



Corps Issues

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Corps Issues

This newsletter is a publication of AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps. AVODAH is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization dedicated to changing people's lives through service.

Please call or e-mail us with your comments about this newsletter or our program at (212) 545-7759 or e-mail info@avodah.net. Thanks!

This issue's writers and production staff:

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AVODAH - Hebrew, meaning:

- 1) work
- 2) worship
- 3) service, and
- 4) an exciting program that brings these three together!

THE AVODAH ALUMNI COMMUNITY Moving Forward

By Stosh Cotler

Alumni Community Coordinator

Anyone familiar with the AVODAH one-year program knows that it attracts vibrant young people who share a commitment to Jewish values and social change. Of course, that commitment and passion doesn't end once the program is over. In 2002, alumni organized a retreat to discuss their continued desire to work together for social justice, to build a sustainable community, and to bring the Jewish service framework to the broader Jewish community. Through the alumni's tremendous leadership, the support of the AVODAH staff and Board and generous grants from the UJA-Federation of New York's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the AVODAH Alumni Community (AAC) was born!

Stosh Cotler, AVODAH's new Alumni Community Coordinator, has been working with alumni during the past few months to shape a vision for the

Alumni Community's growing network of young Jewish activists. Alumni have been in leadership roles throughout this process, and more than 80% of the alumni have participated in meetings, conference calls and list serve conversations regarding the future of the AAC.



Alumni Community Members at the 2003 Alumni Retreat.

Picking up on AVODAH's central themes, the Alumni Community formed three Working Groups focusing on social activism, community-building and Jewish life. The Social Activism Working Group organizes issue education and activist trainings for alumni and their peers. It also serves as the home for the AVODAH Alumni Tzedakah collective, an initiative intended to increase the impact of alumni financial support for anti-poverty work and other social issues. Finally, this working group will coordinate an annual issue campaign designed to engage AVODAH alumni and others in work on a specific issue (the focus this year will be voter access and empowerment). The Community Building Working Group oversees Shabbat

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NEW YORK CITY CORPS MEMBERS

Jenny Ackerman, from Dallas, TX, works as a Mental Health Advocate at the Urban Justice Center, an advocacy center working with and for the marginalized and oppressed in New York City.

Sharon Adams, from West Sussex, England, works as a Transition Specialist at Women In Community Service, an organization dedicated to reducing the number of women and youth living in poverty by promoting self-reliance and economic independence.

Yuval Asner, from St. Louis, MO and Israel, works as a Health Advocacy Fellow at the Medicare Rights Center, an organization dedicated to helping seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare receive equitable access to health care.

Rachel Benedict, from Tallmadge, OH, works as a Domestic Violence Advocate at Sanctuary for Families, an organization committed to empowering survivors of domestic violence in claiming control of their lives while advocating for policy changes and raising public awareness to end violence against all women.

Raffi Bilek, from Atlanta, GA, works as a Technology Teacher at The Community Partnership Charter School, which creates a strong academic base, involving families, educators and community members.

Amy Blumsack, from San Leandro, CA, works as an Employment Counselor at Neighbors Together, which addresses poverty by providing meals to hungry people, offering empowerment opportunities, and facilitating community advocacy for changes to societal structures that create poverty.

Rachel Birenbaum, from Ontario, Canada works as a Case Manager at Red Hook Community Justice Center, the nation's first multi-jurisdictional community court.

Flora Endelman, from Ann Arbor, MI, works as a Tutor and Vocational Rehabilitation Aide at Project Renewal, which serves the most fragile and underserved of the city's homeless.

Rachel Ezrine, from Lexington, KY, works as a Caseworker at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services' Kaplan Center, which provides educational programming for adolescents.

Elisheva Gould, from Toronto, Canada, works as an Outreach Advocate at the Urban Justice Center, Homelessness Outreach & Prevention Program. The Urban Justice Center is an advocacy center working with and for the marginalized and oppressed in New York City.

Robyn Greenstein, from Mission Viejo, CA, works as a Case Manager at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services' Genesis Shelter, which provides shelter, daycare, and counseling services for women recovering from domestic violence and their children.

Tamar Heisler, from West Bloomfield, MI, works as a Tenant Services Assistant at Common Ground's Foyer Program. Common Ground is a nonprofit housing development and management company.



2003-2004 AVODAHniks at DC-NY Winter Retreat.

Cara Herbitter, a native Manhattanite, works as a Project Coordinator at United Neighborhood Houses, which provides educational programs, employment assistance, human services, and cultural activities at 335 locations throughout New York City.

Karen Kranson, from Fair Lawn, NJ, works in the college office of the Manhattan Comprehensive Night & Day High School, a public school for students who face enormous obstacles such as homelessness, lack of childcare and jobs, criminal records, or difficulty with written and spoken English.

Nina Ravick, from Rockville, MD, works as a Paralegal at the New York Legal Assistance Group, which provides free civil legal assistance to New York's most at-risk, low income populations.

Rebecca Shaloff, from Silver Spring, MD, works as an Organizer at Jobs with Justice, a citywide coalition of labor, community, faith-based, and student organizations that organizes to transform our communities and our workplaces.

Ali Shelley, from Boca Raton, FL, works as a Program Coordinator at the Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst, which provides meaningful, enjoyable programs and service for a Brooklyn neighborhood with a large concentration of recent immigrants.

Jessica Stolor, from Millburn, NJ, works as a Health Advocacy Fellow at the Medicare Rights Center, an organization dedicated to helping seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare receive equitable access to health care.

