

# INTERLAKEN BRIDGE

THE STEVE & SHARI SADEK FAMILY CAMP INTERLAKEN JCC ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Toni Davison Levenberg

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\*of blessed memory

**As I write this,** Camp is three weeks away — and I'm very excited!

I have many goals for the summer that we've worked so hard to develop, and I want to make sure we meet them. I want to make sure that each camper has an incredibly positive experience at Camp. I want each camper to make meaningful, lifelong friendships. I want each camper to feel great about themselves while at Camp. And I expect that the incredible staff we've hired will facilitate this without making it seem manufactured! Anybody who has gone from camper to counselor understands what I mean by that.

I am also super excited for Staff Orientation! We work hard planning staff orientation, investing two weeks before Camp begins to prepare staff—and prepare Camp for our campers. We strive to follow trends in camping, in education, and in the world so that we present material in relevant and relatable ways. This year we are bringing some fantastic training to staff that will extend beyond Camp—positively impacting their lives at school and work. I am proud of the schedule we've put together and the talent we've retained to teach our team.



Toni, Jonah & Nava Levenberg

What else excites me? Walking into our beautiful new cabins, swimming in the deepest Lake Finley I've ever seen, climbing the new inflatables added to the lake, learning from specialists hired from all over the world, engaging our campers Jewishly, wearing new



Toni, Mark & the Camp gang

swag, laughing all day and night (I laugh harder at Camp than anywhere else in the world), dancing with my Camp family on Shabbat, singing at five opening campfires, crying at the five closing campfires, and much more!

On the day our campers arrive, nobody is more excited than I am! I can close my eyes and picture the most perfect arrival day: the sun is hot; the flags are waving slightly in the air; staff are wearing their staff shirts, jumping up and down on the floval while the buses pull into Camp; cookies and milk are ready to be served in the Mirpesset; the photographers are taking photos of campers stepping off the bus... We are ready to start another amazing summer! The happiness is contagious; it's the day we've been preparing for since August of the summer before!

I hope you will keep Camp in your hearts and minds this summer when you smell a campfire, eat a s'more, swim in a lake, look up at the beautiful blue sky, or hear an old favorite from song session. I look forward to "seeing" you on July 14th on Facebook for our Live Havdalah event; join us at 9:30pm.

B'Shalom,

*Toni*

**These days,** you might find Omri Bitan connecting with students at Gan Ami Early Childhood Education, bringing energy and heart to a Jewish community event, or breezing through the halls of the JCC between his many responsibilities. He'll give you a warm smile and a sincere greeting, embodying just what we hope a Shin-Shin in our community will be. The Hebrew letters "Shin-Shin" stand for *Shenat Shirut*, translating to "a year of service" and titling the emissary program organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel in partnership with the Israel Center of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation and other partner agencies including the JCC. As Shin-Shinim, Omri Bitan and Amit Glass work in the Milwaukee Jewish community, sharing a bit of Israel everywhere they go.

and counselors in Cabin Levi, Omri felt grateful to have an Israeli counselor, David Mizrahi. He remembers every detail of that summer, from the homesick tears peppering his first week to the exciting beginnings of friendships that stand strong to this day. He remembers thinking, "There's no way I'm not spending all my life here!"

Omri returned to Camp that following summer and became a much-adored mainstay in his grade. Over subsequent years, Omri fell in love with the Camp tradition of super-energized Friday night Israeli dancing, "even though we don't dance like that ever in Israel," he laughs. "It's my thing." He also felt especially connected to the Camp community through Havdalah, singing peaceful prayers lakeside under starlight.



We all know that Interlaken transforms lives. Omri feels that he has been especially impacted, being from Israel. "There's nothing like [camp] in Israel I think," he explains. "I see the world in a much different way than my friends there. I'm more open-minded.

"Things seem much more accessible [here]. I feel like anywhere I go in the US, I have someone," he adds.

Interlaken has shaped Omri's life, and now Omri will continue to shape Interlaken. When it comes to bringing Israel to Camp, he explains, "I have been an emissary of Israel all these years; it's just formal now." Omri and his Shin-Shin counterpart Amit want to "add things, not change things." They want to open conversations with campers and dig a little deeper, helping them find their connection to Israel.

