

Interfaith Families Project

Mar. Apr. 2007 www.iffp.net P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913 iffp@verizon.net 301-270-6337

WORDS OF COMFORT



These times are difficult to hold all the tragic, senseless acts of violence. It breaks our hearts. I heard an ancient story about someone asking a rabbi why G-d places the word *on* the heart instead of *in* the heart. The rabbi replied, “Because when the heart breaks open, the words can sink in.” I love that hopeful image that when our hearts break open the words of comfort, guidance, wisdom can be swallowed and enveloped more easily. What words might we want to ink into our hearts to give us hope, integrity and a way to navigate ourselves (and our children) through all of this? Here are some that speak to me:

“Come unto Me all you who are weary and I will give you rest.” Jesus

“What does the Lord require of us? To do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with thy G-d.” Micah

“Be still and know that I am God.” The Psalms

“Love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, soul and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself.” Deuteronomy 6 and Matthew 22

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Golden Rule and Jesus

“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.” John 8

Christian writer Anne Lamont (highly recommended light and powerful reading) says that when the heart breaks the light can shine through.

Through this tragedy may our hearts take in and behold the good news of grace and hope and goodness which still prevails on earth.

“Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done! On earth as it is in heaven.”

“Shine My Light” and “Do What Matters!”

Joyfully and gratefully yours,

— Rev. Julia Jarvis, Spiritual Director

COA CEREMONY

The **IFFP COA Ceremony** will be held Sunday, May 6 at the **Takoma Park Middle School**, 7611 Piney Branch Road. The Ceremony, which will be held in the cafeteria, begins at 10:00 am and ends at noon. A reception follows the Ceremony. If you would like to attend, please e-mail **Rev. Julia** ASAP. (No child care provided & no Sunday School).

CALENDAR: MAY – JUNE 2007

May 6 COA Ceremony

Takoma Park Middle School, 10 am –noon
Gathering – Rabbi White (No Nursery)
Reception

May 11 -13 – Woman’s Retreat
(No IFFP)

May 20 – Gathering – Teen Graduation

Sunday School (Nursery Open)
Adult Group
New Member Brunch
Teacher Appreciation Sunday
COA prep – Last evening class

June 3 – Gathering 10-noon– Rabbi White
(No Nursery)

June 10 – Gathering -10-noon– Rabbi White
Community Potluck
(No Nursery)

CALENDAR DETAILS

May 20 – New Member Brunch

On May 20, during Adult Group, all 2006-2007 new members are invited to join the New Member Committee and members of the board & staff for a Welcoming Brunch. The New Member Committee hopes to give all new members another opportunity to get to know each other (and others at IFFP) and to ask any remaining, burning questions they have about IFFP. Most importantly, we hope to provide a warm welcome to all our new families. If you have any questions, please contact Stephani.

May 20 – Teacher Appreciation Sunday: A Gathering of Gratitude

Please join me at the Gathering on Sunday, May 20 as we shower our wonderful IFFP teachers with gratitude. This would be a grand time to have your child make a thank you card or to bring in a small token of your appreciation in the form of flowers or chocolate!

We have a unique community. The only other interfaith group in the country of our size is the NY group and they hire outside teachers. Being invested in the community brings a deep level of commitment that is reflected to our children. Approximately 130 children are receiving an amazing education in Christianity and Judaism thanks to the many dedicated members who give their knowledge, time, energy and love to create understanding and appreciation of our interfaith families’ traditions.

Pre-school 3s class: Ruth Moss, Michelle Motta and Grace Lerner

Pre-school 4s class: Kathy Flitter, Anne Dee and Tim Conway

Kindergarten: Lora Dunne and Rich Shegogue

1st Grade: Elizabeth Gelfeld and Deborah Schaumberg

2nd Grade: Roberta Bregstone and Alison Wylegala

3rd Grade: Cindy Pohoryles and Lisa Henderson

4th Grade: Lisa Gabriel and Cathy Kristiansen

5th Grade: Erin Sweeney and David Habenstreit

6th Grade: Freddie Adelman and Steve Brescia

COA Prep: Debra Nagan, Michael Thompson and Philip Bregstone

COA: Ellen Jennings and Robin Allen

Mixed Grade: Kerri Mullins-Levine, Robin Allen and Mary Wichansky

Music: Marci Shegogue
Hebrew: David Quigely
Community Service and Roving Substitute: Carol Muskin

By the way, May 20 is the last day of Sunday School this spring. We'll begin again on September 16.

IFFP teachers, we thank you for all that you do!!!!

