

**Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim:
Susan and Jack Rudin Center
for Community Outreach**



2007–2008 ANNUAL SUMMARY

*Helping
out ...
for
Heaven's
Sake*



Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim

Above: Matthew Goldstone, student at The Rabbinical School, decorating bookmarks with his P.S. 125 reading partner at the Rudin Center Literacy Festival

During the 2007–2008 academic year, the Va’ad Gemilut Hasadim: Susan and Jack Rudin Center for Community Outreach orchestrated innovative programming and new volunteer opportunities to meet the needs of both The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) community and its surrounding neighborhood. Many of the programs this year were initiated by students, affording them the opportunity to take on leadership roles and gain experience in program development.

Highlights of the past year include:

- **Tunnel of Oppression**, an educational program where participants visualized and experienced various forms of discrimination in our society through multisensory presentations and interactive discussion.
- **The Rudin Center Art Exhibit**, entitled Community, which featured art, music, and poetry on that theme.
- **Conference on Autism Awareness and Inclusion in the Jewish Community**, which sought to educate the JTS community on autism spectrum disorder.
- **Inception of a new volunteer opportunity where JTS community members donated leftover food** from the JTS dining hall to the Broadway Community, Inc. (BCI), soup kitchen.

In addition, the Rudin Center continued to oversee its ongoing volunteer projects, various educational programs, and the Annual Tzedakah Campaign that raised over \$20,000 for organizations in need in the United States, Israel, and internationally. In total, nearly 350 JTS community members participated in at least one Rudin Center program this year.

Volunteer Programs

The Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim: Susan and Jack Rudin Center for Community Outreach partners with various New York City agencies to provide opportunities for JTS students, faculty, and staff to volunteer their time and talents. In order to meet the different schedules of the JTS community, volunteer opportunities were made available during days, evenings, and weekends and ranged from one-time projects to weekly commitments.

Ansche Chesed Homeless Shelter

Over the course of the year, the Rudin Center was responsible for staffing the shelter on forty-seven occasions. Approximately thirty-five students and staff participated in sleeping in the shelter at least one of those nights. Our volunteers continue to ensure that the homeless shelter remains open so the men have a safe place to eat and sleep.



List College students Ruthy Askenazi and Samantha Shaffer help prepare food at the BCI soup kitchen.

Broadway Community, Inc. Soup Kitchen

A List College student initiated weekly visits to the BCI soup kitchen, where students helped prepare and serve food to hungry people. An average of three to four students volunteered on a weekly basis.

Everybody Wins! Power Lunch at P.S. 125

Twenty students read with children at P.S. 125 every week for the entire school year. Children from P.S. 125 came to JTS for a year-end Literary Festival sponsored by the Rudin Center where they heard from a children's book author, decorated bookmarks, and ate lunch with their reading partners.

Jewish Home and Hospital Visits

Students volunteered to help welcome Shabbat with the elderly at this local facility. Volunteers sang, prayed, and shared words of Torah with residents. Students also visited the Jewish Home during Sukkot to help decorate the sukkah with the elderly residents. In addition, students helped decorate Rosh Hashanah cards that were given to the Jewish Home and Hospital.



Davidson School student Yoni Stadlin playing guitar with a resident of the Jewish Home and Hospital during a pre-Shabbat visit.

Donating Leftover Food

At the encouragement of a student from The Rabbinical School, as well as other JTS community

members, the Rudin Center initiated a new project where leftover food from the JTS Dining Hall was brought to the BCI soup kitchen. A total of fourteen JTS community members volunteered to help bring leftover food to BCI approximately two to three times each week.

Educational Programs

Under the guidance of the coordinator of Community Outreach and the educational program associate, the Rudin Center planned an array of educational programs to inspire the JTS community to participate in the Rudin Center's volunteer activities and to offer greater insight into some of the broader issues surrounding its community service programs.

T'shuvah and Tikkun 'Olam: Reviewing Our Commitment Towards Helping Others

Stephanie Ruskay, JTS rabbinical student and founder of the American Jewish World Service Rabbinical Student Delegation program, led this timely text study and discussion during the days prior to Yom Kippur.

