



The JSC Newsletter

Newsletter of the Cleveland Jewish Secular Community

www.jewishsecularcommunity.org

Chanukah Edition

December 2011/5772

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Upcoming Events

Thurs., Dec. 15, 7:30 p.m. – Men's Discussion Group, p. 5

Fri., Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. – Shabbat/Chanukah program, p. 2

Sun., Dec. 18, 2011 – JSC Board meeting

Chanukah Welcomed Early for December Shabbat Program

The JSC's December Shabbat program on **Friday, December 16** will celebrate Chanukah, albeit four days early. (The first candle is lit on December 20.) Back by popular demand will be Potato Latke, with a supporting cast of Apple Sauce, Sour Cream, and other sure-fire performers.



In a departure from previous years, there will be no gift-wrapping, but members are encouraged to bring donations of new clothing for Operation Warm-Up. (See next page.)

Members and guests are invited to meet and mingle at 6:30 p.m. The program starts at 6:45. A donation of \$10.00 is suggested for non-members. If paying by check, please

make it payable to "Jewish Secular Community." This fee can be credited toward a JSC membership.

This month, potluck dishes are assigned as follows:

Last names A-N and T-Z, bring a side dish for 12.

Last names O-S, bring a dessert for 12

Please bring a list of ingredients for your food item—pre-cut if possible.



Pretty Please



Please RSVP to Rifke (rifke@bronxbobbe.com, 216-481-0850) or Ellen (eschwa7500@yahoo.com, 440-449-4418) if you plan to attend or bring guests to the December Shabbat-Chanukah program.

At the November Shabbat dinner, member **Annette Solomon** described her volunteer activities for **Sar-El**, which involves non-combat work on Israeli army bases to free up soldiers for more pressing tasks.

Andrea Kropveld and Julie Rabin discussed their experiences with Engliyada, a Jewish Federation program that sends volunteers to teach conversational English to Israeli adults in Beit She'an, Cleveland's sister city.

...and Speaking of Chanukah

A woman goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Chanukah cards. She says to the clerk "May I have 50 Chanukah stamps please." "What denomination?" says the clerk. The woman says, "Oy vey...my god, has it come to this? Okay, give me 6 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, 32 Reform, and 50 Secular!"

Operation Warm-Up Still Taking Donations

Thank you for your generous donations of clothing in support of Operation Warm-Up at the November Shabbat. Many of you brought pre-packaged socks, underwear, towels, and washcloths. In lieu of the traditional Chanukah gifts and wrapping, the JSC **will be collecting your Warm-Up donations at the Friday, Dec. 16 Chanukah party.**

The items will be turned over to InterAct Cleveland's Homeless Stand-Down on January 22 for distribution to Cleveland's less fortunate.

Items to be donated—ALL NEW—for men, women, and children include:

- Pre-packaged socks
- Pre-packaged underwear
- Washcloths and towels

MARK'S REMARKS

In 1947, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act (named for Sen. Robert Taft [R- OH] and Rep. Fred Hartley [R- NJ]), which amended the 1935 Wagner Act (named for Sen. Robert Wagner [D-NY]), America's "Magna Carta" for labor unions and for working people. One of the Wagner Act's provisions was the "union shop," which said that if a private sector union wins a representation election at a company worksite, all employees at that site are required to join the union within 90 days of hire as a condition of continued employment.

Taft-Hartley, passed by the GOP-dominated 80th Congress over the veto of President

Truman, included a provision called "Section 14-b." Section 14-b established a procedure by which states could opt out of the union shop provision of the original Wagner Act through the process of either legislative action or a statewide referendum. Since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, more than 20 states have used Section 14-b to opt out.

In 1958, conservative forces in Ohio gathered enough signatures to place on the ballot a so-called "right-to-work" initiative that would outlaw the union shop in Ohio. After a hard-fought campaign, the right to work initiative was defeated 63% to 37%, and the issue became dormant in Ohio for more than 50 years.

Now, all that is about to change. Although Ohio voters recently defeated Senate Bill 5 (Issue #2 on this November's ballot) by a margin of 61% to 39%, conservatives are now preparing another anti-labor initiative to go before the voters, possibly in 2012 during the presidential election.

