



PANEL BIOS

Harlene Appelman

Harlene Winnick Appelman, a distinguished Jewish educator from Ann Arbor, MI and one of the first winners of the Covenant Awards, became the foundation's Executive Director in June 2005.

Ms. Appelman has worked in Jewish education for nearly thirty-five years, as a pioneering family educator, director of community education and outreach, and most recently as Chief Jewish Education Officer of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Known internationally as a creative force in Jewish education on both the institutional and communal levels, Ms. Appelman won the Covenant Award in 1991 and was invited to join the Board of Directors in 1994.

Pam Edelman

Pam Edelman -- Senior Associate, Family Empowerment and Network for JESNA's Lippman Kanfer Institute -- leads an initiative mobilizing fellow parents to become partners in the transformation of Jewish education. Pam believes co-creation -- professionals innovating together with parents and learners -- leads to families becoming more involved and invested in shaping future outcomes for Jewish education. Pam is Co-Founder of Yerusha, a Jewish learning laboratory testing a new model of family-driven, complementary Jewish education. Her interest and initiatives in family-oriented innovation processes stem from her work in marketing at Kraft Foods, managing consumer products for parents and their children. Pam is Co-Founder of Zamru, an independent minyan in Princeton. A graduate of Washington University, she lives in the Princeton area with her husband and their four children. _

Shira Koch Epstein

Rabbi Shira Koch Epstein works to redefine Jewish Education as Associate Rabbi of Brooklyn's largest and oldest liberal Jewish institution - Congregation Beth Elohim. Shira lives in Park Slope, Brooklyn, with her husband, Dr. Jason Epstein, their sons Amichai and Kobi, and their dog, Duffy.

Born in the Bronx and raised in New Milford, Connecticut, Shira received her BA from Wesleyan University and has also attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Birzeit University in Ramallah, and Machon Hartman in Jerusalem. She received her rabbinic ordination, MAHL and MA in Religious Education from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Shira has served as the Associate Director of ARZA, coordinating the Reform Zionist Think Tank and Development Initiatives, as the Family

Educator of the Reform Temple of Forest Hills, and as Family Educator and Day School Teacher at Congregation Rodeph Sholom/Rodeph Sholom Day School in New York City. Having spent her youth active in NFTY and URJ camps, she has worked at the Eisner Camp, Camp Tel Yehuda, BIMA, and Seeds of Peace Camp for Co-existence and Conflict Resolution. A practiced storyteller, Rabbi Epstein has studied improvisational comedy and acting at the Upright Citizen's Brigade, Chicago City Limits, and the School for Film and Television. A certified Storytelling Maven, Shira was named one of the Feminist Press 40 Under 40 and is an inaugural recipient of the Pomegranate Prize for Jewish Education from the Covenant Foundation.

Ana Fuchs

Ana Fuchs is a young pioneer in the field of alternative Jewish supplemental education and has been instrumental in building Jewish Kids Groups (JKG), one of the nation's only independent Hebrew schools. In 2012 she led JKG in launching JKG Afterschool Community: a Jewish after school program, that feels like summer camp, but runs everyday after school.

Ana was named one of today's "most dynamic young Jewish leaders" and awarded the prestigious ROI fellowship by the Schusterman Foundation (2012); selected as a Presentense Global Fellow (2011) for her cutting-edge work in the field of Israel education; and named one of JESNA's 2011 Jewish Education Innovators.

Research indicates that more and more families are opting out of giving their children a Jewish education; Ana aims to reverse this trend with her radically different Hebrew school. Jewish Kids Groups, which serves affiliated and unaffiliated families, focuses on positioning each child for success and building memorable experiences while meeting each family where they are, Jewishly. Ana earned an MS in Instructional Design and Technology from Georgia State University and BA in Jewish Studies and Middle Eastern Studies from Emory University.

Adam Gaynor

Adam Gaynor is a consultant with The Whelan Group, a New York-based firm that provides planning and advisory services to non-profits and foundations. Mr. Gaynor has 16 years of experience in education, most recently as Executive Director of The Curriculum Initiative, a national Jewish program that has worked with over 240 prominent independent schools. He has served in a range of non-profit leadership positions including Assistant Director of the Bronfman Center at NYU, social work consultant with The Educational Alliance on school-based programs, Program Coordinator at the Department of Education in Jerusalem, and Director of Multicultural Affairs at Bates College. Mr. Gaynor is completing a Ph.D. in Education and Jewish Studies at NYU, holds an M.S.W. from Columbia University, an M.A. from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a B.A. in Women's Studies from Bates College. In addition to his professional responsibilities, he was a Scholar-in-Residence at NYU School of Law in 2011-12, and was named by the New York Jewish Week to its inaugural list of 36 top innovators under the age of 36.

