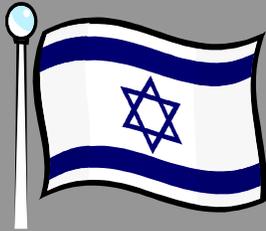


SWUSY to the 'izzle.



The Swizzle^{USY}



Kadima & United Synagogue Youth, Southwest Region

January, 2012

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What is this, Soviet Russia? A little bit of news, already!

On Sunday night, January 8, as the Texas winds whirled outside in the dusky darkness of eight o'clock p.m., SWUSY's own R/E/C, Jonas Actor, hosted a wildly informative, musical, and fun session over Skype in which SWUSYites (and even a few METNY kids) learned new "Slowach" tunes and practiced their favorites. Thirteen USYers, including SWUSY president Eliana Horwitz, were on the call. Look for information and updates about the next Skype session!

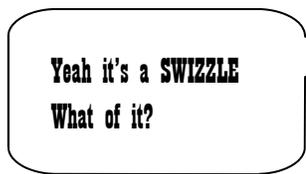
ALL IN THE NAME OF FUN: YOUR MONTHLY JOKE

Two Rabbis were discussing their problems they had with squirrels in their synagogue attic. One Rabbi said, "We simply called an exterminator and we never saw the squirrels again." The other Rabbi said, "We just gave them all a bar mitzvah, and we never saw the squirrels again."



EXTRA EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT

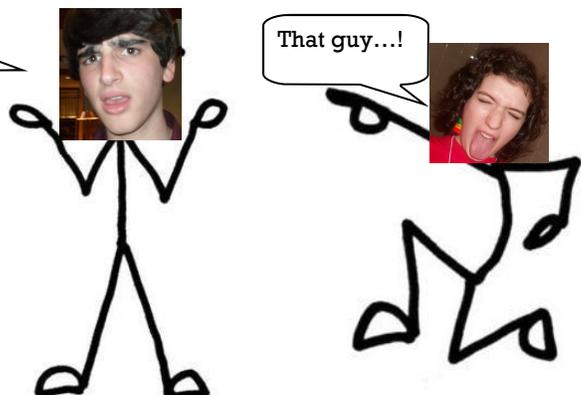
Are you a chapter president? Do you have information on Jewish holidays? Do you have something that you need to say to the region? Please contact Freda Coren for questions, answers, information, or letters to the editor!



Designed and compiled by:

Douglas Coppock (left)

Freda Coren (right)



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A Message from your Regional President

SWUSY, it saddens me to think that it is already January; half of the year, half of my term, is already over. Sure, I'm excited for graduation and what lies ahead, but truthfully, every time I think of June, of Regionals, and of the end of my time in USY, I begin to tear up and my heart begins to break. There are many reasons for this, and part of my job as Regional President is to bring that feeling to you, both for this year and for the future. As horrible as this feeling is, I want for all of you to feel this same tug-of-the-heart when you are a senior and leaving USY. The feeling that these are my best friends and my heart is wrenching thinking about leaving them and leaving this incredible bubble and family that is USY; the feeling that SWUSY was the best thing that ever happened to you and made you a better friend, Jew, and person.

I want to share a fear of mine with all of you. I fear that not enough people will take advantage of USY and that I will not have done enough to help solve this problem. I fear that USY will lay forgotten and it will not be cared about by youth, parents, and institutions within the Conservative movement. I fear, above all, that it might disappear.

Because of my fears I have been working to continue the successes of SWUSY and to make it even better. Of course, I am working with the other Regional Executive Board (REB) members to help incorporate the pillars of USY into our programming: Israel, Judaism, and Social Action/Tikkun Olam (SA/TO). However, I am also trying to make sure that everything that the REB and I have been doing, as well as all that you have been doing, is known to others. I am working to get the word out to all current and potential members. This has been a problem in the past due to a lack of communication. I am working towards changing this void and creating a variety of ListServes to be used for the distribution of many different types of publications and information. I want all of our accomplishments to be shared with others. This ranges from a successful chapter program to tips on incorporating SA/TO into our daily lives.