While Senate Bill 5 was directed against public sector unions like police, firefighters, and teachers, this new initiative would be directed against unions in the private sector and also would be a way to rally the conservative base in Ohio to turn out for a big vote against President Obama in 2012.

In the 2004 presidential election in Ohio, supporters of a statewide initiative against gay marriage were able to use a ballot referendum as a rallying point for the GOP base to turn out and help then-President Bush win a narrow victory over Senator John Kerry in Ohio. *The Plain Dealer* (November 11) reports that Tea Party activists, led by the Ohio Liberty Council, hope to gather enough signatures to place on the 2012 ballot something called the Ohio Workplace Freedom Amendment. This provision, if adopted by Ohio voters, would outlaw

the union shop provision of requiring union membership as a condition of employment. The goal of the Ohio Workplace Freedom Amendment would be to weaken the Democratic Party by weakening one of its pillars of support: organized labor.

This effort has been made possible by two trends that have come together at the same time. First, the de-industrialization of Ohio has seen the closing of steel mills, auto plants, and other manufacturing plants. The result has been a loss of unionized jobs and a subsequent decline in union membership. Many or most of these jobs have been exported to low-wage areas like Mexico or Southeast Asia. Some jobs have been relocated to Southern states, most of which are conservative, with “right-to-work” provisions in their constitutions.

Second, the Tea Party backers of the Workplace Freedom Amendment hope to appeal to younger middle class professionals who they think might be sympathetic to the argument that passing a “right-to-work” amendment in Ohio would bring back jobs to Ohio. All 10 of the poorest states in the United States are “right to work” states and are located in the South. All 10 are also red states that go Republican in presidential elections.

Look for the amendment to be in the news as we enter 2012 and move closer to the presidential contest between President Obama and his GOP challenger.

— Mark Weber
JSC President

News from CSJO

At the CSJO board meeting in November, the Social Action Committee, co-chaired by Ethan Wasserman and Adam Beardsley, drafted the following two statements, which were unanimously approved by the CSJO board:

Statement 1

Because of our commitment to our traditional

Jewish beliefs in humanism, compassion for all peoples, and social justice, we support the concept of a United Nations resolution to admit Palestine as a member state under the condition that Palestine recognizes Israel's right to peacefully co-exist as a Jewish state and has full diplomatic relations with Israel.

In 1989, CSJO resolved to support a two-state solution. In the intervening years, there has been no realistic advancement toward this goal. We would therefore support a United Nations resolution that would guarantee a secure and peaceful future for both Israel and Palestine.

Here is a link to the 1989 statement of the Social Action Committee of CSJO: <http://www.csjo.org/pages/socialaction/middleeast.htm>

Statement 2

Because of our commitment to our traditional Jewish beliefs in humanism, compassion for all peoples, and social justice, we support the Occupy action currently under way in many North American cities and the tenets of the Occupy movement that have given rise to these actions.

We support the basic tenets of the Occupy movement, including stopping corporate greed, which has led to the following problems:

- The housing crisis
- Loss of jobs through outsourcing overseas
- Anti-unionism
- Anti-environmentalism
- Lack of universal health care
- Student debt
- Unfair distribution of wealth
- Inequitable tax system
- Other related issues that impact our society

We urge the North American "occupied" cities to accommodate the occupiers with compassion, dignity, and non-violence. We stand in solidarity with the Occupy movement.

I would be happy to hear from you on these issues!

Sholem!

—Rifke Feinstein
Executive Director, CSJO

New Member Profile

Gary and Loe Goldwasser became part of the Jewish Secular Community a little over a year ago. Previously affiliated with a local Reform congregation, the Goldwassers sensed a need to find a new and different outlet for their deep attachment to the Jewish culture and community. When Loe saw an invitation in the *Cleveland Jewish News* to last year's JSC's Rosh Hashanah program, they decided to investigate. They liked what they saw.

The Goldwassers are native Clevelanders who spend the warm months in their Chagrin Falls home, the winter in West Palm Beach. Their two sons, Brian and Andy, have followed in Gary's footsteps as lawyers who live and practice in Cincinnati and Solon, respectively. Gary and Loe have four grandchildren: three grandsons (one of whom just had his bar mitzvah) and a granddaughter.

