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August 2014

Camp Gesher Newsletter

Summer, 2014

Friends of Camp Gesher



Gesher Is Moving Forward

Now that Shavuot is over, summer and camp cannot be far off.

In the spring I attended the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Leaders Assembly in New Brunswick, NJ, along with 700 other participants from Jewish community camps across North America. I observed that some of the things that Camp Gesher has been doing for years are now recognized by the assembly as an effective way to promote Jewish continuity. Youth-led camps, based on a vital and relevant Jewish culture, friends and role models and unplugged communities. This is the way to build a summer world for our children.

This summer Camp Gesher will host a *mifgash* (meeting) for representatives from Habonim Dror North America and some of the affiliated camps. They will get a chance

to see what's going on in the Gesher world. It's always instructive to get a visitor's perspective and the other camps always seem to take away some of our ideas. These *mifgashim* help the Habonim Dror affiliates develop our camps collaboratively with a strong and shared vision.

I also want to announce that Evan Mendel, who was *rosh racheneh* in 2010 and 2011, will be joining the Gesher staff as the new registrar. He will be providing administrative support to the leadership through the implementation of a new database and on-line registration system. We look forward with excitement to our ongoing evolution as an organization.

I hope to see you all on Visitors Day.

Gary Lichtblau, Chair of the board



First Wedding at Gesher!
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Meet Michael Grossman

[View our 50th Reunion Photos!](#)

Gesher L'Atid: Campaign Update

\$40 000 Raised!

Last July, we launched Phase 2 of *Gesher L'Atid / Bridge to the Future*, the capital campaign marking the camp's 50th anniversary. A number of Gesher families have made significant donations to raise \$25,000 for our new cabin. We are very grateful for their incredible support, the wonderful \$10,000 gift from Issie Lyon and the generous \$4500 grant from the Grinspoon Foundation.

One of our most impressive gifts came from one of our young alumni who is originally from Kitchener. Michael Grossman, 25, a mining engineer in training, gave the camp a gift of \$1000 and he has even pledged an additional \$800 (See page 6).

We have raised close to \$40,000, but we're not done yet. We need another \$20,000 to complete construction on the new cabin. We are now in Phase 3 of the campaign. If you have not had the opportunity to participate in *Gesher L'Atid*, we are asking you to give what you can.

Our scholarship fund, year-round education programs, seminars, dues to Habonim Dror, full-time shaliach, and the camp's physical maintenance are all

significant expenses which we bear out of our budget. Gesher must rely on donations for capital projects, which is why we need parents, alumni, and the parents of alumni to support our renewal projects.

We are asking all our Gesher families, past and present, to make donations that reflect their amazing time at camp. Your gift of \$360, \$180 or anything that you can

contribute (monthly donations are possible) will help ensure that the next generation of new campers and families will also be able to benefit from the special Gesher experience.

A big thank you to Liat Papular for organizing such a successful Open Mic Night at the Pilot Tavern. This recent alumni event raised



\$1000 for *Gesher L'Atid*.

Please go to our website (www.campgesher.com) and make a donation by clicking on the Canada Helps button, or make a cheque out to Camp Gesher. Your support will help keep Camp Gesher going for another 50 years.

Barbara Silverstein, Fundraising Chair

[Visit our Website](http://www.campgesher.com)

What Gesher Means to our Campers

Musings of a First-Time Camper

By Jonah Greenhut, Age 10



When I found out I was coming to Camp Gesher, I was very excited. I also had a lot of questions about what it was going to be like. My first day was overwhelming, but the counsellors were so helpful and they made me feel at home. The rest of the session seemed long, but when it had ended and I was going home, it seemed like the time went by too fast. My favourite day at camp was Rev Day, because everyone was excited and working together. I think the thing I will miss most about Gesher is the feeling of community. Everyone is different and unique, but at Gesher we all come together. I am looking forward to more summers here and seeing how Gesher evolves over my summers here.

