

# Serving Delaware & the Brandywine Valley

# JEWISH Voice

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Back to School

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## Donations Critically Needed for Ethiopian-Israeli Children

By Michelle Efron Miller



education program. Currently facing deep budget cuts, the program is now in crisis and needs urgent funding to keep its doors open.

Without support, ENP would be forced to shut down 15 of 22 Outreach Centers and cut 2,500 Ethiopian youths (ages 13-18) from the programs, due to a recent 51 percent overall budget reduction.

The UJC Executive Committee approved a request to help the Ethiopian National Project – a partner of UJC/Federation, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel – by raising \$3.7 million in order to maintain scholastic assistance programs and Youth Outreach Centers.

UJC Center for Jewish Philanthropy Chair, and Wilmington resident, Toni Young said that, “Every \$1,000 raised will keep one student in the program for a year.” She commented, “We have to prevent the Ethiopian-Israelis from becoming a permanent underclass.”

The committee was briefed on the emer-

gent situation and agreed to support the UJC Center for Jewish Philanthropy proposal that asks Federations to voluntarily raise money to save these programs.

“This is a voluntary effort,” Young said. “We are presenting this ENP effort as an opportunity to all those communities wishing to be a part of it.

The scholastic assistance program has been shown to help this at-risk population achieve significantly higher scores in school exams that determine college eligibility and represent a key gateway into Israeli society, according to a Myers-JDC-Brookdale study.

“We do not want these kids to be without this kind of help,” Young added.

The emergent campaign will commence immediately and run through the month of August. If funding commitments are generated in the next six weeks, ENP will be able to hire teachers in time for the school year in September. Payments can come as late as next summer, but communities must

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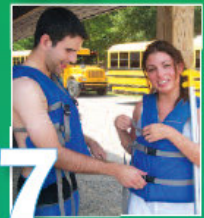
As you prepare your child to return to school this fall, imagine for a moment if you couldn't. Many Ethiopian parents who immigrated to Israel are severely restricted economically and are hoping that your generous donations will support the Ethiopian National Project (ENP).

The ENP is a charity of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) and Jewish Federations of North America designed to assist Ethiopian, at-risk, teen-agers living in Israel.

Last month, UJC approved a voluntary appeal to Federations to help keep Ethiopian-Israeli students in this important

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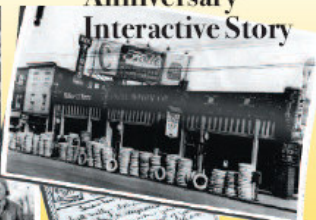
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## JFD Announces

### 75 Year Anniversary Interactive Story



Please send us your memories!

Photos courtesy the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware.

Last month, the Jewish Federation of Delaware announced a yearlong celebration of its 75th anniversary of serving the Jewish community. From its inception in 1935, Federation staff and volunteers have worked together to assist Jews

in need locally, in Israel, and throughout the world.

To mark the occasion, the Jewish Voice is publishing a historic chronicle of each decade, with assistance from the Jewish Historical Society of

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Back to School

## “Black Belt” Rabbi Breaks Traditional Mold; Celebrates 1st Year Anniversary as AKSE’s Spiritual Leader

By Michelle Efron Miller

At the Siegel JCC's Early Childhood Center last school year, Rabbi Steven Saks, 34, could be seen teaching his young protégés the martial art of Jiu-Jitsu. He'd carefully adjust the defensive front-stance of his

proach are breaking the mold. Arriving at Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth (AKSE) only one year ago, Rabbi Saks last month rose from being a member of the Rabbinical Association of Delaware (RAD) to his new role as its president. In contrast to his previous rabbinical position at Philadelphia's Adath Zion Congregation, the rabbi notes that Wilmington offers him the opportunity to be a “big fish in a small pond.” Adding, very quickly, he is humbled by his new responsibilities, “I am looking forward to the privilege of serving as RAD president while continuing the communal leadership role of Rav HaMachshir of the Va’ad Hakashruth and the Chevrah Kaddisha – all of which provide a vital service to the community at large.”

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Of course, Rabbi Saks' main

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Rabbi Steven Saks in front of Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth in Wilmington.

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## FEDERATION FOCUS

# A Message from Ben Shiff, Federation's New Young Emissary

### SHALOM DELAWARE AND THE BRANDYWINE VALLEY!

My name is Ben Shiff, and I am excited to be your new Shaliach in the upcoming year. This is a great opportunity for me. I'm glad to be coming to your beautiful community and am looking forward to sharing my life with you.

I truly believe in the strong connection that exists between the Jewish world and Israel. Here, in Israel, the Jewish people in the Diaspora are a big part of our lives. And, in my home town of Arad, which is a Federation Partnership 2000 community, we feel the same way.

I live with my two parents. My father, Arie,

is a physical therapist and my mother, Leah, works in one of the major hotels at the Dead Sea. I have two older sisters: Einat, 31, runs a small glass museum in Arad, is married and has two lovely daughters whom I love very much, and Irit, 28, lives in Tel Aviv and works for a large corporation.

Two years ago, I finished my army service as a combat medic. Since then, I have taken a professional course and I am now a certified tour guide in Israel. In this position, I have learned about Israel's nature, history, and culture.

