

**THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST SYNAGOGUE
OF THE NORTH SHORE**

SYNAGOGUE SCHOOL

**5774
2013/2014**

Lee Friedlander, Rabbi
Jodie Siff, Rabbi
Eric Schulmiller, Cantor
Rachel Gibbons, Education Chair

School-wide Sukkot Program— SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

CLASSES BEGIN

All bet-vav students: Tuesday, September 10, 4:15 p.m.

**Kadima (7th Grade) First Class and Orientation with Parents
Tuesday September 10, Pizza at 6:00 p.m., Class at 6:30 p.m.**

First Friday of Shabbat School: September 20, 6:00 p.m.

Kindergarten & Alef: Thursday, October 3, 4:15 p.m.

EDUCATIONAL VISION STATEMENT: Jewish Education occurs in a partnership among the generations, and between the Reconstructionist Synagogue Community and its members. Our religious school is integrated into our larger synagogue community and draws upon the resources of our entire congregation. We place a strong emphasis on intergenerational community building and life long Jewish learning among all members.

GOALS FOR THE SCHOOL: It is our goal to support your desire to raise your children with a deep appreciation, understanding, and excitement for Jewish life in its various manifestations - religious, cultural, spiritual and communal. We strive to create a climate of acceptance and security, where all questions are honored and each child is appreciated. We seek to create within our school that which we look for throughout the congregation - a caring community. We hope to provide each child with the tools to lead full and productive Jewish lives.

Children are taught to love and honor the language of our tradition as they learn the *alef-bet*. Through song, prayer and stories they deepen their knowledge of Hebrew. We teach Torah as a living document that serves not only as a record of our people's experiences, but as a blueprint for our lives today.

SPECIAL NEEDS: We are committed as a community to working with all children and addressing each individual as unique, while taking into account the needs of the Synagogue School community. Children with special needs are those classified by N.Y. State, including those with a medical diagnosis, or who receive special services in and or outside of their secular schools. Sometimes it is necessary for additional conferences to take place among parents, teachers, rabbis, the Education Committee, and the Director to resolve classroom and/or behavioral issues involving a student with special needs.

A number of possible options will be explored at these conferences to address these situations. The evaluative team may recommend various options including a special schedule that allows for the child's day to be shorter; encouragement of a professional evaluation for the child; or the provision of additional services by the family at the family's expense such as a classroom aide, or a tutor outside the Synagogue School Program. This policy provides all the children in our synagogue community access to a Jewish education.

SYNAGOGUE SCHOOL OPTIONS

Welcome to the K/Alef Classes for 5774 (2013-2014)! We are so excited to have you in our school and as a part of this cooperative program. Our first class is scheduled for Thursday, September 20. Our school day is from 4:15-6:15 p.m. – we start at 4:15 p.m. sharp, so it is extremely important to have your children at the synagogue on time! There is a light snack for those who arrive prior to 4:15 p.m. We have dinner at 5:40 p.m.

When it is your turn to be the special family, your responsibility includes providing dinner for the students in our classes (in 2012-2013 there were 23 students). There are 27 dates on our calendar, so please sign up to provide dinners for the class!

Dinner **MUST** be dairy/vegetarian or KOSHER meat. In the past, dinners have been pizza, pasta, bagels and spreads. We will give specific guidelines once we know if there are food allergies in the class. There can be **NO HUMMUS** provided for dinner as well as **NO DUNKIN DONUTS** for dessert. Dessert is optional and up to each individual family. If you do decide to bring dessert, please make every effort to bring in something that is nut free and has not been processed on equipment that has handled peanuts, tree nuts or sesame seeds.

Families are asked to bring in a ritual object from home that they can use for show and tell. If you need ideas about what to bring, Rabbi Jodie would love to help . . . email her at rabjodie@optonline.net or call her at the synagogue (516-627-6274).

You will receive an email in the beginning of the week that you are due to participate in class. If you cannot make your participation day, it is **EXTREMELY** important that you arrange to swap days with another family and notify us of the change!! If there is no one to swap days with, we will still need you to provide dinner, even if your child is absent.

Tuesday/Thursday — Bet (2nd Grade) through Vav (6th Grade): from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m. Hebrew instruction and school community programs including *Tefilla Breira* (electives) will be on Tuesdays. *Torah, Jewish Values* and *Acts of Ethical Kindness*, will be the focus of Thursdays. *Tefilla* (prayer service) is held on Thursdays.