— **Ellen Jennings**, Director of Religious Education

June 10 – Community Potluck

Join us June 10th for a great finale to this year! Rabbi White will be with us and we'll have a longer, more relaxed Gathering. After the Gathering we'll have a leisurely potluck brunch in the cafeteria and courtyard. It's a wonderful time for the kids to spend social time with others in their classes and for the adults to have visiting time before we take a break for the summer

IFFP will provide paper goods and beverages for our potluck. As usual, food assignments are based on the last name of the female head of household. If the last name begins with:

- A-J: Bring a side dish or salad
- K-Z: Bring a main dish
- Board Members: Bring dessert

Other Calendar Details

June 3 – The Gathering will look at the similarities between Pentecost and Shavuot! Rabbi White will join us.

June 10 – The Gathering, with Rev. Julia & Rabbi White, will look at the theme of Guilt. After the Gathering we will have our annual potluck brunch which will be clean of all guilt!

There will be **no July Gathering** this year because of Sligo Middle School will be under some construction.

— **Rev. Julia Jarvis**, Spiritual Director

NEWS FROM THE NURSERY

Nursery-Schedule for May/June & Help Needed for Next Year

Our wonderful nursery will only be open one more time this season on May 20. There will not be any child care provided May 6, June 3 or June 10.

Diane Jentilet is willing to continue to help coordinate the nursery next year, but she needs another adult to share the responsibilities. If you enjoy working with our cutest little members and are willing to spend some of the Adult Group times in the nursery plus carting toys back and forth, please contact Susan, Sury3@aol.com.

We also need a larger number of teens available to work in the nursery next year so that we have enough back ups, especially on mornings when COA Prep meets. Any members from COA Prep age through high school who would like to work in the nursery for pay next year can contact Susan, Sury3@aol.com.

FUTURE PLANNING

Cabaret Night on Saturday, June 9th, 8:00 - 10:00pm

JOIN US for an evening of music, merriment and friendship. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know others in IFFP – and it's for a good cause! All proceeds will go to the Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Coalition.

Do you have a talent, poem, song, skit, dance you'd like to share? Want to join the IFFP Cabaret Band? Are you good at the behind the scenes stuff like decorating, setting up, cleaning up, helping with sound and logistics? We need you! Call Karen Kenton or Marika Partridge.

Appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Bring your own beer or wine. The suggested donation at the door: \$10 per person. Location to be announced. Start rehearsing and stay tuned!!

FROM THE RABBI



One of the rituals created by IFFP that intrigued me is the COA ceremony, which will take place this year on May 6. On March 18th I met with the COA Prep class for what turned out to be a stimulating discussion devoted to Agnosticism and Atheism. It provided me with an opportunity to share my personal spiritual journey with the students in the class who were apparently attempting to define what they did or did not believe about the nature of a divinity. What surprised me most about the discussion was the fact that an age group that is characteristically known to possess a relatively short attention span remained intent and involved in the discussion. I reflected on my own childhood and recalled that at age twelve I had my doubts concerning the existence of a personal, supernatural God. Much of their doubt was encouraged by peer pressure and the affirmation of skepticism was one of the modes to gain popularity. On one occasion I aired my doubts in a sixth-grade religious school class. The teacher informed me that I was exerting a negative influence upon my

classmates and that this subject was never to come up again in the class. None of the students in the class supported me publicly even though they had discussed their skepticism openly with me in public school and during social gatherings. Indeed I was encouraged to become the spokesperson for them and I bore the castigation of the irate teacher without their public support.

The COA Prep course was indeed refreshing and liberating in contrast to what I had experienced when I was their age in my religious school class. Although the name Israel means “he who wrestles with God” and Judaism fosters the art of questioning, this principle never seemed to apply pragmatically to my religious education. What I sensed during my hour with the COA Prep students was that they were not necessarily looking for answers, but rather the right to phrase the questions.

COA shares with Bar and Bat Mitzvah the challenges faced by young people as they enter adolescence. Prior to this stage of growth, young men and women have been in the taking, recipient mode. This is the proverbial “children should be seen and not heard.” Coming of age should be a transformative process where the recipient becomes the giver. The COA class experience involves the creation and completion of a service project. Whatever you believe or don't believe is linked to what you do on behalf of others. For the Bar or Bat Mitzvah this is the time when the individual assumes responsibility as a member of the community. The ritual ceremony that celebrates Bar or Bat Mitzvah should link the faith experience of the individual with action on behalf of others. The COA ceremony celebrates the completion of a project and links the endeavor to the ideology of its creator. This is essentially what Bar and Bat Mitzvah are supposed to be about, literally

to become a son or daughter of the commandments. Unfortunately the mitzvah is often dwarfed by the Bar with a small “b” as the social function diminishes the realm of the spiritual. I like Bar and Bat Mitzvah inasmuch as I am a devotee of ritual. I believe that in this sense COA could benefit from a sense of increased ritual and that Bar and Bat Mitzvah could benefit from the COA commitment to service.

