

# JN contents

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**Chabad rabbis with Detroit ties welcome vacationers to the Caribbean. Here Jews in the Virgin Islands celebrate Lag b'Omer with a bonfire.**

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## SHABBAT LIGHTS

**Shabbat: Friday, Feb. 19, 5:51 p.m.**  
**Shabbat Ends: Saturday, Feb. 20, 6:54 p.m.\***

**Shabbat: Friday, Feb. 26, 6 p.m.**  
**Shabbat Ends: Saturday, Feb. 27, 7:02 p.m.\***

\* Times according to Yeshiva Beth Yehudah calendar.

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## Jewish Fund's Teen, Adult Surveys Online

**T**he Jewish Fund, in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, has launched a comprehensive community study to gauge the health and welfare needs of the Jewish community. The results will be used to ensure that the right programs are in place today, tomorrow and into the future for those who need assistance.

"In many instances, funders make decisions based on what they think certain needs are, or will be," said Karen Schoenberg Sosnick, Jewish Fund chair. "The better decision for us is to base our decisions on a combination of objective data and subjective observations from a broad array of key stakeholders. This will allow us to ensure that our investments are helping the most people and having as big an impact as possible."

The community study will include focus groups and online surveys for Jewish agency executives as well as online surveys for Jewish adults and teens, which can be accessed now through March 9 at [www.jewishcommunitysurvey.morpace.com](http://www.jewishcommunitysurvey.morpace.com) for adults age 18 and older and at [www.jewish-teensurvey.morpace.com](http://www.jewish-teensurvey.morpace.com) for teens ages 13-17.

The community study will also assist all of the Jewish agencies in Metro Detroit that serve Jewish people via health and welfare programs and services because the results will be shared broadly, said Margo Pernick, Jewish Fund executive director.

The Jewish Fund and Federation are working with Farmington Hills-based international research and consulting firm Morpace Inc. on the community study. \*



**Detroiters in Florida: Cantor David Propis and Rabbi Aaron Starr of Shaarey Zedek held a concert in Boca Raton Feb. 14.**

## OUR JN MISSION

The Jewish News aspires to communicate news and opinion that's useful, engaging, enjoyable and unique. It strives to reflect the full range of diverse viewpoints while also advocating positions that strengthen Jewish unity and continuity. We desire to create and maintain a challenging, caring, enjoyable work environment that encourages creativity and innovation. We acknowledge our role as a responsible, responsive member of the community. Being competitive, we must always strive to be the most respected, outstanding Jewish community publication in the nation. Our rewards are informed, educated readers, very satisfied advertisers, contented employees and profitable growth.



## Quick Click ... From the William Davidson Digital Archive of Jewish Detroit History

**Mike Smith**

Detroit Jewish News Foundation Archivist

**S**ummer camps for Jewish youth have a long history in Michigan. The Feb. 4 issue of the *JN* featured its annual camp guide. And, I wondered — when did the *JN* or the *Jewish Chronicle (JC)* first feature ads or stories about summer camps?

The first entries I could find regarding summer camps were in 1917, on the *Chronicle's* "Society" pages. For one of many examples, in the Aug. 24 issue, it was noted that "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Selling" were motoring to visit their daughter, Louise, who was at summer

camp in Maine.

Another entry from Oct. 29, 1920, noted that the Detroit Community Fund would provide \$9,221 to the Jewish Fresh Air Society, which maintained a "summer camp on the Grosse Pointe Shore Line." In August 1921, it reported that the Shaarey Zedek Boy Scouts left for the "Detroit Council Camp, Osius."

The first detailed story on a summer camp was about E.H. Saulson opening his Camp Grand Sable for boys, 3.5 miles from Grand Marais, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The story was published on



May 12, 1922. Camp Grand Sable also had the first advertisement for summer camps, which ran in the June 9 issue that year. Indeed, summer camps have been a topic for nearly 100 years in the *JN* and *JC*. \*

Want to learn more? Go to the DJN Foundation archives, available for free at [www.djnfoundation.org](http://www.djnfoundation.org).



# Caribbean Connection

For a handful of rabbis, tropical warmth reveals Detroit spirit.

Dovid Margolin | Special to the Jewish News

Sitting in his Palm Springs study in 2005, Herman Wouk listened as a young Rabbi Asher Federman presented his rather original plan to open a Jewish center on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Wouk — the great Jewish American novelist and author — lived on St. Thomas from 1958 until 1964.

“Wouk was very interested in our future and what we hoped to accomplish here,” recalls Federman, who, together with his wife, Henya, has been directing Chabad Lubavitch of the Virgin Islands for the last decade. “He knew what the day-to-day island life here is like. It’s not all rosy paradise.”

Born in California, but educated in Detroit, Federman points to his formative years of schooling at the Lubavitch Yeshiva-International School for Chabad Leadership in Oak Park that gave him the passion to answer the call of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, and build an outpost of Judaism in a location so far from home.

“The Detroit yeshivah certainly had a tremendous impact on me,” he says. “It shaped my commitment to living my life as a Chabad emissary, and instilled within me a sense of dedication to creating a genuine and inviting Jewish home wherever we were needed.”