SWUSYites, I also want you to be able to help the region. The regional president or other REB members are not the only people who can change the region. EVERYONE can help change this incredible entity and make it better. I want to help teach all of you that everyone can help encourage people to become new members and to return to events. You don't have to "be a Mem/Kad (Membership/Kadima VP)" to help our membership increase. Everyone can share their stories about why they fell in love with USY, and I want to help make that possible. Whether it was because of a chapter event or a USY summer program, we all love this organization and want to be involved in its successes. I want to help you help me and the REB make SWUSY all that it can be and then some.

B'ahava (with love),

Eliana Horwitz

SWUSY Regional President 2011-2012



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Douglas Coppock, COMM VP and Jeremy Duchin, RASHI President;

Q: What is it like being RASHI President?

A: "Oh Boy. Its fun first of all. Yeah. It's really kept me connected with USY in a major leadership role. Um. *chuckle* Uh RASHI is an awesome chapter and has a history as an awesome chapter so being president of such an awesome chapter makes you feel like you are a part of something bigger."

Q: How well does the RASHI board work together?

A: "Really awesomely. We don't fight and everyone gets along. And it's been an honor to be the president of such an amazing board. I didn't want to say I was power hungry but.... "

Q: What kind of events have you been having?

A: "Awesome events. *laugh* we got everything. We got sports, chocolate, pizza and improv, lumberjacks and pancakes, and what's that in a couple of months? GDX that's right.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about GDX?

A: GDX is the best event ever. Group Dynamix (GDX) is an annual event that's been going for some time now. We always invite the other chapter because GDX is such an awesome place. It's an overnight and the GDX staff have always been very nice to us and they run it very well. With the ropes course and the laser tag, it's great. They also have a bunch of team building oriented games plus this year we put our senior board members, Matthew Portman and Richard Stayman, in charge who are going to do a fantastic job.

Q: Is RASHI excited to host Spring Kallah?

A: Most definitely. I can't wait. I hope this will spur more membership because I know it's always great to be able to say "Hey, you can come to this awesome convention and you don't have to miss school and there are no transportation costs, and it's cheaper than last year." We are definitely super excited to show the Region how awesome Dallas is.

Q: Is it hard juggling president and Co-chair at the moment?

A: Uh. Not really. I just put off all my duties. Just kidding *chuckles* it's a little difficult. As president I delegate some tasks to make time. I've only been in charge of one chapter event since I've been co-chair. So it's not too bad!

Chapter Updates

AAUSY

- Recently had a board overnight to plan the spring semester
- Ugly sweater Hanukkah party and clothing donation went great!

BZUSY

- Made chanukiyot for senior citizens
- Spaghetti dinner event soon

CATUSY

- Dallas USY and Kadima event — they'll be paining the Dallas sky-line

CLUSY

- Working hard to plan a great spring semester

FWUSY

- Went Hanukkah caroling!
- Raised money during their even
 - New members!

HOUJEW

- Mitzvah day at Brith Shalom!
- Fun at pre-Hanukkah party

RASHI

- Hosting Spring Kallah!
- Lumberjack pancake breakfast, and a great study break
- T.O. \$\$ raised and lots of events planned for spring

SOONER

- Hanukkah party on Dec. 24
- Next event will be a fundraiser
- Planning spring semester

ZOHAR

- Recently had a great "Java Jews" event at Starbucks
- Planning a service event

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Sexual identity and religion: your SA/TO bridges the gap

This year has been an interesting one for the gay community. For starters, Don't Ask Don't Tell was repealed, New York legalized Homosexual marriage, the American and British Episcopal churches opened their doors to openly gay bishops, and Lady Gaga was nominated for some Grammys.

More and more, religious groups have welcomed in homosexuals as members and leaders. As a proud Jew and Gay, I have kept track as both communities have progressed into accepting each other.