— Rabbi Harold White, Spiritual Advisor

FROM THE BOARD



The Board held IFFP’s Annual Membership meeting on Sunday April 22nd. Over 40 people attended. We began with a lovely Gathering, including a ‘human clay’ sculpting exercise, and then got down to business. Here’s what happened, in case you missed it:

- **Strategic Planning Process Update:** **Rebecca Weiss**, Board Vice Chair, and **Ellyn McKay**, IFFP member and expert organizational planner who is volunteering her time to this effort, explained the Board’s strategic planning process that began last September at a Board retreat and has been in full swing since. The goal is to establish a strong organizational structure and clear set of principles to guide IFFP in our second decade as a membership organization. Key elements of the plan include a clearly defined long-range vision and mission for IFFP, clear definitions of the roles and responsibilities for Board leadership

positions, staff positions, and volunteer committee leaders, and clearly established relationships between those positions. As Ellyn and Rebecca explained, IFFP used one structure that got us to where we are today and now we need to revise the structure to maintain ourselves and continue to grow and evolve. Strategic goals for the coming year include robust fundraising from foundations and other outside sources, membership recruitment and retention, and enhancing existing programs as well as continuing the strategic planning process. **Rev. Julia, Jen Liebreich** and **Ellen Jennings** have contributed to the planning process. More to come

- **Next Year’s Board:** The membership was presented with and approved unanimously the slate of candidates for next year’s Board, which includes two more people than usual. The Board voted earlier this year to expand from nine to eleven the number of members on the Board to both help accommodate a heavier Board workload and also to ensure the Board continues to reflect the diverse backgrounds and views of the growing membership. Board members serve for three years each. The six returning Board members approved for next year are **Rebecca Weiss**, Chair, **Jen Liebreich**, Vice Chair, **Michael Ellner**, Treasurer, **Phil Jakobsberg**, **Colette G. Matzzie**, and **Ian Spatz**. The five new Board members are **Bobby Gelfeld**, **David Quigley**, **Stephanie Abramson**, **Robby Jones**, and **Susan Mathis**. Their bios were distributed and are still available. A hearty ‘thank you’ and congratulations were offered to next year’s Board. The new Board officially begins in July. If you are interested in being considered for a future Board position, please contact the Board.
- **The Budget:** Mike Ellner, Treasurer, and I presented the proposed budget for 2007-08, which is a balanced budget amounting to approximately \$148,000 in income and expenses. A summary and general outline of key budget items was distributed at the meeting. As in past annual meetings, a spirited discussion was had concerning IFFP’s financial condition, our ability to meet current expenses, and the strength of our position to go forward. A few members expressed a concern about the amount of time to study the budget before being asked to approve it. Questions were answered concerning detailed aspects of the budget. And a detailed budget is available to any member who wishes to see one now. The Board noted these concerns for future annual meetings. Following the discussion, the overwhelming majority of the members present agreed that IFFP is in good financial shape and that the proposed budget is sound for our plans for the coming year. The budget was approved with two abstentions and no objections.

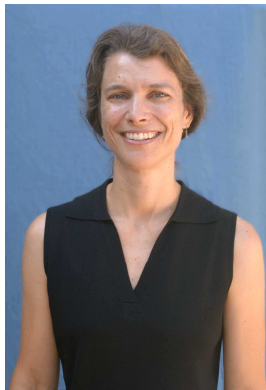
Budget Highlights: IFFP will incur new expenses due to an increase in Rabbi White's time, both informally and formally, including more time for help with outside fundraising and publicity. Rent and custodial fees will increase slightly. And staff expenses will rise modestly due to a COLA for three staff and slightly expanded hours for Rev. Julia and Ellen Jennings during the summer weeks. Revenue will increase to cover the expenses. The tax-deductible membership fee will increase by up to 4 percent. Tuition will not increase. Taken together, membership and tuition, this represents a 2 percent overall increase in IFFP fees for a typical family of four – for at least \$20 more per year per family to at most \$40 more per year per family depending on your income. In addition, the “teen fee” will increase by \$25 and the “COA-Prep fee” will increase by \$50 to help cover the cost of outside teachers needed for these grades. And revenue will increase based on an anticipated net growth of ten new family memberships – an increase consistent with IFFP's historical growth. IFFP currently has 108 paying families. IFFP had \$49,600 in the bank at the beginning of the fiscal year, a comfortable and appropriate reserve for an organization of our size, and we expect to end the fiscal year (June 30) with roughly that same cash amount.

