

Dear Friends,

It has been an invigorating year, and after almost three years of serving at president of the JEC Board of Trustees, I still find it quite humbling to represent an institution that has given so much to the greater Jewish community and to the world at large. As president, I extend my greetings to all of you who are joining us at the Jewish Educational Center's Annual Gala.

This year we are commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rav Teitz Mesivta Academy, known to many of you at the JEC Boys' High School division. We will celebrate achievements past and present and take a look into the RTMA's exciting future. This evening will be capped off with a community-wide gala *siyum mishnayot* in celebration of this special milestone.

As part of our celebration, we will recognize two distinguished RTMA alumni – Rabbi Mordechai (Max) Tokarsky, class of 1988 and Rabbi Chaim Strauchler, class of 1995 – who personify the goals and ideals of our institution. Rabbi Tokarsky is the co-founder and national director of the *Russian American Jewish Experience* (RAJE) and Rabbi Strauchler, the Rav of *Congregation Shaarei Shomayim* in Toronto, Canada, is one of only two Rhodes Scholars from the Jewish day school system; the second is a JEC alumna as well, Miriam Rosenbaum, Bruriah class of 2007.

Tonight, we will also pay tribute to a remarkable couple, Howard and Charlotte Block, for their visionary support of the JEC with the establishment of a generous Legacy endowment. Although currently residing in Springfield, NJ, the Blocks are long-time Elizabethans, who have dedicated themselves to a plethora of communal projects and commitments over the years. Their Legacy gift was formalized long before the concept was popularized among major organizations. For their generosity and foresight, we fittingly honor them with this year's *Lev Tov* (good heart) award.

And, *acharon acahron chaviv*, last but certainly not least, we honor Dr. Brian and Shoshana Allen of Edison, NJ as our esteemed *Parents of the Year*. Shoshana, nee Dessau, is a Bruriah graduate herself, class of 1985, and has maintained a strong connection with the school all these years. The eldest Allen children Talia and Daniel are both Bruriah and RTMA graduates respectively and currently reside in Israel. Daniel is currently serving in the IDF and Talia is married and settled in Israel, after completing her *sheirut leumi* national service to the country. Their next daughter Shira is an incoming senior at Bruriah and I extend a special mazel tov on her recent appointment as G.O. president for 2015-16. And we look forward to welcoming Gila, their youngest, as she enters Bruriah this coming fall. The Allens have exhibited extraordinary leadership and commitment to the JEC and this year were among the key supporters of the new state-of-the-art Bruriah STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) laboratories.

On a personal note, I am a JEC alumna myself (class of 1973), and my connection to the school runs deep. In addition to being a graduate of the school, I am also the father of four JEC graduates, grandfather of two current students, and the husband of the First Grade *limudei kodesh* teacher, Vivi Singfer. I am especially proud of my daughter, Lizi Berkowitz, who teaches in the Yeshiva of Elizabeth elementary division's learning lab. It is both my honor and privilege to have these opportunities of paying it forward within an institution that is responsible for so much success and *nachas* within my own family, and I wish the same for all of you!

Tonight is a celebration, and this *simcha* belongs to everyone - our parents, alumni, friends, supporters and students. For decades, our graduates have made an impact on all walks of life and indeed, we educate our students to become engaged and responsible Jews. Please join us in ensuring the continuity of this almost 75-year-old commitment. **Your support is appreciated, and is still needed.** With your help, no child will be denied a JEC Torah education, and together, we can work to ensure the growth and strength of the next generation of modern Torah Jews.

I thank you for your partnership and for the belief you continue to place in our school, and our students. The tremendous *nachas* tonight is yours to share. Mazel Tov!

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven Singfer, President, Board of Trustees  
RTMA, Class of 1973