How the Environment Acts as a Bridge to Peace in the Middle East

In response to a spring 2007 survey of the JTS community showing a strong interest in programming related to the environment, Rabbi Michael Cohen, director of Special Projects at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies in Israel, was invited to address JTS students, faculty, and staff. Rabbi Cohen reflected on Arava's research and work and spoke about this unique school that prepares future Arab and Jewish leaders to cooperatively solve the region's environmental challenges.

Walk With Me

As part of the New York State Assembly and Senate's legislative resolution proclaiming October 26 a day to "Walk With Me," JTS once again joined with other colleges in New York State for a silent procession to raise awareness of domestic violence. Prior to the walk, Rabbi Lisa Gelber explored the values of our Jewish tradition that call on us to acknowledge and address this global issue. Rabbi Gelber also led participants in a communal prayer for victims of domestic violence. Rabbi Gelber is the associate dean of The Rabbinical School and former board member of



JTS students, staff, and faculty participate in Walk With Me: A Silent Procession to Raise Awareness for Domestic Violence.

Faith Trust Institute, a national multifaith organization working to end sexual and domestic violence. This event was coordinated with Isha el Akhota: The Women's Center at JTS.

The Tunnel of Oppression

The Tunnel of Oppression has been implemented at many different universities across the United States. It seeks to educate its participants through multisensory presentations and interactive discussions about how discrimination manifests itself in our society. Planned by a committee of JTS students, faculty, and staff, our Tunnel of Oppression included three scenes focusing on age, body image, and disabilities. A public display that included facts and statistics helped raise awareness about other types of discrimination and oppression, and pamphlets were created that included resources for advocacy, further education, and volunteer opportunities. The Tunnel of Oppression was open to all JTS students, faculty, and staff; participants also included students and teachers of the Rebecca and Israel Ivry Prozdor High School.

Homeless in New York City

A guest speaker who was formerly homeless shared her experiences of the shelter system in New York City. This program was especially meaningful for those who volunteer at the Anshe Chesed Homeless Shelter, giving volunteers a deeper understanding of what it is like to be homeless in New York City and helping them see the impact of their volunteer service.

Rudin Center Art Exhibit

The Rudin Center Art Exhibit featured art, music, and poetry related to the theme of community. The exhibit included submissions by JTS students, staff, and faculty and aimed to give everyone at JTS the opportunity to explore community service and social action through art. Artwork created by members of BCI's School of Healing Arts and DOROT's Siorta Center for Intergenerational Arts was also displayed at the exhibit, strengthening the relationship between the Rudin Center and these partner organizations and demonstrating how the arts can be used to help and heal others.



Dorothy Cameron, director of BCI's Healing Arts Program, center, pictured with BCI artists at the Rudin Center art exhibit.

The Healing Sounds of Music

To complement the Rudin Center Art Exhibit, Judy Ribnick, LCSW, director of Community Services at DOROT and Charles Gourgey, a music therapist, discussed the use of music to help

people connect with others. A member of DOROT's senior chorus spoke about the positive impact the chorus has had on her life.

Conference on Autism Awareness and Inclusion in the Jewish Community

Spearheaded by a student in List College, and planned with the help of a student committee, this conference helped educate the JTS community on autism spectrum disorder. The conference included a variety of programs to prepare future cantors, rabbis, educators, and lay leaders to build more aware and inclusive Jewish communities and institutions. Speakers included Rabbi Cantor Zvi Rosen, educator at Shema Kolainu, a school for children with autism; Dr. Aryeh Davidson, assistant professor of Jewish Education at JTS, and founder of Tikvah, a program for adolescents with learning disabilities at a Ramah camp in Northern Wisconsin; Rabbi Jim Rosen of Beth El Temple in West Hartford, Connecticut, who has written extensively in the area of disability and Judaism; and a panel of JTS students who each spoke about their experiences working with children with autism.

Annual Tzedakah Campaign

The Rudin Center helped to ensure that the mitzvah of giving tzedakah remained a priority for JTS community members through its Annual Tzedakah Campaign, which included a variety of educational programs and events throughout the year. In addition, tzedakah boxes were strategically placed in the Dining Hall, residence halls, The Library, and in the JTS synagogues. This year's tzedakah campaign raised over \$20,000 for organizations in need in the United States, Israel, and internationally.



List College students at the annual Tzedakah Rocks! benefit concert.

Tzedakah Rocks!