Internal and external fundraising will be critical to meet IFFP's challenges and needs in the future, whether for additional staff such as a bookkeeper, other positions, or more staff time, better compensation for staff, and future increases in rent. We secured our first-ever foundation grant this past year, for \$20,000, but the Rabbi, who has considerable fundraising experience, and members of the Board, believe there are many untapped fundraising opportunities available to us. Members with experience and interest in this field are encouraged to volunteer for the fundraising committee.

This annual meeting was my last as Chair. This is my fourth and final year serving on the Board and my second year as Board Chairman. I have greatly enjoyed my Board service and appreciate the opportunity IFFP's members have given me to work together to maintain, nurture and grow our interfaith community and give something back in exchange for what I have received. As always, please contact me or any other member of the Board with questions, comments or concerns about the annual meeting or any other aspect of IFFP's operations.

— **Danny Weiss**, Board Chairman

NOTES FROM THE DRE



I send sunny spring greetings, knowing deep in my soul that rebirth is possible as I look out on the yellow daffodils and pink tulips nodding in the cool breeze. I find great comfort in the knowledge that, no matter how long winter lasts, spring always arrives.....

This month my “notes” are all about teacher recruitment. Why? Because I NEED YOU!!!

Our Sunday School is taught, almost exclusively, by IFFP volunteers (who are each offered a tuition or membership waiver in great appreciation for all their work). Given the fabulous growth of our Sunday School program, we now have twelve single grade classes, from age 3 through grade 8, including a class for kids with learning differences. This means that we need at least 25 teachers to staff these classes!

If you've ever considered teaching, I urge you to get in touch with me as soon as possible. I'd be happy to talk with you, answer questions, connect you with current teachers, etc. Our IFFP teachers receive a full day of teacher training in the early fall, benefit from ongoing resources and support from the DRE (me!) and enjoy great camaraderie with their teaching peers.

I have openings throughout the Sunday School, but I am particularly in need of teachers for the following classes:

3s class-- this is a great, introductory, community-building, FUN class. If you like to crawl around, do the hokey pokey and not take yourself too seriously, this would be a great class for you!

4s class-- these pre-Kindergarten kids learn about and enjoy the “fruits of the spirit” all year long. They have great fun with bible stories, art activities and felt figures. If you like to be asked a lot of hard-to-answer questions, come hang out with the 4s!

7th Grade (COA Prep)-- starting in 7th grade, the kids alternate between morning and evening class times (meaning their teachers can go to adult group!). The class reads a fabulous novel about a boy who creates his own religion, talks about what religion they’d like to create, and spends much of the year talking about and then implementing ways they can “pay it forward” by doing good in the world. If you like to be challenged by middle school minds, the 7th graders would welcome you with open arms!

I very much look forward to hearing from all you “wannabee” teachers. As we know from recent events, the lives of our students are so very precious and so very vulnerable. I urge you to be one of the adults who makes a positive difference in their lives!

God know my situation. I am but one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
— Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris

Wishing you many blessings,

— Ellen Jennings, Director of Religious Education

MAKING IFFP WORK

In this issue of the Newsletter, **Heidi Freeman** profiles one of IFFP’s younger member/volunteers:

Grace Lerner and IFFP have grown up together. After all, when Grace and her family (mom **Melinda Frederick**, dad **Rich Lerner** and brother **Griffin**, now 14), joined IFFP in 1997, she was only seven and IFFP was “just” an interfaith Sunday school. Now Grace is a graduate of that Sunday school and an active supporting member of IFFP. Grace’s main volunteer activities with IFFP are as an assistant in the 3-year old preschool class and a leader of the Teen Group. She credits IFFP with providing a supportive environment in which to learn about Judaism and Christianity with no pressure to choose and enjoys creating that same environment for the preschoolers.

For IFFP’s teens, Grace works with **Rev. Julia** to plan both social and community service events. Recent (and entirely independent) examples range from a poker night to raising \$150 for refugee services in Darfur, Somalia. Grace is also about to graduate from Albert Einstein High School, where she is an active member of the National Honor Society. Next fall she’ll leave IFFP, high school, and home to enter Miami University in Ohio, where she plans to study communications and anthropology. Grace connects her interest in other people and cultures to IFFP’s message of openness to different things. She and the service she provides to IFFP will be missed.

— Heidi Friedman

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to New Members

We want to extend a very warm welcome to our newest members: **Jill & Josh Bernstein** and their brand new daughter Maya; **Flora & Paul Beaudet**, parents of member **Lisa Beaudet**; **Anita Iverson & Steven Kane**, sons Eli 4th grade & Benjamin age 5; and **Sharon Kershbaum & Tim Kelly** who have been attending to ill parents out of town.

