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MAY 26-JUNE 1, 2007

SUNDIAL Community CALENDAR

Community

Circle of Care Foundation presents Dreams on Canvas

Cocktails, dinner, art exhibit, awards and live auction celebrate the Los Angeles art scene and benefits The Grossman Burn Center, S+ AGE at Sherman Oaks Hospital and Circle of Care Leeza's Place. Saturday, June 2, 6 - 10 p.m. at the Center BMW Building in Van Nuys. \$150. Call (818) 817-3288 for more information. www.thecircleofcarefoundation.org

Alchemy of Music, Movement and Emotion

The Five Fires of Life Transformation Weekend with Jaquelin Levin and Patricia Martello, May 26-27. Everyone welcome. 14252 Ventura Blvd. Sherman Oaks. Call Jaquelin for details: (818) 641-7285. www.biodanza-dancesoflife.com

Sherman Oaks Elementary Open House/Open Enrollment

Sherman Oaks Elementary School will have their open house on May 31, 5-7pm. The school currently has 40 open enrollment/lottery spaces. Drawings will be held on June 6. Parent Tour on June 7 at 8:30am. Parents to meet in the school office at 8:15am for the tour. 14755 Greenleaf St. (818) 784-8283 or www.shermanoaksparents.com.

PAWSAPALOOZA at the Atrium National Center

A celebration of all things canine benefiting Pets Are Wonderful Support/Los Angeles (PAWS/LA). Movies, booths and more for dogs and their owners. June 2, 6pm. \$15, dogs and children free. For tickets: (323) 464-PAWS or www.pawsvia.org.

Cleveland Humanities Magnet Anniversary

Entertainment by Rainn Wilson and Sandra Tsing Loh, dinner, dancing and a raffle in celebration of Cleveland Humanities Magnet High School's 25th Anniversary. June 3, 6pm-midnight. The Sportsmen's Lodge, Empire/Regency Ballroom, 12825 Ventura Blvd. Studio City. For tickets or ads visit www.humanitiesmagnet.org.

Relay for Life

The American Cancer Society invites all residents of the San Fernando Valley to get involved in the fight against cancer. Cancer survivors, teams, sponsors and volunteers are needed for its signature event, which will be held on June 2-3 at Birmingham High School in Van Nuys. For more information, contact Heidi Mankoff, the 2007 Event Chair at (818) 523-2659, or mankoffh@aol.com. Or visit: www.valleyrelayforlife.org.

Clean Up Day

Community clean up day and festival, June 2, 7am-12:30pm. Volunteers will receive a continental breakfast and hot dog lunch. Bicycle raffle. Meet at the Church on the Way, 14800 Sherman Way, Van Nuys. (818) 989-0300 or sign up at www.sanfernandovalleychamber.com, click "Chamberstore" and then "Events."

L.A. Jewish Home for the Aging Breakfast

KFI Radio's John and Ken will speak at the Los Angeles Jewish Home for the Aging breakfast, June 7, 7:30am. El Caballero Country Club, 18300 Tarzana Dr. Tarzana. \$25
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Cantor touts new Jewish traditions at Encino congregation

BY JEREMY OBERSTEIN

Nachshon, according to Old Testament lore, was the first to spring into the Red Sea during the exodus from Egypt when his fellow Jews hesitated. Cantor Judy Greenfeld points to Nachshon's courage as an example of action in the face of indifference.

"I admired him for taking a leap of faith," said Greenfeld, the enthusiastic inspiration behind Encino's Nachshon Minyan community.

As the leader of the two-year-old congregation, Greenfeld hopes to engender a spiritual awakening among disaffected members of the Jewish population.

"I don't think people can feel Judaism anymore," said Greenfeld. "Judaism has to give people something. Most Jewish people my age have an education up until they're 13 and never go back. They never get to see the beauty. They are left cold. I'm trying to bring that beauty back."

Greenfeld moved from Cleveland, Ohio to Los Angeles in 1984. While her husband, Mike, worked in an advertising agency, Greenfeld worked as a dancer and personal trainer. Though raised Jewish, she never took to the religion she considered too strict and unwavering in its customs.

As an expectant mother, however, she was looking for a spiritual rebirth.

"When I was pregnant with my daughter, I was looking for more spiritual fulfillment," she explained. "I got tired of diffusing it through other religions. I wanted to try Judaism. There was so much I heard about it, but there was so much I didn't know as an adult."

After enrolling in the cantorial program



Cantor Judy Greenfeld.

at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Los Angeles, Cantor Greenfeld was ordained in 2000. While studying in the program, she began an eight-year stint helping to lead services at Temple Emmanuel of Beverly Hills, followed by another year at Temple Adat Shalom in West L.A., but said she felt constrained by the inherent limitations of these larger synagogues.

"I didn't like the cookie cutter feelings I got from the larger synagogues. It makes people feel unimportant."

Greenfeld envisioned a congregation in which music, art and inclusiveness would

reinvigorate peoples' passion for Judaism. In 2005, she established the Nachshon Minyan. Originally, Nachshon was a traveling service, held each month at a different synagogue around Los Angeles.