Mingled with Omri's immense excitement of being a counselor this summer is a touch of sadness, because in August, Omri will move back to Israel to serve in the Israel Defense Forces. This will mean an absence of at least a few years from Camp, so he is determined to make the most of this summer. "It will be closing the circle," he says, "because I grew up as a camper and came back as an Ozo. I have this opportunity to give back and do more."

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Come summer, you'll find Omri and Amit at Camp Interlaken—but for Omri, it's not his first time. This will be Omri's sixth summer at Camp. In a delightful and unprecedented story, Omri has found his way from Israel to Interlaken, and Interlaken to Milwaukee.

Omri's father always loved the idea of sending his children to summer camp in the US. "My father didn't grow up with much," Omri says. "He tried to make our lives as interesting as possible." In 2011, he chose to send Omri and his younger brother Amit to our beloved Camp Interlaken, far from their small village of Lehavim.

"I was scared," Omri confesses about his first journey to Eagle River as a seventh grader. As he met his cabinmates

Omri's open heart and deep appreciation for Interlaken served him well; in 2016 he became an excellent Ozo. The same summer, Omri's younger sister Mika joined her brothers as a camper, completing a lovable sibling trio. He also became close with the Shin-Shinim that summer, Omer and Orni, who introduced him to the possibility of spending a year in Milwaukee. Now, Omri looks forward to his best summer yet as a Shin-Shin camp counselor.



*Omri with campers on Shabbat at Camp.*

**Running seven marathons** on seven continents in seven days gives you tons of time to just....think. For me, it was 49 hours of “running time” to think, plus all of the accompanying travel time.

Because I was raising funds for Camp through this event, naturally much of my thought time was spent thinking about Interlaken. Sometimes it was an indirect thought, like remembering a certain Maccabiah race or how it felt to stay up super late on a Friday night with no staff curfew. Sometimes it was more direct, like running into recent counselor Abi Sellman on the streets of Cape Town, South Africa, in Mile 25 of my second marathon (how does that even happen??).

Since I’ve been back, I’ve been asked repeatedly how one trains for an adventure like this. A lot of training runs, of varying lengths, to be sure. But what could possibly prepare someone for living in the cramped quarters of an Airbus 340 forward airline cabin with 16 Hold the Plane teammates for a straight week—some longtime friends and some complete strangers—living out of a single overhead bin? While some struggled with this part of the event, for me it was easy. Could it have been my first 3-week session at Camp in 1976 as a 10-year-old boy, squeezed into a cramped Cabin Reuben with 16 campers and counselors, some friends and some strangers,

living out of a single drawer? (Certainly, the smell was similar.)

What could prepare someone to integrate into a group of fifty 777 runners from myriad places, all focusing on the audacious task of repeated daily marathons, but also wanting to connect emotionally to form a meaningful community through this shared adventure? Again, easy for me. Might that have been my two summers spent in K’far, starting as a disparate group of 50 but, each time, evolving into a strong, tight-knit, self-supporting community? (I struggled as much at K’far Avodah as I did in trying to complete seven consecutive marathons.)

As amazing as the 777 experience was, it was made even more incredible by being able to share it with my longtime Camp friend David Samson (going on 40 years since we met at Interlaken) and current Camp parent Deb Carneol. But the most meaningful part of the adventure was the scores of Camp friends, alumni and supporters who chose this event to make gifts to Camp, to help us continue to develop strong Jewish identities in our campers as they become better versions of themselves. I am so pleased to report that, together, we were able to raise over \$100,000 for Camp through the 777 event.

Given even more time to think back on this experience, I consider the oppor-

tunity to renovate old Cabin Rueben—outdated when we first acquired Camp in 1966 and untouched since then—into a larger, more comfortable and more useful, modern (but still rustic!) cabin. Or I think about the chance to expand our scholarship pool, to allow even more children to experience the magic that is Camp Interlaken. If you would like to join us in supporting Camp, please feel free to contact me at [commoffice@sbcglobal.net](mailto:commoffice@sbcglobal.net). Or, if you have had enough of me... please think about supporting Camp at [camp-interlaken.org](http://camp-interlaken.org); click on Donate Now. And think of all the good we can do together to keep Camp positively influencing young Jewish hearts and minds!