Shabbat School — Bet (2nd Grade) through Vav (6th Grade): This program addresses the desire for direct family involvement in our children's Jewish education and fosters Shabbat learning. Children build community within their age groups and come together in the study of *Torah, Jewish Values* and *Acts of Ethical Kindness*.

The Shabbat School program schedule is as follows: One Friday evening each month (when family services are held), students engage in "classroom" activities from 6:00 to 7:25 p.m. They then join their parents for Family Services beginning at 7:30 p.m. Sessions held on the remaining Saturday mornings are from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and will include Torah study and services. Parents are required to attend with their children on the designated *B'yahad* service schedule. On Friday evenings, the students will have a choice of how to study the Torah portion of that week. Classes will be mixed grade levels and will explore Torah through drama, art, technology or nature.

Grade bet through vav classes on Thursdays and Shabbat School classes on Saturdays include the Chai (meaning "life") curriculum. The Jewish sages teach us that "the world stands on three things;

Torah, Jewish Values and Acts of Ethical Kindness. These pursuits – study, worship, and deeds of loving kindness – provide the framework within which Jews build their relationship with one another and with the world. Accordingly, *Torah, Jewish Values and Acts of Ethical Kindness.* serve as the core of the Chai curriculum, providing students with the foundation for a lifetime of Jewish learning and living.

Tefilla Breira: Prayer services at RSNS are filled with singing and laughter – a truly wonderful part of the day. Our students have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the service. *Tefilla Breira* (prayer electives) or “*breirot*” give students a chance to try something new, letting them focus on a particular type of prayer activity. We will explore different ways to access prayer through storytelling, social action, yoga, Israeli dancing and creative writing sessions led by our staff.

Kiosk: Snacks (pretzels or plain bagels) will be available for children from 4:00 to 4:15 p.m. Kindergarten and alef grade students have dinner in their classroom. **Do not send food to school with your children unless they have a food allergy. You may then provide a supply of appropriate snacks that will be kept separately for them.** Please be sure to alert the office of any allergies.

CLASS SCHEDULE

kindergarten & alef

Thursday, 4:15–6:15 p.m.

Kadima (7th Grade)

Tuesday, Pizza 6:00–6:30 p.m., Class 6:30–8:00 p.m.

bet through vav 2nd - 6th grade (details below)

Tuesday & Thursday, 4:15–6:15 p.m.

Shabbat School 2nd - 6th grade (details below)

Tuesday, 4:15–6:15 p.m.

Friday night of family services, 6:00–8:30 p.m. (Parents attend with children from 7:30-8:30 p.m.)

2-3 Saturdays each month, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Class Schedule for Tuesday/Thursday bet through vav classes

Tuesday

4:00–4:15 *Kiosk* (snacks)

4:15–5:00 p.m. Session 1

5:00–5:30 p.m. *Tefilla Breira* (elective activity)

5:30–6:15 p.m. Session 2

Thursday

4:00–4:15 p.m. *Kiosk* (snacks)

4:15–5:00 p.m. Session 1

5:00–5:30 p.m. *Tefilla* (prayer service)

5:30–6:15 p.m. Session 2

6:15-6:30 p.m. Kids Choir (optional for all students in grades gimmel through vav)

Shabbat School Schedule

Tuesday 4:15–6:15 p.m.

Fridays 5:30–6:00 p.m. Dinner (optional)

6:00–7:30 p.m. Class

7:30–8:30 p.m. Family Services (parents meet children in Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.)

Saturday classes when there is no *B'yahad* service

9:00–11:00 a.m. Class without parents

Saturday with *B'yahad* service. Parents attend with students

9:00–10:00 a.m. Adult Study (adults and children separate)

10:00–11:00 a.m. Service

Holiday Celebrations and Mitsva Day

Our “holistic” approach to our calendar with the goal of integrating learning on holidays and Shabbat into the master schedule has been very successful. Families come together with the synagogue community for holiday celebrations and Mitsva Day. These special days are all incorporated directly into the school calendar and curriculum. We feel that this program addresses the obstacles we face in attempting to increase and intensify family engagement on Shabbat and holidays. In today’s busy society, synagogue programs compete with the myriad demands of secular life; thus is the age-old struggle of the modern Jew. By having families attend these community wide programs, while keeping the total number of sessions per week at two, we have addressed the time constraint while still providing experiences for families on the actual holiday. Of course these events are open to all congregants, not just those enrolled in the school.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Regular attendance at our Synagogue school is important and expected. We all want our kids to feel comfortable and competent with Hebrew reading and Jewish culture, both of which are strengthened by their regular attendance. Regular attendance helps create the kind of community we hope to build for our kids. When kids routinely miss school for appointments and events they lose a sense of continuity with their peers and it is harder for teachers to teach. We take attendance in each class and will be in touch with you if a problem arises. After 5 absences (an absence from either 1st or 2nd period will count as a full day missed) you should expect to receive a letter. After 10 absences we will arrange for a family conference. If a child is absent 15 times he or she will not be allowed to advance to the next grade and will therefore forfeit a bar/bat mitzva date. We appreciate your cooperation.