Loe began her eventual career as a drama educator after having been an elementary school teacher. Influenced by her early career on radio, she founded and directed the Stagecrafters Youth Theater for 20 years in the Orange School District. The district then asked her to develop and teach creative drama for grades K-3 as part of the curriculum.

Volunteering became a big part of her life, especially working with disadvantaged communities. As an active life member of NCJW, she has initiated the Dignity Project,

providing goods and services for foster children; Imagination Express, a cultural arts program for New Life Community; Teens Are Building Bridges, a program of understanding for suburban and urban youth; Carver Connection, an enrichment program for urban fourth and fifth grades; Reader's Theatre, a drama/reading program for various urban and inner ring school districts; and ACTivation, a story-weaving program for senior adults. Among the many awards she has received, Loe most treasures the Most Treasured Volunteer for the Center for Community Solutions, the Young Audiences of Greater Cleveland Arts Educator Award, and NCJW's national award as Enduring Pioneer.

Gary has been enjoying his retirement career after a successful career in medical malpractice law. As a member of the JSC, he embraces the values of secular Judaism and enjoys the Shabbat and holiday programs. He says they "really speak" to him. Gary has also been an active and thoughtful participant in the Men's Discussion Group.

We are delighted that the Goldwassers have chosen our Community to be their home.

Member Notes

Suzette Cohen is quoted and photographed in an [article](#) in the *News-Herald* (November 7) about the art classes that she takes at the Fairport Harbor Senior Center. In the article, Suzette says, "Art keeps my mind active. It's enjoyable. It's relaxing. Art does a lot for the mind. I'm always learning new techniques. We get homework, and I go home and try new things. I try to catch people's personalities in my work."

* * *

Roy Berko's enthusiastic [review](#) of Fred Sternfeld's production of Stephen Sondheim's "A Little Night Music," appeared on the CoolCleveland.com blog.

Atheists Want Representation in the Military

Elliott Berenson recently called attention to press articles about a call by members of the American military who are atheists to have the same kind of official representation as do people of faith.

In the [On Faith blog of the Washington Post \(November 21\)](#), writer Brad Hirschfield takes up the story of an Army intelligence officer at Ford Meade who has requested to be recognized as a chaplain's assistant. In supporting the idea, Hirschfield says, "Military atheists would be better taken care of, atheists would appreciate how much they share with religionists, and the religiously arrogant would be reminded that in our public institutions at least, there is no room for religious triumphalism. Certifying atheist chaplains would be a win not only for atheists, but for the military and for American religion as well."

Men's Group ID's Its "Heroes"

In November, Jim Wattenmaker hosted the Men's Discussion Group. Participants identified those individuals whom they most admire. Choices ranged from family members to business mentors to famous world figures. What was most interesting was hearing the reasoning behind the choices.

The group's December meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 15** at the home of Stan Tager, 65 Fircrest Lane, Moreland Hills 44024. Please contact Stan (440-247-1549, sbtager@aol.com) by Monday, December 12 if you plan to participate. The discussion topic will be "What did you once believe (in) but no longer?"

The Eggs and I

In the November elections, more than 55 percent of Mississippi voters rejected a state constitutional amendment that would have designated a fertilized human egg as a person. Groups like Personhood USA will continue to push a nationwide constitutional amendment that would declare that life begins at conception.

Passing such an amendment may take a while, but it may not be too early to start naming fertilized eggs, including chicken eggs. So after bringing home their organic, cage-free eggs from the supermarket, Jewish families may want to conduct a kind of informal baby-naming ceremony.

The photo below shows identical twin fertilized (but as yet uncooked) eggs. After consulting with the proud parents, Henrietta and Roostervelt, we have named them Sally and Sammy. We think they show great promise as an omelet.



—Steve Shucard

Books, Magazines Needed for USO

Harvey Schwartz is a volunteer for the USO and solicits your magazines and paperback books to donate to the organization for our military men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan. Please bring them to the December Shabbat program. Harvey thanks you for supporting the troops.

The Color Black

October 29, 1929, the day that the stock market crashed, signaling the start of the Great Depression, will forever be known as "Black Tuesday." But for latter-day retail merchants, black is beautiful, and "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving, marks the beginning of what they hope will be a buying binge that will make their businesses profitable. The significance of blackness, then, seems to be a matter of perspective.