This is the great thing about Conservative Judaism. Our movement tries its hardest to straddle both progressive Reform views and more traditional Orthodox ones. The Bible dictates that it is a sin to lie with one of the same sex as one would with the opposite sex. The Conservative Rabbi's say homosexual acts are wrong simply because the Torah says they are wrong, and not because they are an aberration or sickness. Sexuality as a whole is instinctive, and both heterosexuality and homosexuality are natural forms of expression.

I cannot safely say I am always comfortable with my faith mixing with my sexual preferences, usually I choose to ignore what I consider the fallacies. But when I see Jews criticize, for example, defecting Episcopal priests who say they aren't comfortable preaching to Gays, I feel uncomfortable. Judaism's book of laws has a problem with homosexual acts. Rather than using homosexuality's recent surge of societal acceptance as a weapon against others, use it as a way to educate and reform old ideas.

My conclusion is this: to advocate for the end of ignorance rather than squabble and create more of it, no matter what one's faith is. In maintaining a healthy acceptance towards both sexual identity and religious choice, I hope to bridge the two. So from now on, instead of critiquing others for their shortcomings and intolerance find a way to see issues from their perspective. Through tolerating others' ideas, all of us should attempt to be more open, whether it's towards Gays, Christians or Politics.

— Aaron Weintraub, 2011-2012 Social Action/Tikun Olam VP

A few words of encouragement from your favorite Mem/Kad

Dear, USYers, Kadimaniks, and anyone else who loves USY,

There is one thing I have to tell you and that is to never give up. Give up on what you may ask, never ever give up on USY or trying to get new members. Never ever give up on those kids that just won't budge on agreeing to come to an event or convention. Just know that you can make an impact on a person's life by getting them to go to something USY or Kadima related. If you truly believe you can wrangle a person into the most awesomely amazing youth group ever then put your heart into it pull that person in. Just a few words of advice from your friendly neighborhood MEM/KAD!

SWUSY MEM/KAD VP 2011-2012,
Susie Ciccone



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What are YOU doing this summer?



As school comes back and we start our second semester our eyes look to the end of yet another school year. The question arises what are you going to do for your summer? For me the answer is simple, spending it with USY. There are all sorts of different ways we can spend our summer break with USYers from the United States and Canada. There are two different ways you can spend your summer with people like us.

The first is USY on Wheels which is open to incoming freshmen, either high school or college. USY on Wheels is all about making friends and establishing lifelong relationships. You spend the summer in a tour bus visiting any place in the United States you could possibly want to see from the Grand Canyon to the Washington Monument. There are four variations on the USY on Wheels trip: USY on Wheels: Classic, USY on Wheels: Mission Mitzvah, USY on Wheels: Pacific Northwest, and USY on Wheels: East.

The second, USY Israel Pilgrimage is only open to those that have completed sophomore through senior year. It is a fabulous trip where you bond with your fellow pilgrims in a variety of different paths before meeting up in Israel. You will do anything in Israel that you have ever dreamed of, from swimming in the Dead Sea to camping in the desert under the stars. There are a lot of different summer in Israel trips, but what makes USY Pilgrimage unique is the variety of different options available for how you spend the summer of your life as well as the best color war of your life in a mega-event where all the USY groups compete against each other in activities that challenge the mind, body, and spirit of you as individuals and as a group. There are six variations on USY Israel Pilgrimage: Israel Adventure, Israel Adventure Plus, Poland/Israel, Italy/Israel, L'Takayn Olam (community service based), and Eastern Europe. All will leave you wanting more.

If you are even the slightest bit interested in any of these options, call or text me at 405.388.8556, or you may email me at swusyiavp@gmail.com. There are numerous scholarships available so don't hesitate to ask, even if you are not sure. לשנה הבאה בירושלים
Next Year in Jerusalem!

Alex Michael Hamilton, IA 2011-2012



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IC: Philly. Best. Week. Ever.