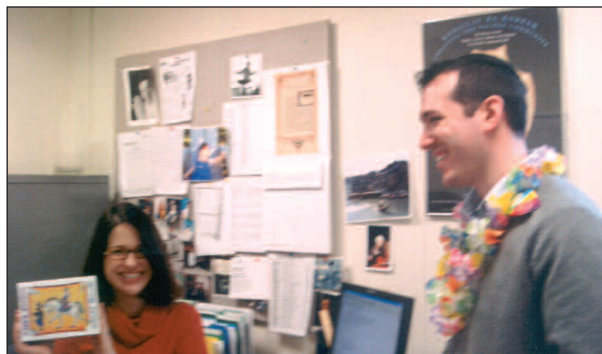
This annual benefit concert features Shake Rabbis and Roll, a rock band made up of New York-area Conservative rabbis including JTS faculty members Dr. Robbie Harris and Dr. Jeffrey Hoffman. This year, the proceeds from the concert were donated to Safe Horizon and Sanctuary for Families, organizations in New York City that help victims of domestic violence.

Book Sales and Auction

The Rudin Center received donations of used Judaic books from individuals in the extended JTS community and then sold or auctioned the books to students to raise funds for the tzedakah campaign.

Rudin Center Donation Cards

JTS students, faculty, and staff purchased condolence or celebratory cards to send to their friends and relatives. Proceeds from the card sales were donated to the Annual Tzedakah Campaign.



Micah Liben, a student in The Rabbinical School, helping deliver mishloach manot to JTS students, staff, and faculty.

cards were sold, giving JTS community members the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah to give to people in need on Purim.

Purim Tzedakah Campaign

The Purim Tzedakah Campaign invites JTS community members to make a donation to tzedakah and send Purim greetings to friends and coworkers. Students, staff, and faculty participated in the Tzedakah Campaign Committee and reached out to friends and colleagues to encourage participation. In total, 170 people contributed, and the campaign raised almost \$15,000. In addition, *Matanot L'Evyonim*

JTS Race Teams

This year the Rudin Center assembled a team of students and employees for the Race to Deliver, which benefited God's Love We Deliver, an organization that provides nutritious meals to people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other life-altering illnesses.

Open Mic Night

At the initiative of a Davidson School student, JTS community members were invited to display their musical and theatrical talents at an open mic night. Guests who attended were asked to make a contribution toward the Annual Tzedakah Campaign.



Pictured left to right are students Jonah Rank (List College), Andy Shugerman (The Rabbinical School), and David Rosen (The Davidson School) performing together at the Rudin Center's Open Mic Night.

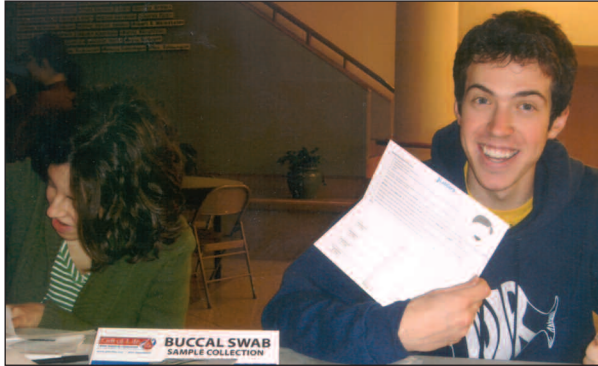
Allocations

An allocations committee composed of JTS community members met to determine how to allocate the funds from the Annual Tzedakah Campaign. Organizations that received donations this year include, but are not limited to, the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, Ramah Tikvah Scholarship Funds, and Yad Eliezer. A complete list of recipient organizations appears at the end of this report.

Additional Rudin Center Programs

Blood Drives

Through the New York Blood Center, one blood drive was held in the fall semester, and two were held during the spring semester. A total of 105 pints of blood were collected from JTS students, faculty, and staff.



List College student Jody Zellman at the Gift of Life Bone Marrow Drive.

Bone Marrow Drive

A number of Rabbinical School students helped coordinate a bone marrow drive in order to register new people with the Gift of Life Foundation bone-marrow donor registry. The Gift of Life Foundation strives to increase the representation of Jewish donors in the registry in order to overcome the devastating effects of the Holocaust, which severed bloodlines.

Clothing Drives

Two clothing drives were held at JTS in the fall and spring semesters. Students, faculty, and staff donated clothing that was then given to two different organizations: Homes for the Homeless and the Salvation Army.