*Mitch Moser and Abi Sellman, running into each other in Cape Town, South Africa.*

### *Omri, continued*

While Omri refers to “closing the circle,” a circle is continuous. Omri’s impact circles over and over, through his own campers, his siblings, the Milwaukee community, and even through people from his village in Israel. After Omri and his siblings went to Interlaken, others from Lehavim started coming to US summer camps like Interlaken. They heard about them from Omri and his family.

The circle continues, and Interlaken will always have an open door for Omri in the future. It is heartening that he began as a nervous camper from a small village in Israel and grew into a prominent young leader in the Milwaukee

Jewish community. This spark has ignited immeasurable connections to Israel, shaping new stories in lives impacted by his presence. Omri’s impact on Camp will last, inspiring us to build bridges with Israel, act with the kindness and integrity that he carries, and go all-out for Israeli dancing every Shabbat.

**When our campers arrive** at Camp, parents receive a call to let them know that the buses have arrived, and to thank them for trusting us. In that call, I always promise that we will send each camper home a better version of themselves. I have recently been thinking about what that means—to me, to each family, and to the campers.

Campers typically return home with some new behaviors. Granted, these behaviors may not last through the entire school year, but they are evident in the beginning... They make their beds. They set and clear the table. They sort, or put away, their laundry. They play games that they make up with their siblings. They teach camp songs to their family. They may want to sing *Hamotzi* or teach camp's hand motions for *Birkat Hamazon* at the first few meals. They may ask to go to Shabbat services so that they can sing some of their favorite Camp songs or prayers. All of this is AWE-SOME! I get many calls from parents asking me how we get them to do all this and how they can have it continue. I can answer one of those significantly better than I can answer the other!

The truth is that I don't want to just help the campers be better citizens in their homes; I want to help our campers learn how to change the world. I want to help give them the strength and the confidence to figure out what matters most to them and how to make those things happen.



*Campers make dog biscuits for the Vilas County Humane Society.*

We recognized last summer that we could do that through a more intentional plan around *Tikkun Olam* at Camp, and we planned many programs to empower and teach campers about their responsibilities to one another and to the larger community:

- Suggested and supported by a generous donor, we planned an evening program for Shores (3rd – 5th grade) campers to learn about *Tzedakah*. Each camper received "Finley Dollars" (fake money), and campers were divided into groups and assigned a project they could support that would benefit Camp. Each group created a commercial for their project to "sell" it to the rest of the group, and campers voted by designating their Finley Dollars to the project that they most wanted to do. First session campers built



*Campers have fun writing letters to local senior citizens.*

and painted a Free Library that we installed outside the Beit Am building. Second session campers planted an herb garden that they took care of and used for the remainder of the summer. Campers had a great time doing both projects, and they learned that they can and should be stakeholders in deciding where their money goes.

- Mitzvah Day sent campers through rotations including making dog biscuits for the Vilas County Humane Society, sending letters to thank our local park rangers in the Wisconsin Northwoods, writing letters to senior citizens at a local senior center, creating Campfire Safety Plaques for camp, and assembling first-aid kits for a local women's shelter. Some campers made beautiful blankets for Project Linus, an organization that provides hand-crafted blankets to children and others in need. Others created positive messages on Post-Its and placed them all over Camp. The following day a group of campers delivered the dog biscuits to the Humane Society and got to play with some of the dogs. Another group went into town and placed messages of positivity around downtown Eagle River.

