

Jewish Program Sees 'New Light'

Ohr Chadash Religious School recently acquired another merging partner, bringing more community.

by Arlene Ratzabi
Community contributor

A merger is by definition a voluntary combination of two entities on roughly equal terms into one legal entity. The resources of the merging entities are pooled for the benefit of the new entity.

Ohr Chadash — which is Hebrew for “a new light” — Religious School is located in eastern Queens and serves Fresh Meadows and the surrounding communities. The school provides a high quality after-school Jewish education program.

Merger brings improvement

Starting in the fall of 2008, Ohr Chadash was the successful merger of two conservative Jewish synagogue religious schools — Hillcrest Jewish Center and Israel Center of Conservative Judaism. A new merger partner, Hollis Hills Jewish Center, has recently joined Ohr Chadash making it an even more inclusive and relevant program for the community.

The shared vision and goals of the merger partners and the pooling of their resources into Ohr Chadash, enabled the new school to greatly enhance the opportunities for an improved after-school Jewish education experience.

The environment focuses on the social and spiritual development of the children in accordance with the goals of Jewish education.

With larger classes, financial viability and many more enrichment programs and experiential learning opportunities, Ohr Chadash has thrived over the past five years. Every five months, a location rotation within the partners occurs.

The direction

Under the leadership, initially of Education Director Judith Stein and currently under Ruth Merrill, together with a professional staff of teachers and dedicated clergy from the three synagogues, Ohr Chadash serves chil-



dren from pre-kindergarten through post Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah. Students' families need not be members of any of the merger partners.

The environment focuses on the social and spiritual development of the children in accordance with the goals of Jewish education. Bible, Jewish History, Prayer, Holidays, Music, Israel, and Hebrew are featured in the curriculum for each class. Emphasis is also placed on the universal values that Judaism teaches.

2009

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism recognized Ohr Chadash as a “Framework For Excellence School” in May 2009.

Ohr Chadash is one of a select group of after-school religious schools in the state of New York to receive this status which we have maintained for the past five years. This prestigious certification marks the fact that Ohr Chadash Religious School has met rigorous standards in all academic areas including professional development, curriculum, and family education.

Further, Ohr Chadash has demonstrated that it has met all of the goals, aims, and benchmarks necessary to be considered a school of exceptional academic quality. Ohr Chadash strongly feels that we play a vital role in Jewish youth education, transmitting Jewish traditions, building a Jewish identity, and instilling a sense of community in our students.

—Information courtesy of Ohr Chadash Religious School



Ohr Chadash's welcoming assembly on the first day of school on Sept. 8.

Photo courtesy of Michael Zuckerman

Recognition

Ohr Chadash has been designated a "Framework of Excellence School" meeting the standards for Jewish after-school education of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the primary umbrella organization for over 650 synagogues practicing conservative Judaism in North America.

The school is dedicated to the growth and achievements over the past five

years and of the role Ohr Chadash plays in educating children and building community in Fresh Meadows.

For more information, visit their website at ohrchadashqueens.org.

Arlene Ratzabi is a member of the Israel Center of Conservative Judaism and was a member of the founding committee of Ohr Chadash. She currently serves as the secretary of the Board of Ohr Chadash.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

EXTRA ACTIVITIES OFFERED



First day of classes at an Ohr Chadash classroom.

Photo courtesy of Michael Zuckerman



A teacher giving instructions in a classroom.

Photo courtesy of Michael Zuckerman

Ohr Chadash provides a number of extra activities throughout the year. Our weekly music program is offered to all the classes from pre-kindergarten through seventh grade every Sunday. All songs are age appropriate and there is a special emphasis before all major holidays. The songs are both in English and Hebrew and an explanation of the vocabulary and theme is given for the Hebrew language songs. Each year the school holds a special Hanukkah Happening. The children sing songs they have learned about the "great miracles that occurred" and light the Menorah and recite the appropriate blessings. A festive Hanukkah meal of "sufganiot" (doughnuts) is provided by the Parents Association along with menorahs, candles and chocolate "gelt" (money). Visit ohrchadashqueens.org for more programs offered at the school. —**Information courtesy of Ohr Chadash Religious School**



Photo courtesy of Michael Zuckerman