Views of a Gesher Half-Lifer

By Shulamit Simon, Age 15

My name is Shushu and this is my 7th summer at Gesher. That's half of my entire life and I couldn't be happier about how it was spent. All my experiences at camp have been positive.

Anything that is remotely negative, like an especially rainy *tiyul* (trip) or a power outage, is made less unhappy and intimidating, because your kvutzah is there with you. And when it all ends, you can laugh about how ridiculous it was.

Gesher is a home away from home for me. My kvutzah is so close we may as well be joined at the hip and my madrichim are practically parents to us. This camp is where I learned to be outgoing, shameless and sensitive. It has made me believe in things and formulate opinions. Gesher is a place where if you and another person know each other's name, you can have a conversation. Everybody is so friendly. I am proud of Gesher and everything it encompasses. I am proud of my own personal accomplishments here, of my kvutzah and everything we've done, of the camp's history and its goals. I'm looking forward to continuing my experience at Gesher and what future leadership opportunities will bring.



The Only Jewish Kid From a Small Town School Finds a Welcoming Community

By Rebecca Cohen, Age 19



I'm from Sault St. Marie, a small city in Northern Ontario with a very small Jewish population. I was the only Jewish kid in high school. Two years ago, Shaul reached out to me and told me about Camp Gesher. I had been involved with RJCO (Regional Jewish Communities of Ontario), but I had never been a camper. I decided I wanted the camp experience. Shaul said I could go as a *Madatz*. I was nervous about joining a camp where people had known each other for years. Gesher was a welcoming and accepting environment. I developed new skills and formed many friendships. It was so foreign for me to be with other Jewish kids, but I felt a sense of belonging right from the beginning. Coming to Gesher has strengthened my Jewish identity. Overall I'm really glad I came, even if it was late in the game. I hope that other kids have a positive experience like mine.

[**View our 50th Reunion Photos!**](#)

Message From Our Executive Director

I have been the executive director at Camp Gesher since 1998. This summer will be my 16th year, but my connection to Gesher goes back a lot further. As a youth I was a member of *Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed* in Israel, which is the sister movement of Habonim Dror. Informal outdoor education is one of my passions and I can't wait to be back up at camp.

It's been a very busy year, especially for alumni activities. One of my goals is to reconnect alumni with Camp Gesher through events at Camp and in Toronto. Many of you may know that we had our 50th reunion at camp last summer. It was a great success, thanks to the hard work of Liat Papular, our alumni coordinator. We had 150 people of all ages in attendance.

We had a lot of fun at Open Mic Night at the beginning of June when 60 alumni and parents come to the Pilot Tavern in Yorkville.

This year Yael Polunsky, our *shlichah*, and I did outreach in a number of smaller Jewish communities in Ontario. We visited Ottawa several times, Kingston and Waterloo/Kitchener. In addition, we continue to run family and holiday programs for many downtown community groups like City Shul and the various groups who use the Miles Nadal JCC.

We also organized seminars for our older campers. We had a terrific turnout for Fall Seminar in Niagara Falls with 75 people in attendance and our Spring Seminar at camp

drew 60 participants.

Israel is a focus of many camp activities. Aside from Yael, who is our on-site specialist in Israeli programming and Jewish education, we also try to have other Israelis at camp. We bring a group of campers from Israel who introduce their peers to Israeli culture.

We will be saying goodbye to Yael after the summer as she will be returning to Israel. She has done a wonderful job. When I was in Israel this spring I interviewed several candidates. I am happy to announce that Ido Rumianek will be our next *shaliach*.