IC: Philly was easily one of the best weeks of my life. I met so many Jewish teens who I can relate to and now I can honestly say I have a friend from every state in our country (and even Canada). Pretty impressive, eh? If you have never been to a USY International Convention I strongly urge you to go. This year's 61st annual International Convention was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from December 25th to December 29th. Talk about a Jewish Christmas! The moment I stepped into the hotel I was swarmed by the hundreds of Jews already there trying to meet the people who say y'all and ride horses to school. What an experience *that* was trying to explain to a northern Jew that we actually live in houses and own cars! From Southwest USY, we had 14 representatives including four of the Regional Executive Board. The themes of the convention were Light up your Life to commemorate Chanukah and *Derech Eretz*, Jewish Ethics.

On the second night we were there we were split into regions and taught a song that we would sing to the rest of the convention. SWUSY was grouped with EMTZA and HAGALIL for our song. After a few of the regions sang their songs Six13's song Chanukah Rights started playing on the screen in the front of the room. And right in the middle of the song Six13 jumped from behind the screen and started singing live! It was truly spectacular. The live performance was amazing especially since one of the members was a USY alumnus.

Another amazing moment at the convention was unexpected, but also my favorite part. We were called into the Grand Ballroom to have a general session. While everyone was being noisy the co-chairs were telling us what was next and it included a short poem by a former USYer Joseph Robbins. He was a tall, lanky young man no older than 25. He jumped on the stage and just stared at us for a second. He began reciting this chilling poem about the Holocaust and how we as Jews have been targeted all of our existence. He continued on and told all of us that through it all we have survived and that is what makes us unique. It was extremely inspiring and was the first time all convention everyone was dead silent.

Right after the amazing poem, a speaker by the name of Marc Elliot got up to talk to us about tolerance. Marc was born with Tourette's Syndrome and a rare disease that left him with only four feet of small intestines. He talked to us about how he learned to control his Tourette's and why being different isn't a bad thing. We should all "live and let live." We never know what is going on in other people's lives and therefore we cannot judge them. He advocated that we should all be tolerant of other people's differences. It was certainly inspiring to say the least.

IC was a wonderful experience and I highly recommend it to any USYer who is looking to create lifelong friendships and wonderful memories. It was truly incredible to be able to interact with that many Jews. Seeing all of the positive energy and friendly faces really made me proud to be a part of this breathtaking organization. USY is simply the best.

All my love,

Douglas Coppock

2011-2012 Communications VP

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Meet your Religion/Education/Culture (Cookies) VP

The Swizzle Presents: Jonas Actor!

- Name: Jonas Albert Actor
- Nickname: Princess Jojo
- Position: SWUSY Religion/Education/Culture VP
- Favorite Color: Orange- I once went through a phase where I only ate orange-colored food...
- Favorite Food: You can never go wrong with chocolate
- Number of spoons eaten to date: 3
- Favorite Sport: to play- Quidditch; to watch- football, especially if it's the New York Giants
- First USY Convention: Spring Kallah 2009 (SWUSY in Wonderland, Austin, TX) and I haven't missed one since!
- Favorite USY Convention: Fall Kallah 2010 (SWUSY and the Hannukah Goblins) because I co-chaired and it was over Hannukah
- Favorite USY experience: Shabbat in Prague on Israel Pilgrimage/ Eastern Europe G8'11
- College Plans: My top choice is Northwestern, followed by University of Chicago, Whitman, Rice, Stanford, Washington in St. Louis, and UT
- Siblings: Amanda, my twin, the current HouJew Co-President

This year so far has been fantastic!!! I'm really excited to be the SWUSY REC VP this year. Being on board so far has been amazing- after co-chairing Fall Kallah last year, I thought that being on REB would be a wonderful experience, and it working with the rest of my REB and with our awesome new regional director Maury has been great. Mostly I've been working on convention materials, such as alternative services; however, I have also devoted time to other projects, such as updating the SWUSY Songbook, creating guides for Jewish holidays, and writing frequent divrei torah. Hopefully, as the year continues I will be able to maintain these projects as well as working with USYers on an individual level to extend their Jewish skills and abilities.

—Jonas Actor, 2011-2012 R/E/C VP