Food Drives

Two food drives were held in the fall and spring semesters and the food collected was donated to BCI, here in our Morningside Heights neighborhood.

Give and Go Green

Traditionally, students moving out of the residence halls at the end of the school year have discarded a lot of items that they no longer need. This year, JTS EcoReps (representatives who serve on the JTS Green Committee), the Rudin Center, and the Office of Residence Life organized a campaign called “Give and Go Green” to help reduce waste and contribute to people in need. Collection boxes were placed in each of the residence halls for things like clothing, shoes, furniture, unopened toiletries, linens, kitchenware, books, computers, and nonperishable food. In addition, “e-waste”—electrical and electronic waste items like batteries and lightbulbs—was collected and brought to an appropriate site. One-hundred twenty-five large bags filled with donations were given to the Salvation Army.

Haar Family Memorial Kallah Mitzvah Project and Links to Leadership Retreat Mitzvah Project

As students, faculty, and staff arrived at these annual Shabbat retreats, they assembled special art kits for children who are patients at St. Lukes Roosevelt Hospital.



List College students at the Links to Leadership retreat make art kits for children who are patients at St. Lukes-Roosevelt Hospital Center

Howie the Harp Graduation

In October 2007 the Rudin Center hosted this year's Howie the Harp Graduation. Howie the Harp is one of the programs orchestrated by Community Access, a small not-for-profit organization in New York City dedicated to helping people with severe mental illness. Graduates of the Howie the Harp program have received employment training, placement, and support services so that they can begin to live on their own. The Rudin Center invited JTS community members to show support for the graduates by attending and volunteering at the ceremony that was held at JTS.

Interfaith Relations

As part of JTS's initiative to build bridges with the Muslim community, the coordinator of community outreach and the volunteer coordinator met with leadership of the 96th Street Mosque several times throughout the year to determine an appropriate volunteer project for both communities to engage in together. In July 2008, a group of JTS students, faculty, and staff joined members of the 96th Street Mosque in volunteering at the BCI soup kitchen in Morningside Heights. We plan to continue to volunteer at the soup kitchen alongside members of the 96th Street Mosque on a regular basis this coming 2008–2009 academic year.

Rudin Center Roundtable

The Rudin Center Roundtable continues to serve as an advisory committee to assist with the work of the Rudin Center. This roundtable committee included students, faculty, and staff at JTS who are committed to the Rudin Center.

Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

This end-of-year gathering gave us the opportunity to express our appreciation to every volunteer who served our community for five or more hours this past year.

Volunteer Leadership Program

The Volunteer Leadership Program is an enrichment program for a dozen JTS students who

demonstrate a deep commitment to social action. Students from each of JTS's five schools participate in this special program that helps to create a community of volunteers, as well as give participants the opportunity to discuss and explore various topics related to community service and social action. This year's seminars included a session relating to domestic violence in the Jewish community, a text study on the environment, and a visit to one of Common Ground's buildings. Common Ground provides affordable housing and a network of support to formerly homeless people.

Planning for 2008–2009

During the upcoming 2008–2009 academic year, the Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim: Susan and Jack Rudin Center for Community Outreach will focus on growing the number of participants in our on-going volunteer opportunities. Many of our students balance their academic course work with various jobs, internships, and family life, making it a challenge to fit volunteerism into their busy schedules. With this in mind, the Rudin Center is exploring different ways help boost participation during the 2008–2009 academic year. We plan to:

- Organize a phone-a-thon for the beginning of the fall semester. Students, staff, and faculty will gather to make phone calls to their friends and colleagues, encouraging them to sign up for at least one volunteer program over the course of the year.
- Seek partnerships with other JTS constituencies, including student organizations and Residence Life staff in an effort to connect to people that we might not otherwise reach.
- Offer a greater variety of volunteer projects, especially one-time opportunities. We hope to appeal to a broader population, meeting the diverse interests and schedules of the JTS community.

Through these various marketing and outreach initiatives, we hope to build upon the base of current volunteers who participate in our ongoing programs.

The Rudin Center Staff Members*

Tani Schwartz, coordinator of Community Outreach, is devoted to providing opportunities for JTS students, faculty, and staff to volunteer in the community through the Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim: Susan and Jack Rudin Center for Community Outreach. She also works with students to coordinate Rudin Center educational programs and our Annual Tzedakah Campaign. Before coming to JTS, Tani earned her MA in Public Administration at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and served as program director for Medical Development for Israel, a fundraising organization that supports Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel.