B'Shalom,

Shaul Zobary, Executive Director



[Sign up for our Alumni Family Weekend Aug 1-3rd, 2014!](#)

Alumni News

Open Mic Night

Gesher Alumni kicked off the summer with an Open Mic Night on June 7. There was a little boozing, a lot of schmoozing and plenty of live entertainment at the Pilot Tavern in Yorkville. Gesherites who braved the stage included Micah Rakoff-Bellman, Erez Zobary, Tamar Stein, Bram Cherun and Aaron Smordin. More than 60 people came out to this fun-filled fundraiser organized by Liat Paular, Gesher alumni coordinator. Many great raffle items were donated - gift cards, a signed CD by the original Broadway cast of Beautiful, treats, to name some of the prizes. In all, \$1000 was raised for *Gesher L'Atid*/ Bridge to the Future, the camp's 50th anniversary capital campaign.

Alumni Weekend August 1-3, 2014 at Camp!

Message From Our Rosh Machaneh

Hello Gesher families! I am very excited to be writing to you as this summer's *rosh machaneh*. This will be my 14th summer at Camp Gesher, and I am thrilled to be part of running a camp that is so dear to my heart. After spending a year in Israel on Habonim Dror's Workshop program, I started my undergraduate degree in biology at York University. In September I will be going into my fourth year.

I have spent four summers on *tzevet* (staff) at Camp Gesher, as a tripper, counsellor, and last summer as the *merkezet chinuch* (educational director). My job this year will be to work with mazkirut (Julie Dancis, *merkezet chinuch*, and Tamar Stein, *merakezet techni*) in planning the summer, training our *tzevet*, and overseeing the day-to-day running of the camp.

I'm looking forward to working with our vibrant community of parents, alumni, staff, and of course, campers! I'm hoping to create a summer of *ruach*, combining lots of new exciting programs along with the old traditions.

Erica Shenfeld, Rosh Machaneh

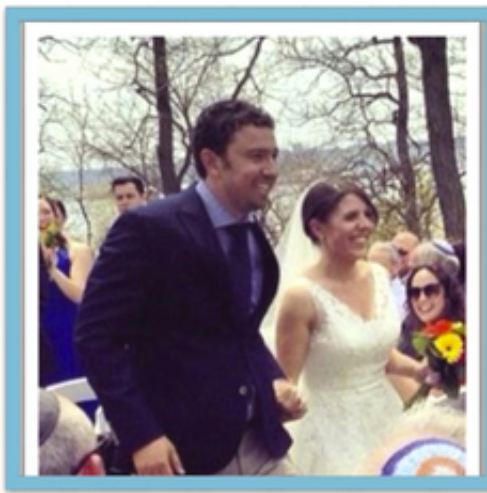


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Mazel Tov!



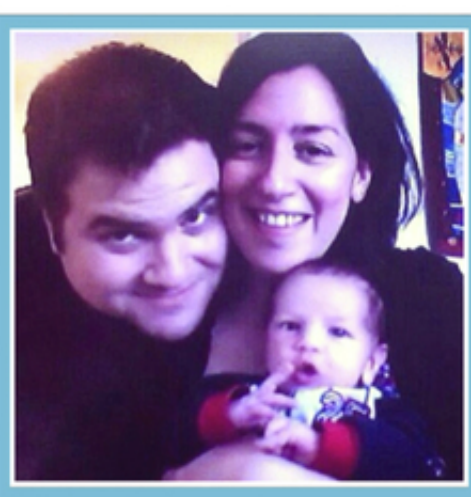
Shira Bromberg, *rosh machaneh* (2010), & alumnus Gabe Pickus were married at camp last summer.



Daryn Epstein, *rosh machaneh* (2003/04), & Aviva Millstone were married in May. Daryn serves as treasurer of the board of Camp Gesher.



Alumni coordinator Liat Papular & Josh Benzacar announced their recent engagement.



Merakez chinuch (2004) Daniel "Tex" Kupferstein & former medic Oshrat Ben-Arie on the birth of their 1st child, Adam.