Orna Eldor Gerling

Ms Orna Eldor Gerling is the founding executive director of MoEd – A Jewish After School Community. Orna has a combination of vision, skills, experience, and enthusiasm perfect for MoEd. A native speaker of Hebrew, she came to MoEd after two decades of experience teaching and overseeing informal educational programs for children and young adults -- including afterschool programs, summer language immersion camps, and arts camps. Her extensive administrative experience includes directing a network of 180 Jewish Community Centers in the former Soviet Union and directing multiple education and social support agencies in Israel. She holds a bachelor's degree from Tel-Aviv University, a teaching certificate from the Beit Berl Arts Academy in Kfar Sava, Israel, and a certificate in Nonprofit Management from Georgetown University. She is the mother of two young children, and lives with her family in Chevy Chase.

Tamara Gropper

Tamara Lustgarten Gropper is an educational and organizational consultant with The Experiment in Congregational Education, a project of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Tamara began her work with the ECE in 2004 as a consultant to congregations participating in The RE-IMAGINE Project of New York. She continued her work in partnership with The Jewish Education Project with the launch of LOMED – Learner Outcomes and Measurement for Effective Educational Design - in 2009. Currently, in addition to consulting directly to congregations involved in the project, now in its fourth year, Tamara acts as a critical colleague to other LOMED consultants. In 2011, Tamara joined a team of Clinical Faculty Mentors working with the first cohort of students in the Executive Masters Program in Jewish Education at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Tamara received a Bachelors of Arts from Georgetown University, a Masters in Jewish Education from the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles and a Masters of Science in Education from Bank Street College. Tamara lives in Harrison, NY with her husband, Rabbi Daniel Gropper, and their three children Elijah, Shai and Noa.

Gidon Isaacs

Gidon Isaacs relates to Judaism as a vibrant force that constantly develops and changes through our questions and our personal journeys. Growing up as a member of the Reconstructionist synagogue Bet Am Shalom in White Plains, New York, his own journey has emphasized three themes: deep study of our tradition and texts, a love of teaching and mentoring young people, and community leadership.

Gidon pursued his desire to engage with the tradition by spending three years in Jerusalem studying Jewish texts at institutions such as the Pardes Institute, the Hartman Institute, and the Conservative Yeshiva. This study eventually led him to New York University, where he worked toward a Ph.D. in Judaic Studies, with a focus on Talmud, prior to joining us at the SAJ in 2005.

Gidon's involvement with young people has had been rich and varied: working at and eventually running a Jewish summer camp for children and teens, teaching undergraduate and congregational classes while in graduate school, and studying experiential approaches to education derived from the work of Maria Montessori.

Through Reconstructionism he also experienced the power of our Jewish community as one that is made holy through our shared striving for meaning. While in Israel and then again before graduate school he

worked in a variety of community settings, most prominently as director of 20s and 30s programming at the JCC in Manhattan.

These three themes come together in Gidon's role directing the Jewish Journey Project at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. Judaic knowledge gives our learners the opportunity to experience the depth and vitality of our tradition. His diverse teaching background allows him to create an educational atmosphere where children are encouraged to become thinking and spiritually attuned young Jews. His focus on community fosters a learning environment dedicated to welcoming the whole family through innovative discussion and experience-based programs.

Gidon lives in Riverdale with his wife, Wendy, and two young sons, Yadin and Natan.

Lori Forman-Jacobi

Rabbi Lori Forman-Jacobi is the Director of The Jewish Journey Project, a new initiative to create a totally new paradigm for Jewish education for students in grades 3-7th. Prior to assuming this position last March, Rabbi Forman-Jacobi served as the principal of the Ivry Prozdor High School at The Jewish Theological Seminary, Associate Principal of The Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies, Director of the Jewish Resource Center at UJA-Federation of New York, and Inter-Religious Program Specialist at The American Jewish Committee. She co-edited two books: *SACRED INTENTIONS: Morning Inspiration to Strengthen the Spirit, Based on Jewish Wisdom* and *RESTFUL REFLECTIONS: Nighttime Inspiration to Calm the Soul, Based on Jewish Wisdom*.

Jeffrey Lasday

Jeffrey Lasday serves as the Director of the Alliance for Jewish Education at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Jeff's professional accomplishments include serving as Director of Education at the Partnership for Effective Learning and Innovative Education (PELIE), Executive Director for the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) and Executive Vice President of St. Louis' Central Agency for Jewish Education.

Jeff earned his B.S. in Psychology and Judaic Studies from the University of Pittsburgh and Ed. M. from Harvard Graduate School of Education. Jeffrey is also a graduate of the Senior Educators Fellowship Program in Israel at Hebrew University's Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora. Jeff is married to Lori Serbin Lasday and is the proud father of David and Ilana.

Naomi Less (Music for "Innovation in Action")

Songwriter. Activist. Rocker. Worship leader. Trainer. Educator. Naomi Less engages, enlightens and empowers worldwide audiences through concerts, worship and educational workshops and training.

