

The Youth Connection brunch at Gail Grossman and David Rubman's home on April 27 was an excellent opportunity for parents of youth aged 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade to hear about youth programming and to give their input about what they'd like to see from Beth Emet's youth program.

The gathering was a terrific opportunity to get together socially and to hear from the leaders of our youth programs. Aaron Gunning, our talented youth director, shared with us his vision of youth involvement at Beth Emet—teaching our children how Jewish values are relevant to their everyday lives and to issues they see in the world through experiential activities, community service projects, and socializing.

Aaron also talked about the many successes of the past year. Our seventh- and eighth-graders have been involved in our Mitzvah Corps program, working in the community and hearing from representatives from social service agencies. Our fourth- and fifth-graders have participated in several fun programs that have allowed them to forge stronger bonds with each other and the Beth Emet community. Our high school students hosted a Chicago-area Reform Movement youth program. They also traveled to Washington D.C., to learn about the connection between Jewish values and civic duty. These are a few of the many exciting and important things we are doing for our youth at Beth Emet. Please see the [Guide to Beth Emet Youth](#) for more details.

Abby White and Itay Solomon, presidents, respectively, of our senior youth group, "BESSY," and our junior youth group, "Chassamba," spoke of the relationships they have formed and strengthened, the fun they have had, and the leadership skills they have acquired through involvement in Beth Emet youth programs. Youth activities at the synagogue have also helped them deepen their Jewish identity and strengthen their connection to the congregation.

Sunday's brunch also provided parents with an opportunity to share their concerns, hopes and dreams for their children's Jewish growth. We thank everyone for the openness and productiveness of this dialogue. This is the beginning of a conversation about how we can work together—parents, staff, and lay leadership—to create a strong youth community at Beth Emet. We are committed to continuing this conversation with you.

It's no secret that youth who participate in thriving Jewish youth programs are the ones who retain a strong bond with the Jewish community throughout their teen years and beyond. The success of the brunch sends a message to our children: that we are deeply committed to supporting youth programs at Beth Emet that engage body, mind, and spirit, and that help our children grow into committed and knowledgeable Jewish adults and caring human beings.

Thank you for supporting our youth and for helping to develop the next generation of thoughtful Jewish adults. Our Youth Committee always welcomes your ideas, your assistance and your support. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please contact Youth Committee chair Emily Nidenberg or Aaron Gunning.

Finally, I want to thank David and Gail for opening their home to us and to the committee that organized the brunch. The committee was chaired by Carol White. Committee members were Mike Isaacson, Eileen Rosenthal, Susan Fisher, Leslie Shulruff, Suzanne Kanter, Abby White, and David Rubman.

L'shalom,  
Rabbi Andrea London