- Rabbi Shari Shamah visits Camp every summer and does a mitzvah project with the 8th grade campers. In 2017, campers focused on food insecurity. The campers did an exercise where they figured out how much certain foods cost and how hard it is to feed a family of four. Using that knowledge, they went grocery shopping with \$40 and the

*Continued, next page*



*Campers make blankets for Project Linus.*

*Each year we scour the globe to find first-rate staffers who can share their expertise as specialists with our campers. We'd like to introduce you to a few:*

Name: **Brittany** Position: **Athletics Director**  
From: **New Zealand**



Brittany is originally from Rangiora, North Canterbury, but has been living in Wellington for the last four years working on a design degree. When she is not in classes, she spends her time working as a tennis coach. She wants to work at Camp because it is an opportunity for her to explore a new place, meet new people, and bring her energy and enthusiasm to the campers at Interlaken!

Name: **Georgia** Position: **Photography Specialist**  
From: **Perth, Australia**



Georgia has been creative for as long as she can remember! She has a passion for all things art and being able to express messages through a variety of creative mediums. Art has always had an influence on her life. She currently works as a Graphic Designer, living the dream! In her spare time, Georgia likes to read, paint, take pictures, and hang out with her friends. She likes to keep updated within the design

industry and is a member of a few Perth-based Creatives Clubs, such as The Design Kids, to share experiences and advice and learn new skills from each other.

Name: **Marco** Position: **Theatre Director**  
From: **Portsmouth, United Kingdom**



Marco is a second year Drama and Theatre student at the University of Kent. He has always been passionate about acting because it brings people together and can create the most unlikely friends. Marco has experience acting in plays through the Drama Society at school and recently cowrote and directed an original play, THE NOTORIOUS 31. We are excited for

Marco to come to camp this summer and share his skills with our campers!

Name: **Sophie** Position: **Arts & Crafts Specialist**  
From: **Scotland**



Sophie currently attends the University of Aberdeen studying History of Art and Film. After leaving high school, she knew she wanted a career within the arts and went to Glasgow Clyde College to study Contemporary Art Practice. This course combined her love of painting with education! She later decided to expand her artistic knowledge, and that is what brought her to Aberdeen. In her spare

time, Sophie loves to hang out with friends, sketch, take photographs and make vlogs for her YouTube channel!

## *Tikkun Olam, continued*

assignment to feed a family of four for an entire week—the cost of a food stamp subsidy for a week. To complete their mitzvah experience, they went to the Vilas County Food Pantry in Eagle River to donate all the food purchased and meet with pantry volunteers.

As we approach summer 2018, we plan to repeat Mitzvah Day for the entire Camp—with even more projects and new ideas. We can't wait to have the opportunity to introduce the Shores campers to *Tzedakah* again and learn together as they come up with ideas for projects this year. Our 8th graders will go to the food pantry with Rabbi Shari once again. Together, we are teaching our campers how to repair the world, truly focusing on *Tikkun Olam*. This is how we are going to empower our campers to be better versions—the best possible versions—of themselves! We should still embrace the table setting and the *Birkat Hamazon* singing, but these changes are much more long term and more deeply impactful than those few behaviors! We cannot wait to kick off our summer and begin changing lives!



**8th grade campers learn about food insecurity and donate food to the Vilas County Food Pantry.**



We gratefully acknowledge our visionary and generous donors who have promised to fulfill the commitment of leaving a Legacy to the Steve & Shari Sadek Family Camp Interlaken JCC.

Anonymous (2)  
 Jamie Lyn Adashek  
 Beth Alling  
 Steve & Joy Appel  
 Daniel N. Baer  
 Drs. Brian & Laurel Bear  
 Samantha Bear  
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 Jonah M. Wagan  
 Meredith Wagner  
 Dara Winter  
 David Winter  
 Sylvia & Michael Winter  
 Evan Michael Wool  
 Tracey Wool  
 Diane & Eric Zall  
 James\* & Eve Joan Zucker

*\*of blessed memory*

*To discuss how you can help Camp's future, please contact Harriet Rothman, Chief Development Officer, at 414-967-8239 or [hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org](mailto:hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org)*

## CAMP INTERLAKE JCC ENDOWMENT FUNDS

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 Adam (AJ) Sobel Camp Interlaken Scholarship  
 Tracy Sweet Camp Interlaken JCC Scholarship  
 Bob & Jeane Zarne  
 James & Eve Joan Zucker

Would you like to support Camp Interlaken with a family endowment fund? For as little as \$2,500, your family fund can help support the camp we hold dear. For further information, please call Mark Shapiro at 414-967-8224 or contact Harriet Rothman at [hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org](mailto:hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org) or 414-967-8239.