Meet our New Members

Our continuing new member bios highlight three new families to IFFP this issue. Please make an effort to introduce yourselves to all of our new members when you are at the next IFFP gathering.

Suzanne & Nat Mund

Nat and **Suzanne Mund** both grew up on Long Island, Nat in Commack, and Suzanne in Dix Hills. Nat graduated from Michigan State in 1993 and UNC-Chapel Hill Law School in 1996. He is currently the Deputy Legislative Director at the League of Conservation Voters. Suzanne graduated from Georgetown University in 1993 and Hofstra University School of Law in 1998. She is currently a Manager in the Education Department of the American Association for Justice (formerly the Association of Trial Lawyers of America.)

Their daughter, **Sarah Anne**, turned one year old on March 11, 2007. Suzanne writes “It was Sarah Anne’s birth that brought all of the religious issues we’d thought we had resolved crashing down on us!” and motivated them to join IFFP.

Nat knows IFFP member, **Daniel Rosenberg**, through work, but didn’t realize he and his family were members of IFFP until we visited. Aside from caring for Sarah Anne, Nat and Suzanne both enjoy reading and college sports. Suzanne likes digital photography and Nat follows politics.

Bobbie Friedman

Bobbie Friedman grew up on a poultry farm in New Jersey. She has spent over 26 years in university administration, including 15 as director of the Career Development Center at Binghamton University and currently maintains a small private practice, focusing on retirement transition issues. Bobbie writes: “It is exciting to interact with adults who bring a lifetime of experience to thinking about the ‘next chapter.’ Plus, they think my age is an asset. In addition, I typically spend several months each year working with the Foreign Service Institute’s Career Transition Center. It is fascinating to work with Foreign Service professionals who have lived history.”

Bobbie, who is the oldest of five siblings, joined IFFP this fall along with her sister and brother-in-law, **Heidi Friedman** and **Tom English**, and their family. She is married to **Dick Beerbower**, with whom she will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary next year. She has four stepchildren, one of whom lives with her family here in Washington, D.C.

As a doting Aunt, Bobbie says that it was a desire to share time and religious traditions with her sister Heidi’s family that brought her to IFFP.

Outside of family and work some of her interests include spending time with friends, following current events, reading, and going to museums.

Bobbie says that she likes coming to IFFP at Sligo Middle school. “As a secularist, who is interested in religious ideas and traditions, IFFP is a relief. I feel free to participate without a lot of pressure. I appreciate

the genuinely welcoming atmosphere and wish I lived closer so I could participate more easily. Thank you to everyone who has said hello.”

Kathy & Trevor Voglmayr

Kathy Voglmayr grew up in Baltimore, MD with her parents and 2 sisters. She was raised in a reform Jewish household. Growing up, she was very athletic and loved playing on sports teams and played field hockey and lacrosse through college. **Trevor** grew up for his first seven years in Sterling, Massachusetts. He then relocated with his parents and older brother to Melbourne, Florida where he enjoyed surfing and swimming. Trevor was raised primarily Protestant. Trevor’s mother is from Australia and his father is from Austria. Trevor was an avid skier and skateboarder and loved making trouble with his friends.

Kathy has her Master’s in Social Work and worked as a therapist for Latino adolescents until the birth of her son, **Jesse**, in July 2005. Trevor is a builder and owns a building/renovation company, called Washington-Landmark, with his brother. Their son, Jesse, is 21 months old. Kathy and Trevor are expecting another baby boy this coming September 2007.

Kathy writes that what brought them to IFFP was their desire to be a part of a community that both of them identified with. “We heard about IFFP through internet research and a friend of the family.” They also know fellow IFFP members **Tova, Gideon** and **Makeda Sanders** through a toddler playgroup. **Rob Liebreich** works with Kathy’s dad.

Some of Kathy’s interests include lots of fun toddler activities, hiking with her dog and family. Trevor loves biking, hiking, skiing and motorcycling as well as puttering with all of his “toys” in the garage. Kathy says that she and Trevor are “looking forward to being a greater part of the IFFP community, especially as our children get a bit older!

If you would like to welcome and support new members, please contact **Tova Sanders** or **Melinda Frederick**.

