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YOM HA'ATZMAUT

at The Centre in Vancouver for Performing Arts | 777 Homer Street

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featuring

MARINA MAXIMILIAN BLUMIN

popular Israeli singing sensation

Wednesday, April 25, 2012 | 7:30 p.m.

This vibrant, multi-talented finalist of Kochav Nolad (Israeli Idol) has become a huge star in Israel. Widely regarded as a 'once in a generation phenomenon,' she is among Israel's greatest young talents. Together with her band, Marina will win your heart and get you dancing!

Tickets: \$18
NO ADDED CHARGES

Purchase tickets online at
jewishvancouver.com

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Vancouver Hillel Foundation
Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre
Vancouver Jewish Film Festival Society
Vancouver Talmud Torah School
Vancouver Yaffa Housing Society
Weinberg Residence
White Rock/S. Surrey JCC
Young Israel of Richmond

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Your Jewish Community Connection

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Welcome to Federation Focus, the quarterly supplement about your Jewish Federation, its partner agencies and their impact on Jewish life. Federation Focus keeps you informed and connected with important issues in our community, ensuring that everyone knows where to find a helping hand and where to extend one.

Jewish Day Schools Face Challenges, But Benefit Entire Community

A Jewish day school education is a big commitment. It asks a lot academically, financially and in parent involvement. But the dividends it pays are profound and far-reaching. Numerous North American studies on the benefits of a Jewish day school education show that the majority of day school graduates maintain strong community ties and create Jewish homes of their own. Jewish day schools also help instill the values of *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), building a foundation for moral and ethical choices. As Vancouver Hebrew Academy head of school, Rabbi Don Pacht puts it, “There is great value in participation in sports and extra-curricular activities, but a Jewish education is an absolute necessity in ensuring the transmission of our heritage. Jewish education needs to be seen as the priority.”

The Federation Annual Campaign supports day school education by contributing to operating costs and tuition assistance. Operating funds impact all day school families, regardless of whether they pay full fees or receive tuition assistance. While campaign dollars do not cover total operating costs, they do offset them significantly at close to \$950 per child. And tuition assistance ensures that on their own fundraising to meet their budgets. In addition, the Lower Mainland’s housing prices mean that many families simply cannot afford to live near a day school and therefore face numbers: “While we are thrilled to be attracting families who live within our ‘catchment,’ the reality of Vancouver’s real estate market means we have to cast a much wider net to maintain our enrollment

“A Jewish education raises children who have a strong sense of identity, a connection to the past and current members of our community...”

MICHAEL NORTHY, PRINCIPAL, RICHMOND JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

no child is ever denied a Jewish education for financial reasons.

Still, day schools face challenges. Even with Jewish Federation’s support, the schools rely

transportation issues. Cathy Lowenstein, head of school at Vancouver Talmud Torah, says housing prices have a real and demonstrable effect on her school’s student

in coming years. As a community, we will have to innovate solutions to keep young families engaged in all Jewish institutional offerings, including Jewish day schools.”

King David High School faces different challenges; head of school Russ Klein notes “... the perception of parents and students is that a Jewish education in elementary school is sufficient to create a strong Jewish identity...” Studies, however, show that the high school years are the period in which young people begin to cement their values and sense of identity. Klein points out that King David “... provides an opportunity for students to really focus on who they are and to develop the skills and attitudes they need and to do that in an environment of Jewish values and traditions....”

Richmond Jewish Day School Principal Michael Northy believes that day school education creates long-term benefits: “A Jewish education raises children who have a strong sense of identity, a connection to the past and current members of our community, and teaches them to be knowledgeable adults and leaders in the community. Those who have been educated in a Jewish day school frequently go on to enroll their own children in a day school—a cycle that will lead to a strong and committed community.”



Students at King David High School

Beit Vancouver Volunteer Wins National Youth Award

The city of Kiryat Shmona, in the heart of Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver’s partnership region in the Upper Galilee Panhandle, faces complex challenges. It is geographically and economically separated from Israel’s centres of population and business. It still bears the scars of the 2006 Lebanon War and residents live with the threat inherent in bordering Lebanon and Syria. But Kiryat Shmona is also home to resilience, determination and a strong sense of community. There is no better example of those traits than in sixteen-year-old Dean Shoshan, winner of the Elan Ribben Award for Youth Volunteerism. The national award is named

for the sixteen-year-old volunteer firefighter from Haifa who perished in the tragic Carmel wildfire.