Depending on the season, the Friday night Shabbat dinner draws between 25 and 75 people. Last Chanukah, they hosted a Jewish concert that drew an audience of close to 1,000.

Federman is one of three leaders of the burgeoning Caribbean Jewish community with ties to the Motor City. Rabbi Mendel Druk, co-director of Chabad of Cancun, Mexico, was born and raised in Oak Park, while Rabbi Berel Pewzner of Chabad of the Cayman Islands studied for rabbinical ordination at the Lubavitch yeshivah in Detroit as well.

All three point to Detroit’s pioneering spirit as a driving force behind their decision to leave the ice and cold — and comfortable Jewish communal structure — of the Midwest and head to the tropical isolation of some of the world’s most beautiful vacation spots, where kosher food and active Jewish life often rests solely on their own shoulders.

## CANCUN CHABAD

In 2006, a group of Jewish locals in Cancun sent a message to Chabad-Lubavitch requesting a representative to help lead the community of locals and cater to the thousands



Rabbi Mendel Druk, left, an Oak Park native, runs the Chabad Jewish Center of Cancun with his wife, Rachel.



Lag b'Omer with Chabad of the Virgin Islands

of yearly tourists. Rabbi Mendel and Rachel Druk had recently married and were already searching for a posting, so when Cancun was suggested they planned a visit.

“We came here in January of 2007 and met with some Jewish families, but it was very hard to gauge the level of interest,” says Druk, a native Detroit. “When we came back two months later and made a Purim party, it was a great success. We moved to Cancun by the beginning of that summer.”

The Druks acknowledge it is jarring to see their four children growing up in such a different environment as they did — Rachel was born and raised in Brooklyn. Their children do not even own winter coats.

“I feel energized doing the type of work needed here,” says the rabbi. “You have to make every interaction count because you often don’t get a second chance.”

“There’s a certain light here; people are able to go out of their box. It’s easier for everyone to look past their differences and bond as Jews here. And, of course, there’s a special connection that I often make with people from my hometown.”

One Detroit connection made was with Larry Shlom, a semi-retired schoolteacher from Southfield. Walking through downtown Cancun on vacation two years ago, Shlom saw a sign for Chabad. Inside he met Druk.

“I had to fly 1,600 miles to meet someone who grew up around the block from me,” Shlom marvels. “Seeds were planted when I met Rabbi Druk, and since then I’ve become so much more connected with the Jewish community and my heritage.”

Shlom attended Chabad Jewish Center of Cancun’s seder and, despite 150 people from

all over the world, the ambience felt like home.

“The rabbi was my neighbor and the Haggadah they used was the one I have used my whole life,” he says. “It was quite unbelievable how far away we were yet how familiar it all was.”

The hometown link did not end there. Druk put Shlom in touch with Rabbi Mendel Stein, the Detroit Lubavitch yeshivah’s development director, who was able to connect Shlom with a rabbinical student at the yeshivah to study advanced Jewish texts together.

“It’s really made me feel like I’m part of this greater whole,” says Shlom, who remains in close contact with Druk. “The experience has been quite magical.”

For Barbara Kappy of Orchard Lake, the Detroit connection began where it would have made most sense: in Detroit.

“I was standing in line at a kosher bakery here and got into a conversation with this lovely young couple,” Kappy recalls. “The rabbi gave me his card and told me if we’re ever in Cancun, they would love to have us over for Shabbos. And I thought, ‘Yeah, right, when am I going to be in Cancun?’”

Six or seven years later, Kappy, together with her husband, Irvin, and their children, found themselves planning a trip to Cancun, and Barbara remembered the young couple from the bakery.

“I called Rabbi Druk and reminded him about our meeting and we came for Shabbos,” Kappy says. “There must have been 50 people there, and the Druks were just so hospitable. We fell in love with them and their family.

“We tell people here all the time, if you’re

ever going to Cancun, you need to stop by the Chabad there,” Kappy says.

## GROWING COMMUNITY

Founded originally in 1965, today the Lubavitch yeshivah educates close to 100 rabbinical students, aside from another 200 in their elementary and middle schools.

In 2012, the institution moved into a new 50,000-square-foot building on the 4-acre Harry & Wanda Zekelman Campus, where a new generation of leaders can now be comfortably educated and inspired.

Rabbi Berel Pewzner is a graduate. He and his wife, Rikal, arrived on the Cayman Islands in December of 2013, and since then have quickly expanded their Chabad activities on the island.

Pewzner describes the Cayman Islands as a growing community, as more Jewish snowbirds and retirees see it as a viable option. Many European Jews looking for a place to retire and, at the same time, to avoid rising anti-Semitism have also begun considering Grand Cayman and the surrounding Caribbean islands.

He admits his posting on Grand Cayman is not always as easy as it sounds.

“I wouldn’t want to call it a hard life, but there’s no question it’s a unique and special challenge to live here and create a Jewish community from scratch here,” says Pewzner, who studied in Detroit in 2009-2010.

“The yeshivah in Detroit instilled in all of us that we can’t rest until we’ve reached every Jew,” says Pewzner. “Even on a tiny island in the Caribbean.” ✳

Dovid Margolin is an associate editor at Chabad.org.