— **Melinda Frederick**, New Member Coordinator

IFFP TEEN GROUP

An Awesome Group of Teens

In early March nine IFFP Teens went on retreat at the Pearlstone Retreat Center near Owings Mills! We had a fabulous time celebrating Purim, observing Sabbath through rest and teaching, playing kickball, drums and other group games, eating great food, getting some sleep, building bond fires and community! We also talked with each other about our own interfaith identities. An interesting reflection I came away with after that discussion is that most kids are following the passions of their parents. Several teens noted that both of their parents felt strongly about their faith traditions. As a result, the teens felt a strong claim to both traditions. One teen stated that only one of her parents felt tied to her Jewish tradition and thus she too felt mostly aligned to the Jewish tradition! Very Interesting! Most religious education takes place outside the church/synagogue/IFFP!

Our last session in March was at **Elliot Meyerson**’s house where we ate pizza and learned about the struggle in Darfur, Sudan. **Rabbi White** joined us for this event to educate us about the tragic genocide which is occurring there. We all wrote letters to President Bush about putting US peacekeeping resources into that region.

In April, 15 teens met at **Alex Groff**’s house to play poker with **Rob Liebreich** and **Randy Gibson**. They raised the stakes high so that \$155 was donated to the Save Darfur campaign going on at Einstein High School!

Late April we will meet to make sandwiches for a men's shelter in Rockville. We will also be writing a blessing for the upcoming COA Ceremony and encouraging the COAers to join the teen group next year.

In May we will be participating in the May 20th Teen Graduation Sunday saying our sad farewells to **Zoe Cohen** and **Grace Lerner**.

This summer we hope to have a swim party and participate in more community service projects. We've had a terrific year together.

Planning for next year-Teen Group Leader

If you or anyone you know has an interest in leading the teen group next year please see Rev. Julia. It is an incredible privilege to get to know all of these wonderful teens.

— Rev. Julia Jarvis, Spiritual Director

KIDS' COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY

Friends of Sligo Creek Thank IFFP's Kid's Community Service Day Volunteers

On Sunday, April 22, IFFP's kids, COA, COA Prep & teens joined others in the Sligo Creek Community to help clean Sligo Creek and the surrounding area as part of the wonderful activities planned for the Kids' Community Service Day. The Friends of Sligo Creek thanked IFFP with in an article on the FOOSC web site:

On Sunday, [we] also ran a clean-up with kids from IFFP, an interfaith group that meets at Sligo Middle School, a notorious hotspot. Thanks to **Antoinette Eates** and **Carol Muskin**, about **27 super kids** eagerly set to work in the sloping woods down into Sligo Creek Park and filled 20 bags in no time. One girl asked, "What's with Corona?" [the beer bottle brand so prevalent in the trash thrown down the hill by soccer players].

A LETTER FROM PHILADELPHIA

News from Felise & Mark Shellenberger

The **Shellenbergers** moved to Philadelphia last year. Thankfully Mark generously still continues to work with us on our web site including weekly/monthly updates and technical support.

Things are going well in PA. We love the area we picked and the schools are great. The house has needed much more work than we expected, but it's coming together nicely. Living close to our families is better than we had anticipated. The girls are getting to spend a lot more time with their families. It's also great to not constantly be on the road. It's been wonderful to enjoy holidays in our own home and to be able to invite friends and family over for celebrations.

The best news is that **Carissa** is walking and progressing beautifully. **Emma** is doing great, too. She loves kindergarten. She still mentions IFFP and misses it as much as we do!

So far our efforts to get an IFFP started in Philly have not gotten very far. "Interfaith" around here either means you pick one religion, but no one has to convert or that different religious organizations are talking to each other. We'd like to get started soon so that we can do something for the December time frame. Any ideas would be greatly appreciated! Hope everyone at IFFP is doing well."

YOUNG COUPLES

Young Couples Chili Cook-Off, June 2

Find your favorite chili recipe! All young couples are invited to the last event of the year, a chili cook-off. It will be Saturday June 2nd at 6:00pm at **Kerri** and **Andrew Levine**'s house. An email invitation will be sent shortly with more details.

— **Kerri Mullins-Levine**, Young Couples Coordinator

JOYS! AND CONCERNS

IFFPs Joys

*Mazel Tov to **Steve Jackson & Cynthia Wayne** & their families on the Bat Mizvahs of **Zoe & Adrienne** at the Historic 6th & I Synagogue April 28 with Rabbi White. Even their 101 year old great-grandmother was in attendance!

***Susan Ryder** would like to share the wonderful blessings in her life: the marriage of her son **Micah** to **Christina McGuire** in Honolulu March 11 ; the birth of **Mikaela Katherine** to her son **Noah** & his wife **Christine** April 9; and the (God willing) graduation of **Taghi** from St. Mary's May 12.

*Congratulations to **Jill & Josh Bernstein** on the birth of their first child, **Maya Sivan**, April 14 after a 60 hour labor!!!

