to the evening’s two sponsors: Samuel A. Erez of Americare CSS and Nest Seekers International, who sponsored the evening’s Grand Raffle. The first prize of the Grand Raffle ($5,000) was awarded to Valerie and Daniel Feder. Shele and Rod Covlin took the second prize ($2,000) and third prize ($1,000) went to Alisa Adler and Ronnie Landau.

The evening, already delightful for its superb delicacies and impressive auction, was enhanced by the stimulating words of both Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald and Congressman Anthony Wiener. Entertainment was provided by Sax and Sound.

A special thank you to our Food & Wine sponsors:

- Abarbanel Wines
- Allied Importers USA
- Brothers International
- Dessert/Emerald Dist.
- Butterflake Bakery
- Eden Wok
- Foremost Caterers
- Infinity Caterers
- Le Marais
- Main Event Caterers
- Prestige Caterers
- Scoop & Company

As always, Foremost’s sushi was a hit.
NJOP Board Member Eli Salig checks out the prizes.
Event Chairs Ben and Ruth Lubick place a bid.
Infinity’s Grilled Vegetable Kebabs!
Hillel Has Hebrew

This year, the National Jewish Outreach Program and the National Hillel Foundation are working together to reach a greater number of Jewish college students. In order to enhance the effectiveness of our marketing, NJOP created a specially designed “Hebrew Across Hillel” ad campaign to encourage students to attend campus Read Hebrew America/Canada programs. As part of the joint process, NJOP, working closely with Clare Goldwater, the Associate Vice President for Jewish Life at Hillel, arranged for Hillel to promote Read Hebrew America/Canada in its weekly “Shavua Tov” e-newsletter, sent to Hillel administrators and educators across North America. The promotional blurb, which was sent out over a two month period, helped NJOP exceed the number of Hillels that participated in last year’s RHA/C -- 31 Hillels offered at least one Hebrew program as part of the campaign.

At the same time, NJOP is pursuing a closer relationship with the Birthright Israel Alumni representative in the Tri-State area. We plan to target programming directly to Birthright alumni using “neutral” locations such as JCCs and corporate board rooms. The Crash Course in Jewish History and the Hebrew Reading Crash Course are the programs being considered for this initiative. Should this initiative succeed, we hope to explore, with Birthright Alumni representatives across North America, other methods to reach the “20-something” alumni who have now settled in their respective communities. Our aim is to inspire these young people through their existing social networks and help them make a Jewish connection in their own communities.

Read Hebrew America/Canada: “Hebrew Course Piques Iranian Jews’ Interest” cont...

promote Hebrew learning among American and Canadian Jews who have lost touch with their Jewish identities.

While this is the first year Nessah has participated in the program, its leaders said the free Hebrew course has attracted more than 600 local Iranian Jews to its first three sessions.

“I was really amazed that so many people from this community really want to learn Hebrew and reconnect with their heritage,” said Benchimol, who has been teaching the 90-minute classes on Monday nights since Oct. 15. “You don’t typically see this large of a turnout for Hebrew classes from the Ashkenazim.”

Ilya Welfeld, a spokesperson for the NJOP said her organization was “extremely pleased with the large response” they have received at Nessah. On average, roughly 20 to 80 people attend “Read Hebrew America” courses in the United States.

Surprisingly, the majority of individuals in attendance for the classes at Nessah were between the ages of 50 and 70. They said they wanted to learn Hebrew because they had been unable to do so previously, due to the difficulties of trying to re-establish themselves in America during the last 25 years.

“I like how people of all ages from our community are here and wanting to learn Hebrew,” said Eliza Ghanooni, a 20-something resident of Beverly Hills. “I think Persian Jews are generally more traditional and have a stronger connection to Judaism.”

A small contingent of younger Iranian Jews were also in attendance and said they had come because they want to speak Hebrew fluently. While the Nessah class was often sidetracked by individual questions and comments, Benchimol kept the group’s interest by making the group laugh at his witty comments and his efforts to pronounce odd Persian-language words.

“When you’re learning Hebrew, you’ve got to have fun with it, and we’re trying to keep it a light-hearted environment so people will want to come back,” Benchimol said.

A number of non-Iranian Jews visiting Nessah said they were impressed with the excitement Iranian Jews had exhibited in the Hebrew class, and as a result would continue to take the classes at Nessah.

“I’m here to improve my Hebrew because my Bar Mitzvah is coming up soon, and I want to be able to read from the Torah better,” said Yuji Hasegawa, of West Hollywood, who recently converted to Judaism. “Iranians are loud, but it’s good to see so many of them interested in learning Hebrew.”

Benchimol said [that] after the remaining two sessions of the Hebrew classes are completed, Nessah plans to offer more advanced Hebrew language classes to adults in the coming months.
Sensational Sukkot

One of the central goals of the National Jewish Outreach Program is to bring the Jewish community together, and Sukkot Across America helps NJOP achieve that goal. Because of the flexibility of the program and its public presence outside of the synagogue, the 19 locations that offered a Sukkot Across America program this year drew over 1,000 participants from a wide spectrum of people, young and old, singles and families. For many participants, the Sukkot Across America event was the only Sukkot experience they would have during the festival.

Not only is Sukkot Across America a great way to attract people from the general community, it is also a fabulous follow-up event for High Holiday Beginners programs and a most effective lead-in to Read Hebrew America/Canada. In fact, to make certain that the event would not be a “shake-a-lulav-and-run” experience, each Sukkot Across America location was required to offer a follow-up Hebrew Reading Crash Course. To entice Sukkot Across America participants to return for a Hebrew course, each visitor was offered a copy of NJOP’s mini Reishith Binah so they could see how simple it is to learn Hebrew.

And from our locations:

Rabbi Moshe Rothchild, Beit David Highland Lakes Shul, Aventura, FL

We had a great turnout [at our Sukkot Across America event]. Over 100 people were in attendance—many of them had not been in a Sukkah at all on the chag [holiday]. We had live music, raffles, prizes for the kids and Chinese food.

Quick anecdote: There was a family that had heard lots of singing and talking coming from their neighbor’s backyard. They knocked on their door and asked them what all the commotion was. They explained to them all about Sukkot and then invited them to [our] Sukkot Across America. Surprisingly the family showed up! I spoke with them and they hopefully will now be coming to the shul for other events. They had been living in the area for a while but never went to or connected with any shul. Sukkot Across America was the catalyst for their entry into the community.

We also had a few people who were driving by who joined the celebration as well... This was a great success!! We would not have had such an incredible event if not for Sukkot Across America. It was the motivational force behind this special event.

Don Memberg, President of Cong. Anshei Chesed in Sandy Springs, GA

The event was great and we convinced some people to join, be more active, and to come to the Hebrew classes. This was an evening party with a band and food. It was very special.