Deborah Miller, educational program associate*, works with the JTS community to coordinate and cultivate interest in educational programming related to community service. Deeply committed to *tikkun 'olam*, Deborah has been an active volunteer for just about as long as she can remember, and is an especially proud alumna of Project OTZMA.

Ben Herman, volunteer coordinator*, serves as the liaison between JTS community members and the Rudin Center's partner organizations. He reaches out to students, staff, and faculty members to promote the various volunteer opportunities of the Rudin Center. Ben graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a BA in History, Hebrew, and Jewish Studies. He is enthusiastic about community service and spent the summer of 2006 doing a Social Justice Rabbinic Fellowship with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs in Chicago, where he worked with a Muslim nonprofit organization while also studying Jewish texts on social justice.

Ute Steyer, book sale coordinator* and Rabbinical School student, uses her expertise in Judaic books to sort and price books for the Rudin Center's semiannual book sales that raise money for the Annual Tzedakah Campaign. In addition to studying at The Rabbinical School, she will also be finishing her MA in Jewish Philosophy this year. Before coming to JTS, Ute worked as a project manager for implementations of mobile telephone systems worldwide for Ericsson. Ute is extremely passionate about books and loves overseeing the Rudin Center booksales.

**The positions of educational program associate, volunteer coordinator, and book sale coordinator are offered to a new JTS student each year, in order to involve a greater number of students with the Rudin Center and give more students the opportunity to assume a leadership role.*

2007–2008 Statistics

The Va'ad Gemilut Hasadim: Susan and Jack Rudin Center for Community Outreach provided the following services during the 2007–2008 academic year:

- Staffed the Anshe Chesed Homeless Shelter on forty-seven nights;
- Impacted the lives of twenty children through the Everybody Wins! Power Lunch program;
- Visited the Jewish Home and Hospital on eighteen occasions to conduct pre-Shabbat programs with the residents;
- Donated 105 pints of blood through the New York Blood Center;
- Volunteered at the BCI soup kitchen weekly during the fall and spring semesters;
- Raised over \$20,000 through our Annual Tzedakah Campaign;
- Delivered approximately sixty meals from the JTS Dining Hall to the BCI Soup Kitchen;
- Added thirty-six new registrants to the Gift of Life bone marrow registry;
- Collected 150 large bags of food, clothing, and other items that were donated to the Salvation Army, Homes for the Homeless, and BCI soup kitchen; and
- Educated over 130 students, staff, and faculty who participated in at least one of our educational programs this year.

Overall Participation in Volunteer Opportunities, Educational Programs, and Tzedakah Campaign:

Population	Total Participants	% of Population
The Davidson School	27	34%
The Graduate School	20	14%
H. L. Miller Cantorial School and College of Jewish Music	23	52%
List College	79	43%
The Rabbinical School	81	60%
Faculty and Staff	118	25%
Total	348	33%

Annual Tzedakah Campaign Allocations for 5768 (2007–2008)

United States

Abyssinian Development Corporation
Broadway Community, Inc.
City Harvest
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
DOROT
Gift of Life
God's Love We Deliver
Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness
and Housing
Jewish Home and Hospital
Lifeskills Program at the Anshe Chesed
Homeless Shelter
Matan
Mazon
Morningside Retirement and Health
Services, Inc.
Project ORE
Ramah Tikva Scholarship Funds
Safe Horizon
Sanctuary for Families
Shema Kolainu
Single Stop USA
The Blue Card
The Hebrew Free Burial Association
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
UJA Federation of NY

Israel

A Package From Home
Abraham's Vision
BINAH
Carmei Ha'ir
Lifeline for the Old
Masorti Israel Special Needs
(Moreshet Avraham)
One Family Fund
Seeds of Peace
SELAH
Shevet Achim
The Malki Foundation
The Rabbanit Karpach
Tova's Kitchen
Woman to Woman
Yad Eliezer
Yad Sarah

International

American Jewish World Service
Argentinean Jewry—Comunidad Dor Jadash
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
Operation Dreamseed
Our Lady's Youth Center
Save A Child's Heart
Stop Hunger Now
The World Council of Conservative/Masorti
Synagogues

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