***Kristina Seppala & Jon Seaton** will be married May 19th by **Rev. Julia** & Rabbi Joel Braude. Then they're off to a honeymoon on St. Kitts. We wish them many very blessed years together.

***Grace Lerner, Zoe Cohen** and **Noah McMillan** for their graduation from High School!

***Tova Sanders**' "official" graduation and hooding ceremony takes place on May 20th.

The prayers and thoughts of the community to

***Jen Liebreich**, whose grandparents, George and Birdie Bird, were in a terrible car accident. Birdie is in intensive care in Columbus, OH where the accident happened. George was hospitalized today due to complications. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers as Jen and her family wait on their edge of their seats.

***Danny Weiss**, whose grandmother, Paula Weiss, passed away yesterday after 104 years of living peacefully and fully.

***Robin Allen**, whose sister Stacy died in April.

*To all the faculty and students/alumni of Virginia Tech, we send our love and light to you.

THANKING THOSE WHO SERVE

As we close another IFFP year, we need to thank everyone for so much hard work and the time that they give willingly to our community.

IFFP thrives because of our wonderful volunteers. Some members are able to spend small amounts of time and others give a great deal of their time and energy. The work of all volunteers is necessary to provide the

variety of programs and activities IFFP offers. Please consider returning to your present volunteer position next year, or participating in another group. Just remember that everything you do for IFFP benefits all of us.

We listed all the volunteers in the newsletter earlier in the year but we would like to acknowledge all that they have done this year: And a special thanks to our teachers is noted above in this Newsletter. Here we give thanks to our other volunteers. Please forgive us if we have omitted your name:

Antoinette Eates & Carol Muskin and the Community Service Committee for creating numerous worthwhile and varied community service events that benefit all the members of IFFP as well as the outside community. Committee: **Promise Alstrom, Chuck Pierret.**

Diane Jentilet for her amazing efforts to make our nursery a wonderful place for all our little ones, and to **Yuri Rosenberg** for all his help & support.

All our Nursery workers for their dedication to our little ones: **Aimee Miller, Alex Groff, Adrienne Jackson, Julia Lewis, Hannah Kenton, Rosalie Fischer, Elana Gold, & Sally Ravitz.**

Colette Matzzie and the Adult Group Committee for all their work in presenting us with educational, informative and helpful Adult Groups and to **Susan Mathis** for video taping these great sessions. Committee: **Chuck Fromm, Terry Fischer, Jimmy Mrose, Phil Jakobsberg, Ron Weich, Bobbie Friedman.**

Jessica Vistnes for, once again, being the supreme planner and organizer for our Holiday Party & Seder.

To the many folks who take turns assisting our teachers by being “hall helpers” for the Sunday School: **Daniel Rosenberg, Kan Kohrman, Diane Ives, Eve Weisburg, Gail McCallion, Jennifer Cavey, Lance Flitter, Michelle Motta, Nina Shumofsky, Curt Meuse, Susan Kaplan, Wendy Brown.**

The Worship Committee for planning thoughtful, meaningful Gatherings for our varied community and to **Marci Shegogue** for creating our Gathering Programs. Committee: **Jen Liebreich, Larry Bostian, Pete Flynn, Dan Griffin, Andy & Josh Herman, Eric Burman, Jodi Kanter, Robby Jones.**

Lisa Beaudet & Lori Walker Roth for ensuring that our refreshments are set up nicely and ready for the eating each week.

Marika Partridge & Larry Ravitz for getting up at 6 am to prepare the coffee without which our adult members would not be able to truly appreciate our Gatherings. Thanks also to **Sue & Paul** for helping.

Robin & Chris, Ashley & Drew Thieme, for schlepping & setting up our sound equipment & beautiful panels each week; to **Pete, Shaun & Andrew Flynn** for helping to set up the sound equipment and **Barr Weissman & Linda Goldman** for helping.

Robin Thieme for her many hours, expertise and support advising the board & staff on financial issues (including setting up computer systems & training) and the transitions that have taken place this year.

Ellyn McKay for her commitment of time & energy to the Board’s Strategic Planning Committee so that IFFP can move forward with a clear direction

Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg and **Stephani Abramson** for creating a great up-coming Women’s Retreat

Andy Katz & Nat Mund for planning the IFFP men’s night out.

Cheney Ravitz, Alex Feiden & Nick Corrales for ushering,

Robin Allen for supporting the ushers and creating great art for us!

The New Member Committee for all the work they've done supporting our new members with greeters, brunches, bios for the newsletters, an in depth FAQ sheet, and more. Committee: **Melinda Frederick, Tova Sanders, Stephani Abramson, Diane Ives, Cheryl Leanza.**

Erica Burman & Jenni BenBassett for being the warm, welcoming face of IFFP, carting all of our name tag boxes, answering questions and being all around helpful.