It now appears that the same can be said about poverty. In a recent editorial, *The New York Times* (November 23) cited statistics from the 2010 Census showing that "49.1 million Americans are below the poverty line—in general, \$24,343 for a family of four. An additional 51 million are in the next category, which they termed "near poor" — with incomes less than 50 percent above the poverty line." To put it another way, roughly 1/3 of all Americans live in poverty or near-poverty.

You might ask, What American wouldn't be ashamed that so many of our fellow citizens are poor? In fact, some, perhaps many, of our countrymen appear not to be discomfited by the existence of widespread want—and actually quarrel with the very definition of "poor." (One thinks of the sport that was made of Bill Clinton's "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is.")

Poverty deniers like the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector, claim that such terms as "poor" or "near poor" are "emotionally charged [and] clearly suggest to most people a level of material hardship that doesn't exist." The think tank uses a different yardstick to count household's "amenities." If, for example, a poor household has a television, refrigerator, air-conditioner, coffee maker, cellphone, and other stuff, the implication seems to be, as *The Times* notes, "how hard can things be?"

Like blackness, then, poverty is just a matter of perspective. If you don't like the government's definition of it, you need only

change the definition to a more congenial one. Never mind the moral, social, and political implications. Or as some have put it, let them go out and get a job.

—Steve Shucard

Community Coalition Addresses Budget Cuts

Greater Cleveland Congregations, a coalition of 40 congregations and community organizations, is meeting **Thursday, December 8, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.** to express its concern about the latest round of Cleveland school district budget cuts that would eliminate early childhood education, transportation for high school students, summer school, and athletics. At the meeting at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church (8712 Quincy Ave.), GCC will hear students and parents whose lives will be upended by these devastating cuts, call on all sides to reach an agreement that restores funding for these essential programs, and plan to work together to solve long-term funding problems for Cleveland schools.

If you are interested in attending and would like to ride a bus leaving from Fairmount Temple, call Kathy Lipton (464-1330) at the temple to reserve a seat.

"Caring Hands" Assists Those in Need

The JSC's "Caring Hands" committee is intended to assist JSC members who have undergone surgery or have other emergency needs that may require assistance with such things as grocery shopping and doctors' appointments. If you ever have such a need, please contact **Sandy Guth**. (216-291-5869, thelanguagesource@neohio.twcbc.com).

Challenge to Einstein Is Challenged

A team of scientists working at a laboratory near Rome, Italy, claims that they have detected neutrinos (subatomic particles) traveling faster than the speed of light. Such a finding would refute Einstein's special theory of relativity, which says that nothing can travel faster than light. Another team, however, that recorded the data at the same site has challenged their colleagues' claim.

How the disagreement will end is not clear, but personally, we never thought that the speed of light was all that fast!

Calling All Writers!

Consider contributing an original article to the newsletter. Subject only to space, time, interest to fellow members, and editorial constraints, your article, told in your own words, will be gratefully accepted. Email your item to ssshucard@gmail.com. We welcome attributed letters with comments, rebuttals, or new information.

Note: We edit for length and clarity.

2011-2012 Shabbat Programs*

December 16, 2011 – Hanukkah party (no speaker)

January 13, 2012 – Joshua Stacher, "Egypt's Transition Since the January Uprising"

February 10, 2012 – Tu B'Shevat Seder; Victoria Avi, "Sustainable Business Practices"

March 2, 2012 – Purim party (no speaker)

April 20, 2012 – (TBD)

May 18, 2012 – Harold Ticklin, "Secret Medical School in the Warsaw Ghetto"

*All programs held Friday nights.

The JSC Mission

The Jewish Secular Community, affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations and the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, is a non-profit cultural and educational organization whose purpose is to:

- ✧ *Encourage Jewish identification in a non-theistic setting that draws inspiration from the traditional Jewish sources and values*
- ✧ *Educate adults in the history, culture, and tenets of Judaism*
- ✧ *Celebrate and observe Jewish holidays and life cycle events*
- ✧ *Contribute to the betterment of our society through social action and volunteerism*
- ✧ *Provide a link to a world-wide community of secular Jews*

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