Naomi tours worldwide with her band, sharing music that spans edgy pop rock to meditative spiritual song. Founder of Jewish Chicks Rock and Jewish Kids Rock, Naomi builds Jewish rock programs in camps and after school programs across the US encouraging the next generation of voices to speak out for justice and values. Her music video, "Sh'ma Yisrael/Listen Israel" – is a call for spiritual civil rights in Israel. Her song, "Shout 'em Out" was an animated youtube hit for G-dcast.com. Her album "The Real Me" is a tour through her own personal wrestling with self-worth, theology and being oneself!

Naomi is a gifted professional facilitator and program designer, with an impressive list of organizations and companies as clientele. She specializes in developing exciting training programs, retreats,

teambuilding collaborations and meetings.

A Storahelling founding company member, Naomi serves as its Director of Education and Training. She has a Masters in Jewish Education from JTS Davidson school and professional certificates from the Institute for Informal Jewish Education at Brandeis University Fellowship and Institute for Jewish Spirituality. She is a Center for Leadership Initiatives trained facilitator/trainer.

Naomi's music is available on itunes and cdbaby.com.

Check out Naomi at www.naomiless.com

Robert Lichtman

Robert Lichtman is the founding Executive Director of The Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life, which was created by the now Greater MetroWest Federation as its Jewish Identity-building agency in 2006.

Bob has been a professional leader in formal and informal Jewish educational initiatives as Vice President of JESNA, Associate Vice President of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, and as Executive Director of Overseas Services at UJA-Federation of New York which pioneered Jewish identity development programs in Israel and throughout the former Soviet Union.

Prior to this, Bob was a member of the MetroWest Federation Executive Staff for nearly a decade.

Bob lives in West Orange, NJ with his wife, Natalie who is the Associate Principal of the Blue-Ribbon Award Winning Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy, which educated all three of their daughters, and now two of their grand-daughters as well.

Eve Rudin

Rabbi Eve Rudin is the Director of the Congregational School at the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. Previously, Eve served as the Director of the Department of Camp Excellence and Advancement for the Foundation for Jewish Camp, as well as the Director of the URJ Kutz Campus for Reform Jewish Teen Life and the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) for the Union for Reform Judaism. A product of the Reform Jewish movement, Eve graduated with a B.A. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University in 1992. She was awarded a Wexner Graduate Fellowship for her rabbinic studies at HUC-JIR and was ordained there in May 2000. Her undergraduate thesis was on the history of the founding of Reform Jewish camping, and her rabbinic thesis studied the early history of HaShomer HaTzair as it developed from a European-based youth movement to an Israeli political party. Eve has spoken and presented at numerous conferences on experiential Jewish education, camping, faith development and youth mentorship. She lives in Tarrytown, NY, with her daughter, Emma.

David Waksberg

David Waksberg is CEO of Jewish LearningWorks (formerly, Bureau of Jewish Education, San Francisco). During David's five years in leadership, the organization has initiated community strategic

change initiatives in part-time Jewish education, Israel education, early childhood education, young family engagement, and inclusion/special education. Before joining the BJE, David worked as a software executive and, prior to that, was a leader in the movement to rescue Soviet Jews, serving as executive director of the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jews, Vice President of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, and founder of the Center for Jewish Renewal in the USSR. Jewish LearningWorks is currently leading two new community-based experimental ventures in Jewish education and engagement for young children and families in Northern California.

Ariann Weitzman

Rabbi Ariann Weitzman fell in love with Judaism and Jewish education in kindergarten at the San Diego Jewish Academy, a pluralistic community day school. Since then, she has continued to strive for pluralism, authenticity, and meaning in her Jewish practice, her personal education, and her role as a community educator and spiritual leader. Rabbi Weitzman was ordained by the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York, a pluralistic Jewish seminary training rabbis and cantors for over fifty years, and where she wrote her master's thesis on *Interpersonal Reconciliation in the Talmud*. She has also drawn inspiration in her teaching from her experience in interfaith dialogue, interdenominational dialogue and learning, and extensive chaplaincy work. Since being ordained, Rabbi Weitzman has served as the first Director of Congregational Learning at Bnai Keshet, a Reconstructionist congregation in Montclair, NJ. In this capacity, Rabbi Weitzman has focused on efforts to integrate learning into the life of the entire community, to make Jewish education for children a spiritual experience, to bring primary Jewish texts to learners at all levels, and to support *tikkun olam* efforts both inside and out of the synagogue.

Cyd Weissman

Cyd Weissman is the Director, Innovation in Congregational Learning for Greater New York, for The Jewish Education Project. She leads a team that works with the Coalition of Innovating Congregation to reshape the landscape of Jewish engagement in New York. Cyd also teaches at Hebrew Union College in the School of Education and in the Certificate in Jewish Education for Adolescents and Emerging Adults. Publications include: "Not Your Father's Hebrew School," "Experimenting with the Architecture of Jewish Education," and "Professional Development Requires A Discipline for Seeing Wholes." Cyd also serves on the board of ACRE (Alliance for Continuing Rabbinic Education). She has also produced and directed the documentaries, "The High Five: Jewish Learning that Nurtures the Whole Person" and "Not Your Regular Religious School." Cyd blogs at [LivingLOMED](#) about Jewish learning that lives in today's world.