[Sign up for our Alumni Family Weekend Aug 1-3rd, 2014!](#)

Alumnae Profile: Meet Michael Grossman



MICHAEL GROSSMAN: Age 25

Education: B.Sc. Mining Engineering, Queens University

Occupation: Mining Engineer in training for Vale (one of the world largest mining companies)

Residence since 2011: Thompson, MB (800 km north of Winnipeg)

Family: Michael grew up in Kitchener, ON. He's the youngest of 3 brothers: Jonathan, 28, is a public policy advisor in Ottawa. Aaron, 30, is a Toronto lawyer

Camp History: 2000-2009. Michael started at camp at 11. He went on MBI and was on tzevet for 2 years.

Aspects of camp that were particularly important for him

Friendship: *"I've made a lot of lifelong friends at camp. They're all over and I'm still in contact with them. Even the friends I'm not in contact with regularly, I feel quite comfortable calling when the opportunity arises."*

Community: *"Camp teaches you to be a part of a community. When you're in your camp kvutzah (group) you have to learn to get along. You become close with everybody. It's the same as growing up in a small Jewish community like Kitchener."*

Strengthening Character: *"Many of the activities at camp build character. Luxuries aren't part of the package. As a member of the camp community you clean toilets, you take out the garbage. Those kinds of activities build character."*

Camp imparts important values: *"The educational programming at camp helped me develop into the kind of person I wanted to be. The camp focuses on tikkun olam which is so important, because the idea of giving becomes a part of you."*

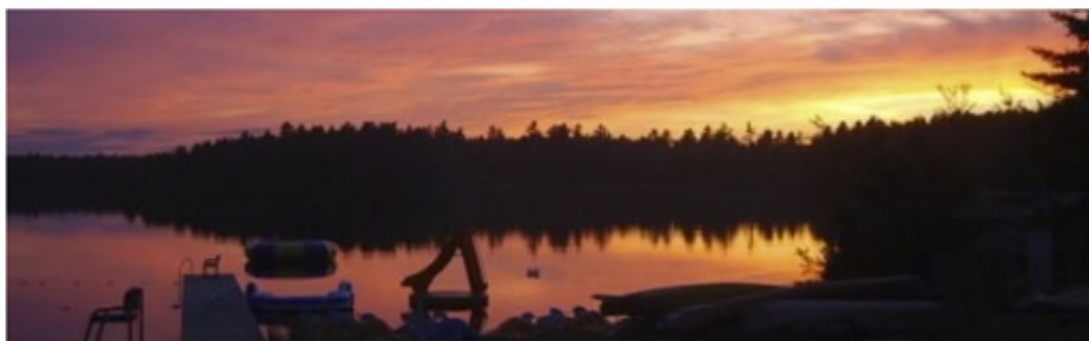
Michael's explanation for why he made a significant donation to camp

"I wanted to make sure that future generations of kids get to have the same experience that I had and learn the same values as I did. I want to see the camp thrive and I intend to keep donating to the camp. My money has to go somewhere."

"We grew up in a small Jewish community. When you're from a small community you learn to become an active participant. If you wanted to attend synagogue you had to build it yourself. You have to make the effort. You have to help."

"My brother Aaron is a participant. He's on the board. If we were in Toronto I would be able to participate more in the affairs of the camp, but right now that's not possible. I know I can help out by making a donation."

[Donate to Camp Gesher Today!](#)



GESHER L'ATID

YES, we are ready to participate in Camp Gesher's capital campaign.

Names of company/person: _____

Name to appear on tax receipt: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Level of donation: _____ Single payment ☐ or Monthly payment ☐

Cheque enclosed ☐ Send Invoice ☐ Tax Receipt Required ☐

Credit Card Information: Visa/Master Card/ American Express

Credit Card Number: _____

Name on Card: _____

Expiry Date: ____/____ Security code: _____

*Please make cheques payable to Camp Gesher and mail them to our Toronto office at
272 Codsell Ave. Toronto, ON, M3H 3X2

***To donate online please go to our website
(www.campgesher.com) and click on *Donate Now***

Friends of Camp Gesher Co-Editors: Barbara Silverstein, Dana Brookman

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