Early Dismissal: Students who must leave Synagogue School early will only be dismissed from the office at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and 5:40 p.m. on Thursdays. This avoids disrupting classes. **Please do not arrange to pick up your child at any other time unless it is an emergency and you have spoken to the office.** All students who leave early must be signed out in the office. **An early dismissal will count as an absence.**

RESIDENCY POLICY: The goals of the RSNS synagogue school are to impart to our children not only the Hebrew language, prayer and Jewish culture and history, but to instill an appreciation for Jewish life and values. As a Reconstructionist congregation, we seek to create a cohesive caring community within our school as well as in the congregation. To achieve this goal, which our congregation deems to be of great importance, the synagogue school has a six-year residency requirement for attendance. This is defined as follows: All children are required to attend synagogue school from grades Bet through Kadima (grades 2 through 7), although school begins in Kindergarten and we welcome and encourage children to attend our school from Kindergarten through keshet chadash (RSNS Teen Connections).

EXCEPTIONS: A student who has attended another Hebrew School since at least second grade will be admitted to RSNS Synagogue School and will be evaluated by the educational director and placed in the appropriate grade. Private tutoring (at the expense of the family) may be deemed necessary to enable the child to be current with his or her correct grade.

Other exceptions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. However, it is the belief of the synagogue community that it is disruptive to community building as well as to Reconstructionist principles to allow exceptions to the six-year residency requirement. All decisions regarding exceptions to the residency requirement will be at the sole discretion of the educational director and/or rabbi(s) in conjunction with the chair of the education committee.

“OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM”

Prayer: Bet through vav classes join together for a modified prayer service weekly on Thursdays from 5:00 to 5:40p.m. We have found that communal prayer creates a sense of Synagogue School community and *kavana* (intent). Kindergarten and alef engage in weekly *tefilla* (prayer service) with Rabbi Jodie.

Special Events: Several times a year we will be holding school-wide or class-wide special events. These will include Mitzva Day preparation, Purim Carnival, a Holocaust remembrance program, the making of home ritual objects for Shabbat and a school wide *zimriah* (music program). Families are welcome to participate.

Tzedaka: The Jewish ideals of *tzedaka* were summarized and taught by Moses Maimonides, a great teacher who lived 800 years ago in Spain and then in Egypt. Maimonides believed that *tzedaka* is like a ladder with eight rungs from bottom to top. One of the highest levels that can be reached is by the person who gives without making his or her identity known. We encourage the children to bring *tzedaka* to be **collected in their classroom**. Each class community will make a tzedaka box and engage in a values clarification exercise to help develop a connection to the mitzva of tzedaka. Students will be part of the decision making process to determine where the money will be given. Please help your child remember to bring *tzedaka* regularly.

Children’s Choir: Our successful Children’s Choir, led by Cantor Eric Schulmiller, is offered for students in grades gimmel through vav. They meet every Tuesday from 6:15-6:30 p.m. to prepare material to sing at Family Services.

B'yahad: The *B'yahad* program is one Saturday morning each month from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. There are two simultaneous Torah study groups — one for parents and the other for children — followed immediately by a joint family shabbat service. As always, the *B'yahad* services remain an integral part of the synagogue school program and are open to the entire community.

Shabbat Services: Family services are held one Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. There are many different ways for families to participate. We work with each class to enable parents to provide Jewish role models for their children as well as expand their knowledge of Jewish liturgy and texts. At Back-To-School Night you may sign up to help with a Family Service oneg. The *B'yahad* Saturday morning family service and education program will act as reinforcement for our *tefilla* program.

FRIDAY EVENING FAMILY SERVICE PARTICIPATION 7:30 p.m.

