

Coming to Philly: Revolutionary Concept in Israeli Education

LYNN B. EDELMAN
Jewish Federation Feature

On Sunday, Oct. 26, Gratz College in Elkins Park will be the site of a revolution in Israel education. At 1 p.m. Prof. Kenneth W. Stein, president of the Center for Israel Education in Atlanta, Ga. will present a community lecture on "The Middle East: Pitfalls and Prospects For the Next Administration." Then, at 2 p.m., he will challenge Philadelphia-area Jewish educators to commit to the center's comprehensive three-year training program and thereby help transform, the presentation of Israel and Zionism to young adults.

Stein, who serves as the William E. Schatten Professor of Contemporary Middle Eastern History, Political Science and Israeli Studies at Emory University, is an internationally recognized authority on Israel and the Middle East.

In 1988, Stein established the Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, to build and strengthen an understanding of modern Israel for Emory students, as well as for the general public, through visiting professorships, lectures, conferences and other programs.

Although based at the University, ISMI is not an academic department nor does it confer a degree or award scholarships. Faculty from the school's departments of anthropology, history, Middle Eastern studies, political science, sociology, and religion offer courses exploring aspects of modern Israel and its place in modern Jewish history, the Middle East and in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since 2001, more than 1,000 pre-collegiate teachers in the United States and Canada have engaged in a variety of workshops where, under Stein's direction, Israeli content and pedagogy are taught. On topics relating to modern Israel, Stein is writing innovative curriculum material for 7th to 12th graders and developing a Web site for that purpose. Support for the teacher and student curriculum projects come from a variety of foundations. On July 1, 2008, the recently established Center of Israel Education in Atlanta, which Stein also heads, took over the Israel outreach activities, including conduct of the pre-collegiate teacher workshops, curriculum develop-

ment projects and engagements in long-distant learning.

David Solomon was one of Stein's students at Emory and was profoundly affected by his lectures and workshops about Israel. "We take it for granted that our children will care about Israel as much as we do, when statistics demonstrate that only 20 percent of Jews under 35 report being 'very emotionally attached to Israel' and only 50 percent of Jews in this same age group would see Israel's destruction as a personal tragedy," he said, adding that these statistics jibe with Solomon's personal experiences traveling to Philadelphia-area college campuses as a member of Federation's Young Men's Roundtable.

"In my conversations with students, I found them ill-prepared to counter anti-Semitic and anti-Israel sentiment, which is becoming more prevalent on campuses across the country," Solomon commented.

Stein has had great success in teaching Jewish day school and supplementary Hebrew school teachers how to educate their students in middle school through high school about Israel, using an innovative curriculum which includes such topics as modern Jewish history, origins and development of Zionism, the growth of the Yishuv, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jewish connection to the

land of Israel from biblical times to the present, establishing the modern state of Israel, Israeli politics, culture, literature, music, and the importance of foreign policy.

"Because of Ken's unique background as an educator, policy adviser and author on Middle East issues, he has access to original letters from Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Baron Edmond de Rothschild, a prominent French banker and benefactor of Israel, which he incorporates into the curriculum to make it relevant, interesting and exciting for students," explained Solomon, who commented that he was "pumped" when his former professor happened to mention that he wanted to bring this teaching initiative to the Philadelphia area.

The goal for this project, which is sponsored by Federation in partnership with the Center for Israel Education, Gratz College and the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, is to engage some 60

Philadelphia-area Jewish educators in an innovative three-year professional development opportunity for teachers that includes six one-day workshops, various distance-learning sessions, one-on-one coaching, several site visits, multimedia experiential sessions, as well as a trip to Israel. Stipends and professional development credits will be available.

Solomon's enthusiasm for the project caught fire with his father, Mark Solomon, a founder and chairman of CMS Companies. The elder Solomon, along with his friend and fellow Jewish com-

munal leader, CMS President Paul Silberberg, committed themselves to provide funding for the project over the next three years.

"My dad and Paul know how important Israel education is to our youth in the Jewish community, helping ensure we have future generations of committed, knowledgeable leaders," said the younger Solomon.

For additional information about the Octob34. 26th program, e-mail Lynne Hernandez at LHernandez@philafederation.org. ♦



PROF. KENNETH W. STEIN

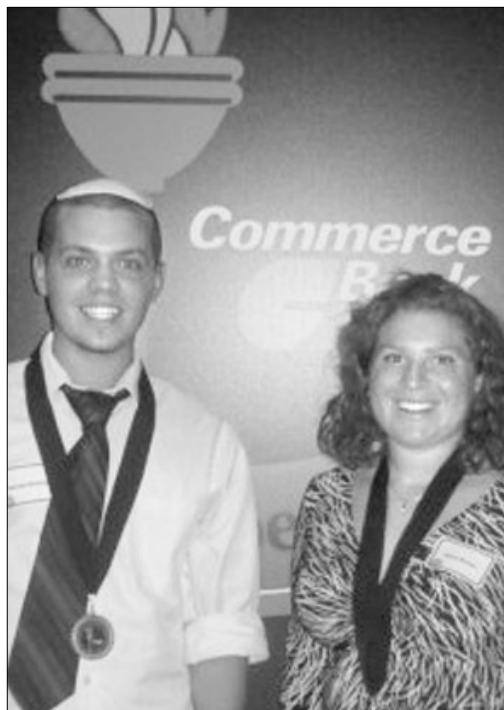


DAVID SOLOMON



Federation Leadership Honor Simonson

Many of Federation's former leaders turned out to honor Beryl D. Simonson, (4th from left), during his tribute dinner on Sept. 17, at Temple Adath Israel. Joining in the tribute are: from left] Edward H. Rosen, President, 1981 to 1984; Bennett L. Aaron, President, 1984 to 1987; Miriam A. Schneirov, President, 1987 to 1990; Simonson, Immediate Past Board Chairman; Andrea Adelman, Board Chair 2002 to 2004; Michael R. Belman, President 1996 to 1998; Ronald Rubin, President 1978 to 1981; and Alan E. Casnoff, president 1993 to 1996.



Satell Accepting Teen Scholars

It was an exciting summer as two of the Satell Teen Fellows, Ellen Brown and Gabriel Horwitz, were selected as Young Heroes by the National Liberty Museum and Commerce Bank. The Fellowship is an innovative leadership development program for motivated and inspired Jewish teens who want to make a difference in our community. Application deadline for the 2009 class of Satell Fellows is October 16, 2008. Visit: www.gratz.edu/satell for an application and more information. In addition, the Satell Teen Fellowship video, created by Sally Mitlas, won a 2008 TELLY award for excellence in filmmaking and has been appearing locally on MiND TV Channel 35.