H CORPS MEMBERS 2003-2004



WASHINGTON, DC CORPS MEMBERS

Sarah Beller, from New Haven, CT, works as a Neighborhood Tutoring program Assistant at For the Love of Children (FLOC), an organization that works with thousands of Washington, DC's most vulnerable children and families.

Jackie Bliss, from Manhattan Beach, CA, works as a Legal Assistant for the Detention Project of the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition, which brings immigrants, attorneys, volunteers and community leaders together to work for a fair and humane immigration policy.

Ann Glazer, from Indianapolis, IN, works as a Behrend Builder Coordinator at The DC Jewish Community Center. The Behrend Builders program creates organized volunteer activities for young people and for young adults and families to work alongside shelter residents, local families and community members to repair, rebuild, and renovate community structures serving homeless and low-income persons in Washington, DC.

Jodie Goldberg, from Wilmette, IL, works as a Case Manager at N. Street Village, which offers a continuum of care through day and residential programs assisting women to move from homelessness to independent living.

Jenny Halper, from Brooklyn, NY, works as an Intern Advisor at Byte Back, which helps close the "digital divide" in access to and effective use of technology.

Drew Himmelstein, from Los Angeles, works as an Advocacy Specialist at Casa of Maryland, which assists Latino immigrants and refugees of modest means to find work, learn necessary skills, access available resources, and build a strong community.

Merav Lichtenstein, from Highland Park, NJ, works as the Southeast Workers' Rights Clinic & Advocacy Coordinator at The DC Employment Justice Center, an organization that secures and enforces the rights of low-income workers in the Washington, DC metropolitan area by providing legal assistance on employment law matters to the working poor and by supporting a local workers' rights movement.

Jennie Mauer, from Glendale, WI, works as a Legal Clinic Coordinator at Bread For The City, which promotes the mutual collaboration of clients, volunteers, donors, staff, and other community partners to alleviate the suffering caused by poverty and to rectify the conditions that perpetuate it.

Aviva Moster, from Merion, PA, works as Case Manager at N. Street Village, which offers a continuum of care through day and residential programs assisting women to move from homelessness to independent living.

Jordana Price, from Orinda, CA, works as a Medical Clinic Coordinator at Bread for the City, which promotes the mutual collaboration of clients, volunteers, donors, staff, and other community partners to alleviate the suffering caused by poverty and to rectify the conditions that perpetuate it.



Cara Herbitter leads a workshop at United Neighborhood Houses

Suzanne Spencer, from Newton, MA, works as an Outreach Specialist for Metro Teen AIDS, the only community based organization in the Washington, DC area focused solely on preventing HIV/AIDS in young people and improving the quality of life for young people already affected by, or infected with HIV.

Sara Simons, from Wellesley, MA, works as a Teacher's Aide at The Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School (TMA), which prepares traditionally underserved students to be academically able, confident, and empowered to engage in our democratic society.

Rebecca (Becky) Wolf, from Phoenix, AZ, works as a Youth Advocate at N. Street Village, which offers a continuum of care through day and residential programs assisting women to move from homelessness to independent living.

Serena Zeise, from Northridge, CA, works as a Community Outreach and Organizing Intern at Jobs with Justice, an organization dedicated to bringing together labor, community, faith-based, and student organizations to build power for working families in Washington, D.C.

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dinners, holiday celebrations, an alumni mentoring program, the alumni section of AVODAH's website, and the annual AVODAH alumni retreat.

The Jewish Life Working Group works to engage the broader Jewish community in the annual campaign and other social issues and helps alumni continue to connect with meaningful parts of Jewish life and institutions that provide a Jewish context for social activism.

The organizational shift from AVODAH as a one-year program to AVODAH, an organization with both a one-year program AND an Alumni Program is exciting! We are not only providing young adults with a compelling entry to Jewish life, but also supporting their life-long engagement in social change with a community to share in that journey. If you have questions about the AVODAH Alumni Community or would like to get involved, please contact Stosh Cotler at scotler@avodah.net.



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JEVERA TEMSKY JOINS THE STAFF OF AVODAH DC

As the new Assistant Director of AVODAH DC, **Jevera Temsky** is largely responsible for advising AVODAH's DC Corps members in their work lives, planning and implementing their educational program, and helping to build the AVODAH community. Before joining our staff, Jevera had served as the lead organizer for Jews United for Justice, an



organization whose mission is to mobilize the Washington area Jewish community to act as allies on local issues of social and economic justice. She instituted a monthly social justice text study and other opportunities for learning, socializing, and reflection. For four years, she helped build an organization grounded in Jewish pluralism and has been very effective in building bridges between the Jewish community and other communities. (She also served briefly as a supervisor of an AVODAH corps member, as co-chair of DC Jobs with Justice.) Jevera has a Master's of Public Administration, with a concentration in Women and Public Policy, and a great deal of experience in working as a counselor and advisor for individuals and groups. Please join us in welcoming her to AVODAH!

SAVE THE DATE!

AVODAH is excited to announce our spring events in New York City and Washington, DC.

Join us in New York City:

June 3rd, 2004

6:30 PM

Time Square Hotel

*Honoring Rabbi Joy Levitt &
Rabbi Michael Strassfeld*

Join us in Washington, DC:

June 13th, 2004

6:00 PM

*Historic Sixth & I Synagogue
Featuring popular author,
Judith Viorst*

For information on tickets and sponsorship opportunities, email stabak@avodah.net (NYC) or mmorse@avodah.net (DC).