Susan Katz-Miller, Anne Stewart & Adria Zeldin for greeting perspective members and making them feel welcome.

Kent Dirckx , Phil Jakobsberg, Rob Liebreich & Mark Shellenberger of the Web Site committee for patience, creativity and much work in updating our web site.

Mark Shellenberger for handling all the updates to our web site even though he's moved to Philadelphia!

Our Public Relations committee for their strategies, ideas and support for the Web Site committee
Committee: **Mary Melrod, Julie Stewart, Nina Mrose, Rob Liebreich, Steve Stern**

Special gratitude to our graduating seniors, **Zoe Cohen & Grace Lerner** for helping to revive the teen group and to **Rob Liebreich** for his participation. Advisory committee: **Julia Lewis, Promise Alstrom, Cindy Allen, Maggi Cowlan.**

Our Fundraising Committee for successfully bringing in the target amount needed to run our programs.
Committee: **Andre Parraway, Betsy Keeler, Stephani & Scott Abramson.**

The Comfort Committee for providing cards, meals and support for our families during times of joy & grief.
Committee: **Carol Muskin, Cheryl Dembo, Jodi Kanter, Geneva Collins, Cindy Pohoryles.**

To **Marci & Rich Shegogue, Pete Flynn, Dan Griffin, Larry Bostian & Ben Miller** without whom we wouldn't have music to feed our souls.

Marci Shegogue for teaching music in some of our Sunday school classes

Kerri Mullins-Levine for, once again, being the sole planner of all of our Young Couples activities.

Jeff Kenton for being handling our list serve and solving all our problems

Mary Joel Holin & Stacey Katz, two founding moms, for their help in assisting others to start groups in their cities

Anne Stewart, Carol Muskin & Rebecca Weiss for working with Ellen to improve the curriculum that is taught to our children

Rebecca Weiss & Stephani Abramson for creating & organizing our new Monthly Women's Group

And finally to **Peter Gray**, who has done such a wonderful job with our bi-monthly newsletter.

— **Susan Ryder**

WHY WE BELONG . . .

We joined IFFP nearly three years ago, when our girls, Lele and NaNa, were 8 and 6. We knew a few families who were members and had attended several gatherings the previous year. I grew up in a conservative Jewish home with formal Hebrew school three days a week. Lisa grew up Protestant, attending church and Sunday school as a young child. When her family moved overseas when Lisa was a young teenager, they switched from church going to wine tasting.

As a family we celebrated major Jewish holidays with my family but did not attend religious services. We celebrated Christmas with a tree and presents with Lisa's family. When the girls were in first and third grade, we decided to get serious about finding a spiritual community in which we both felt comfortable. We liked the philosophy of the Sunday school, and I particularly liked the un-church-like quality of the Sligo cafeteria. We attended a Unitarian service about the same time we visited IFFP, but I didn't feel comfortable there. I also appreciated the Sunday Gathering leaving me free to attend synagogue on Saturdays with my mother. My father had just passed away, and this was an important way for me to spend time with my mother.

After nearly three full years, we're more settled into the IFFP community. I've enjoyed making music from time to time at Gatherings with my flute. Lisa co-taught third grade this year. I've just joined the Board. So far IFFP feels like a very good fit for our family.

Susan Mathis, Lisa Henderson, Lele, and Nana

MONTGOMERY COUNTY WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY: IFFP follows Montgomery County Public Schools for closure due to weather. In case of icy conditions, snow, or storms, call 240-777-2706 or check the website <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us>. WE WILL SEND OUT A LIST SERV ANNOUNCEMENT IF THE WEATHER SUNDAY MORNING IS QUESTIONABLE. PLEASE CHECK THE LIST SERV BEFORE LEAVING HOME.

IFFP Board: *Chair:* Danny Weiss, • *Vice Chair:* Rebecca Weiss, **IFFP Coordinators:** *Adult Group:* Colette Matzzie • *Celebrations:* Jessica Vistnes • *Community Comfort/Support Group Contacts:* Anne Stewart and Carol Muskin • *Community Service Workgroup:* Antoinette Eates • *New Members:* Melinda Frederick • *Newsletter:* Peter Gray • *Website:* Mark Shellenberger • *Worship:* Larry Bostian • *Young Couples:* Kerri Mullins-Levine

IFFP Staff: *Spiritual Director:* Rev. Julia Jarvis, 301-270-6337 (office) • *Director of Religious Education:* Ellen Jennings • *Spiritual Advisor:* Rabbi Harold White • *Program Coordinator:* Susan Ryder, Sury3@aol.com