September 20	Shabbat School	January 24	hay
October 4	bet consecration & new members	February 7	daled
November 1	vav	March 7	gimmel
December 6	Shabbat School	April 4	kindergarten/alef
		May 2	Shabbat School

ASHOKAN: The gimmel through vav students have the opportunity to experience a wonderful weekend retreat at the Ashokan Field Campus near the Ashokan Reservoir in upstate New York. This program provides a unique opportunity for significant Jewish learning and community away

from home and the synagogue. This year the retreat will take place Friday, January 31 through Sunday, February 2, 2014

A NOTE ABOUT B'NAY MITSVA: In the course of the past several years, students have come to the Synagogue wearing personalized clothing they received as bar or bat mitsva favors. Students who did not attend the party have felt excluded. We ask you to consider how the 'uninvited' children feel when they come into our synagogue and see many of their classmates wearing the same party favor. Therefore, as you plan your child's bar/t mitsva celebration, please consider the impact that your choice of party favor will have on the synagogue and public school communities.

DISMISSAL FROM SCHOOL:

Option #1 Back Door Dismissal Line: Under this arrangement, students are escorted to waiting cars that are dismissed from their assigned rows on the side of the building. The last car will leave no later than 6:30 p.m. **Traffic Lanes** In order to expedite the dismissal process, we have expanded our pickup area to include 4 separate lanes. Please follow the instructions of our volunteers when being directed to a lane. Also, please note that on Tuesdays all cars picking up Kids Choir participants will be directed to a 5th lane to maintain optimal traffic flow. Remember to shut your cars and lights off. The no idling policy is for all of our well being - remembering to shut off your lights can help prevent a dead battery. For the safety of your children we ask you to follow these simple guidelines if you are picking up from the back door. **Exiting the Parking Lot** You will be directed when it is your line's turn to leave. Please understand that it may not necessarily be the same order in which you arrived, and remember that there's truly only a minute between the lines — please give us that minute for the safety of all our children. When you are leaving the parking lot, stay to the right. **There is two-way traffic on The Terrace!** The incoming lane must be kept clear for our neighbors.

Option #2 Walkers: Parents enter the building to pick up their child(ren). Walkers will be required to park in the front parking lot. Do NOT park in the fire lane. Drivers will be required to enter through the sanctuary doors, and wait on line to sign out their child(ren) and any others in your carpool. No students will be dismissed before 6:15. No one will be permitted to enter the building via the Synagogue School door used for regular dismissal. Walker families are NOT permitted to leave their cars in the driveway in front of the synagogue. Walker families must park their cars in appropriate spaces. If you do not want to WALK from a parking spot into the building, please choose the back door option. When exiting onto Plandome Road, if at all possible, please consider making a right turn onto Plandome and use an alternate route in order to expedite the flow of exiting traffic – we all know how impossible that left turn is! Anything we all can do to move things along is surely appreciated.

Carpool Dismissal Volunteers Every family is asked to assist in the dismissal process from 6:10 to 6:30 p.m. twice during the school year. **All grade 2-6 parents, including Shabbat School, sign up for a total of 2 dates, regardless of what dismissal options you use for pick-up.** Families with only kindergarten and alef students sign up for one date. You will receive an email with sign-up instructions.

HOW TO REACH US: We are very interested in all your ideas, concerns and questions regarding any aspect of your child's experience at school. Rabbi Jodie is available to discuss any issues that arise. For administrative questions, please speak to Sylvia.

STANDING EDUCATION COMMITTEE: The chair of the education committee is Rachel Gibbons. Dates and times of Education Committee meetings will be announced by email.

STANDING EDUCATION COMMITTEE ROLE AND PROCEDURES: We have established the following goals and functions for the Standing Education Committee:

1. Fulfill vision of school
2. Act as curriculum advisor
3. Establish policy and support enforcement
4. Report to the synagogue board
5. Interface with the school community
6. Establish procedures to ensure the safe and effective operation of the school
7. Evaluate the school

Membership in the Standing Education Committee is comprised of parent volunteers who have made a commitment to attend most meetings, the VP of Education who reports to the board, the school administrator, school director and the clergy. During the school year, anyone who wishes to attend a particular meeting or meetings is welcome to attend. However, only those parents who express an interest and join the Standing Education Committee would have the right to vote on issues presented at meetings.

and don't forget

- ✓ We communicate with school families by a weekly email, most often on Mondays. Any questions about these emails can be directed to Sharon Dobbs in the RSNS office at sharonrsns@optonline.net We hope that all parents read these emails.
- ✓ Kindergarten and Alef meet on all Thursdays when school is in session.
- ✓ Shabbat School meets on all Tuesdays when school is in session.
- ✓ When the synagogue office is closed, there is NO synagogue school.
- ✓ If the public schools close early due to inclement weather, a decision will be made relative to Synagogue School.
- ✓ When Synagogue School is cancelled on a regularly scheduled day, you will receive a phone message from our auto-dialer and an e-mail. (Call the office if you need to be added to our group e-mail list.)