Searching for a more permanent venue, Greenfeld set up shop in the Baha'i Center in Encino where she now holds a service on the first Saturday of every month.

Greenfeld counts about 40 regular congregants at her monthly non-denominational service. Among those are Laurie Petok and her son, Jack, who have been attending the cantor's service since Nachshon was first established.

"Judy has a fabulous way of explaining all the prayers," said Laurie, a voice-over actress, from her Sherman Oaks home.

Cantor Greenfeld recently presided over Jack's Bar Mitzvah, one of about 20 she has performed. "They wanted a ritual, something that was personal, and we provide that," Greenfeld said.

Such personality was important to Jack. "There are two things that are really important to me: music and Judaism," the Harvard Westlake 8th grader said. "Nachshon beautifully integrates those two things. Everything Cantor Judy has to say about Judaism draws me closer to the religion."

The Petoks aren't members of any synagogue. Laurie does not even consider herself religious. "Synagogues turn me off," she admitted, "but [attending Nachshon] has brought out a new spirituality."

Such "unaffiliates" - Jews that don't belong to a synagogue -
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"Benefit for our Bravest" aids drive to support U.S. troops

BY TIFFANY ROGET

Fire fighters and community groups teamed up May 19 to host "Benefit for our Bravest," a family-oriented festival that aimed to raise funds to support American troops overseas.

Operation Gratitude and the Valley Inn restaurant sponsored the afternoon event at Sherman Oaks Avenue and Ventura Boulevard, held on Armed Forces Day to honor the service people who would benefit from the proceeds.

An all volunteer-run organization, Operation Gratitude would use the funds in its mission to prepare and send care packages and letters of thanks

to members of the military.

"Everything is donated - all the workers are volunteers, from the people here today in the booth, to the ones packing up the kits to all the supplies we send, everything and everyone is or works for free," said Charlie Othold, director of operations for the organization.

Officers from the California Highway Patrol, the Marines and the Army Reserves attended the festival, at which fire fighters from all over the San Fernando Valley cooked and served food.

30 to 40 fire fighters from Fire Station 75 began preparing 400 pounds
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TEACHER OF THE YEAR ♦ VALLEY ECONOMIC SUMMIT ♦ "GREEN" CORK

CANTOR from page 1

are Greenfeld's main targets.

Membership at many large, Valley-area synagogues has declined over the years. Adat Ari El, one of the Valley's oldest and largest synagogues, for example, has lost about 70 families over the last two years. According to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, there are currently 830 dues-paying families. In 2005, there were around 900.

This follows a general downward trend in synagogue membership among the United States' Jewish population. According to the Jewish Agency, Israel's semi-governmental body in charge of Jewish immigration, the number of Jews in the world is declining at an average rate of 50,000 people per year.

There are 12.9 million Jews in the world, the survey said, noting that the decline was sharpest in the United States where

is something for everyone."

Still, not everyone has taken to Greenfeld's methods. Some decry what they see as the cantor's attempts to "pick and choose" what aspects of Judaism she includes in her service.

She dismisses such complaints, saying, "I think you can pick and choose when you have an education. I grew up in an en-

vironment where you were afraid to ask. Now, people are encouraged to ask why, to buck the system a little bit. You have to have your own truth."

Eventually, Greenfeld hopes to pull in 100 people at her monthly service. But for now, she's just relishing her mission.

"Temples aren't filling people spiritually. They have become too much of a busi-

ness. I'm doing this because I love it, because I can provide a spiritually fulfilling place. I love every minute of it." *

The next service will present Rabbi Yossi Carron in "Finding the Light in the Wilderness of our Lives," June 2, 10am. Baha'i Center, 4830 Genesta Ave. Encino. Call (818) 789-7314 or visit www.nachshonminyan.org.

JEREMY OBERSTEIN



Cantor Judy Greenfeld.

the figure dropped by 300,000 over the last decade to its current level of 5.2 million.

While the number of Americans who consider themselves Jewish is in decline, so too are the number of Jews who consider themselves part of one of the major sects of Judaism.

The National Jewish Population Survey found that out of the 5.2 million American Jews, About one million of those do not identify with any denomination, nor are they members of a Jewish organization.

Because of these trends, Greenfeld is reaching out to those who feel alienated by synagogues. "I want to bring people in who are converting and bring people to a place where they feel comfortable, and to bring in unaffiliates from other temples," she stated.

Greenfeld is also trying to cross the spiritual divide between Reform and Conservative Judaism.

"One of the things I want Nachshon to do is let people know we are all Jews," she said of her congregation's prayer book. "What's happened, especially in the Conservative movement, is that people are afraid to admit they don't know Hebrew. Our prayer book has transliteration and Hebrew. We also have pictures and verses of poetry so people have many opportunities to step into the prayers."

Music is another way people can integrate themselves into the service, she believes. Greenfeld herself utilizes a cross section of genres meant to reach a wide audience. By incorporating aspects of opera, folk, Gregorian chants, country and traditional prayer music, she said, "there



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