**“Haksheevu Haksheevu Nah... Kol Ha Machaneh...”** We are so excited to share with you that a few of our beloved cabins are getting a makeover... *achshav!*

During each camp off-season, we take time to evaluate the facility and think about what projects we need to or want to do before the next summer. Over this year, we decided that it was time to continue making an investment in our cabins. Knowing that we already completed Cabins Zebulon and Naphtali, we wanted to finish Boys Cabin Row.

Cabins Levi and Reuben were both original cabins that have been standing since the 1930s. When I shared with an alum parent that we were doing this project, he told me that when he was in Cabin Reuben (probably in the early '80s) they needed to be renovated!

Because of the cabins' distance from Lake Finley, we were allowed to completely tear down both cabins and rebuild them. That left Cabin Asher as the only original cabin standing, so we decided to tear down and rebuild Asher



Clearly, Cabin Levi was in need of a overhaul!

as well; it was necessary! We moved the cabin back 15 feet so that we could completely rebuild. All three cabins are replicas of Cabin Gad, which was rebuilt in 2015 and designed by alum Andy Enders. The cabins will house up to 14 campers, and the counselor room holds 4 staff/ozrim.

Cabin Simeon, built in the mid-'70s, did not need to be torn down as it had a solid foundation and good bones; however, it was ready for an update! Greg Ratliff, our facility director, along with Ian Ratliff completely renovated Cabin Simeon, and it will also be ready for this summer! Simeon will have new paneling, new wood floors, a finished ceiling, new bunk beds, and new exterior siding. It will house up to 16 campers and the counselor room will hold 4 staff/ozrim.

We are so excited for these improvements to the quality of life of our campers and staff.

To see an early May tour of the three new cabins, please visit [youtu.be/AWS4Ld6ZjBQ](https://youtu.be/AWS4Ld6ZjBQ).



Boys Cabin Row gets a needed facelift!

FUTURE CAMPERS



Reuben Kane

Parents:  
Jeremy Kane\*  
& Allison Young



Rena Kaplan

Parents:  
Jonah & Grace\*  
(Fantle) Kaplan



Isaac Firer

Parents:  
Nathan Firer\*  
& Marielle Gelber



Calvin Enders

Parents:  
Andy\* & Morgan  
Enders



Asher Harrison  
& Noah Daniel  
Bar-Lev

Parents:  
Benjy\* & Lauren  
Bar-Lev



Aaron Gunnar  
Johan Costa  
Lofgren

Parents:  
Erik\* & Davila  
Lofgren

\* Former camper

**If you have happy news you'd like to share with your fellow Interlaken alumni—engagements, weddings, babies—please send your information, along with a photo if available, to Beth Alling, [balling@jccmilwaukee.org](mailto:balling@jccmilwaukee.org). We'd love to help you spread the word!**



# Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center

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MILWAUKEE  
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LIVE UNITED  
United Way  
Greater Milwaukee  
& Waukesha County



## SAVE THE DATE!

### It's "Shavua Tov" all over again at our Facebook Live Havdalah

We invite you again this summer to gather around your laptop, your iPad, or your SmartPhone to join our beautiful Havdalah in Eagle River.

Please join us on **Saturday, July 14, at 9:30 PM** Central Time on Facebook Live for a long-distance Havdalah at Camp. You provide the spices, the candle and the wine (or grape juice); we'll provide the songs, blessings and inside access!



### Indulge for Interlaken: Shake Shack Fundraiser!

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, August 21**, when the Shake Shack in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward will donate 25% of the day's proceeds to Camp Interlaken and JCC Rainbow Day Camp! Interlaken alum and parent Ari Domnitz is the general manager at our area Shake Shack—we thank Ari for arranging this event! Watch for more details coming up this summer...