In addition, volunteer work is also a big part of my life. I worked as an environmental educa-

tor at an elementary school, and at Saroka Hospital assisting with the children in their pediatric cancer unit. At the young adult center (Mercaz Tze'erim) in Arad, I worked as a teen advisor.

I am looking forward to sharing my love of Israel with all of you!



With Great Anticipation,  
Ben Shiff,  
Ben@ShalomDel.org

## L'Hitra'ot! (See You!)

By Hadas Amster

Every journey has a beginning and an end. If a journey doesn't end, another can't start. My journey here in Delaware is about to end. By the time you read this, I'll be back at home. As you sit with your family for Shabbat dinner on Friday night, I, for the first time in a year, will do the same.

It is interesting for me to look at my position - a Shlichah - a young emissary. This year, I volunteered throughout the community, and more than anything else, I engaged in my personal journey. There are many processes that I feel I have started this year - things that I won't see come to their fruition. Anat, Hila, and Idan started events and programs that only came into full bloom this year, like the Israeli Film Festival that became a huge success or Yom Ha'zikaron that has become a wonderful tradition in this community.

The things that I cultivated, will, hopefully, continue to enrich the community after I leave. It was meaningful teaching people about Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier and a friend, held captive for four

summers in Gaza. I assisted in an international effort of Shlichim doing the same throughout the world to increase the pressure for his release. I loved staffing Birthright and hosting an entire bus of students from Delaware in my home. It was educational leading programs in a Catholic school. Expanding "Israel Day" to a full week at the Siegel JCC's summer camp was gratifying. Speaking at the Olive Tree Ministries and at the State Police was a great learning experience. Conducting programs with BBYO was special to me since I grew up involved in a youth group. Bringing Israeli speakers for the University of Delaware and Bagels & Briefings was a great honor. I enjoyed making the connection with Idith Shacham, an Israeli lawyer that lectured here about women's issues in Israel and who will come again in the fall.

I'm curious how these programs that I initiated and fostered will grow, expand and what they will become in a few years down the road. Will I be back to see them one day? I

certainly hope so.

I came here to share my passion and love of Israel - to strengthen the relationship between this community and Israel. It is a relationship, like any other relationship, that you have to mutually grow. I had the joy of people sharing their love of Israel with me: Israel's birthday party at the JCC, working with the children at the synagogue Hebrew schools, teaching at Albert Einstein Academy, and working with students at Hillel or during holiday programs.

Within this community I met wonderful people that truly care for others. When I was sick, a secret and yet friendly competition was going as to who makes the best chicken soup, which, as all of you know is the Jewish cure for any illness. I dare not name the winner but enjoyed and appreciated the competition.

People shared with me their love of American culture from Thanksgiving to "Black Friday" to the Presidential election, from baseball to a 4th of July BBQ.

When I am asked about



(L to R) Allison Weiss, Mike Kaminsky, Steve Gold,  
Hadas Amster & Matt Offman

the year, about being in Delaware, I give this answer, simple and true: this year has been a gift. I feel I have gained so much from it, and yet I know that it will take some time to truly know how much I have learned. I came here to volunteer, to give, to share. And I learned that when you give of yourself, you always feel as if you are the one who receives the most.

I'm excited about being reunited with my family in Israel, but I'm sad to leave my new family here in Delaware. When I was interviewing for this position, I was asked how I'd manage so far away from

my family. My answer was that, even with an ocean between us, they will still be with me. I know it will be the same with you. Next year I'll be engaged in another year of shlichut in New York, volunteering for the youth movement, Haborim Dror. My experience here will serve me well in my new adventure.

Please keep in touch with me. I look forward to hearing how my projects are growing. You can reach me at am.hadas@gmail.com.

Thank you for a wonderful year that I will treasure always.

Love,  
Hadas

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**DID YOU know?**

For 75 years, the Jewish Federation of Delaware has mobilized the community for social justice, human rights, education, and tzedakah?

**JEWISH FEDERATION OF DELAWARE**

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### Donations, from page 1

make commitments in this month to save the programs.

ENP administrators tell of several examples of young adults who are assisted by this life-changing program.

Abeve was 14-year-old when he nearly dropped out of school. Few believed in him, nor did he believe in himself. But the staff of the Ethiopian National Project (ENP) had total confidence that he had the potential to succeed.

Trained personnel worked intensively with him - first on rebuilding his self-confidence, then on improving his grades. Today, not only is Abeve regularly attending school, but he received one of the highest grades on his college acceptance exams and is certain to lead a successful life thanks to ENP. Abeve is one of thousands; thousands more await this opportunity.

In 2004, only 19% of Ethiopian-

Israeli seniors passed their high school completion exams, compared to 56% of the total Jewish population. In 2006, 32% of Ethiopian-Israeli seniors who attended high schools with ENP programs tested well enough to get into college. In 2008, statistics now show that the ENP has brought to a stop, and even reversed, many negative trends such as dropout rates, delinquency and flat college attendance.

The ENP is a charity of the United Jewish Communities (UJC), sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Delaware, and is making its place in the philanthropic world with quantifiable successes. With your much needed donations, this month, these successes will continue.

To donate, go to [www.ShalomDelaware.org](http://www.ShalomDelaware.org) and click on the "Ethiopian National Project." For more information, go to <http://www.enp.org.il/default.aspx>.

*"We have to prevent the Ethiopian-Israelis from becoming a permanent underclass."*

- Toni Young