Dean is being honoured for service that touches young people throughout his community. He currently volunteers with the Hora Goel dance troupe—a partner of Vancouver’s Or Chadash, the local youth movement Idan, and Wings of Krembo, a youth group for children with special needs. On top of all that, he serves on his school’s student council and at the newspaper, which he founded. Dean says he loves the opportunity to be exposed to different kinds of people. He particularly enjoys his work with Wings of Krembo as special needs

kids in Israel do not attend mainstream schools and so have far less contact with their peers: “It’s a self-empowerment process. A simple smile from one of them melts you from the inside out.”

Dean understands well

later renovated with funds raised by Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver. “Our city doesn’t develop like other cities,” Dean says, “In the centre of the country there are places to go to hang out. Without Beit Vancouver, we wouldn’t

late on weeknights, allowing kids a productive and fun place to be with their peers instead of sitting at home or hanging out in the street. It also provides young people with organized opportunities to volunteer and raises awareness of the

a very young age. I can’t imagine who I’d be without these opportunities.”

Dean plans to enter Teuda, a highly competitive program in which high school graduates immediately go to university, paid for by the army, then serve five years in the army in a role that encompasses their field of study—in Dean’s case, electrical engineering. All of his volunteer work has given Dean the ability to work with a variety of people and develop his leadership skills—all of which will serve him well whatever he does. As he says himself, “I never want to step away from being a leader!”



DEAN SHOSHAN, AWARD WINNER

the hurdles faced by Kiryat Shmona and appreciates the efforts made there to provide opportunities for its young people. In particular, he cites Beit Vancouver, the community centre built and

have anywhere to go. In the summer, we’d be sitting in parks doing nothing. Beit Vancouver is truly the answer to all this—there’s so much to do for kids our age.” The centre is open

importance of volunteering and community-building. Dean says “Beit Vancouver has changed the life of many kids. It’s given us options to get involved and believe in ourselves from

Birthright Program Develops Future Leaders

Since its inception in 2000, the Taglit-Birthright Israel program has sent nearly 300,000 Jewish young adults on 10-day journeys to Israel, free of charge. Our Federation Annual Campaign pays one-third of the cost for local participants. It is well worth it. Whatever their level of religious observance or community involvement, they express a deepened sense of Jewish identity and connection to Israel and their own communities. And for some participants, that awakening is just the beginning of their Birthright experience as they embark on the new chapter of becoming trip leaders or *madrichim*.

Paul Curran is one such Birthright alumnus. He travelled to Israel in 2008 with the program at the age of 22. While he had been involved in the community previously through his fraternity and the Israel Awareness Club at UBC, the trip made a profound and indelible impression on him: “[Birthright] connected my religion to the land; Jerusalem made the biggest impact.”

Curran’s own Birthright experience and his desire to “share the experience, knowledge, passion and excitement of Israel with those that have not been,” led him to the *madrichim* program. After an application and interview process, he joined peers

from across Canada for a three-day training session just outside Montreal. Participants engaged in leadership and group-building exercises and learned more about Israel. Once they have completed their training, they are able to lead Birthright trips as *madrichim*. They serve as liaisons between the tour guide, driver, medic and trip participants. The *madrichim* also plan evening activities tied to the day’s previous program and coordinate with Israeli organizers to ensure a smooth trip.

But the *madrichim*’s responsibilities do not end when the plane touches back down in Vancouver. They conduct follow-up

interviews with participants and help plan Birthright alumni events. *Madrichim* often go on to other leadership roles in the community. Curran, for example, has made two trips to Israel as a *madrich* and is now the director of Hillel at Simon Fraser University. In fact, his experiences in Israel have made such an impact on him that he is making *aliyah* in July.

If at Eilon Heiber, director of Jewish Federation’s Israel and Overseas Affairs department, says that the organization is committed to helping develop young leaders. “Since 2003 Jewish Federation has provided funding for 40 local young adults to

receive Birthright *madrichim* training,” she says. “We help them develop their leadership skills, then give them a chance to use those skills both on the Birthright trips and by

creating opportunities for community involvement once they come home. Our hope, of course, is that we are building a new generation of community leaders.”



Paul Curran (far right)