

# VBS ECC NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER, 2014



### CHANUKAH TRADITIONS FROM OUR DIRECTORS

Hanukkah will soon be upon us, and with it another opportunity to create meaningful traditions and deepen our families values. Here are a few things we've learned about the holiday season:

*Rita:* Our children each had their own menorah that they made in school. They loved lighting and saying the blessing over their own menorah. They each had a number of self-made menorahs that I still put out every Hanukkah. As adults they always smile and laugh when they see them displayed for Hanukkah and the thought that I have kept them for so many years.

*Brenda:* Traditions don't need to be glamorous to leave a lasting impression. The simplest traditions, when they are joyful and connecting, can create the greatest memories. I asked my 15 year old son what his favorite memories of Hanukkah are. He replied, "Hanging decorations and getting to choose where they go." I vividly recall the restraint it required to keep myself from trailing behind him, and "fixing" the ill-placed, crooked, placement of decorations. I admit, there were times when I couldn't hold back, but I'm grateful for the restraint that allowed him this memory.

*Claire:* Our annual "Yidfest" Chanukah parties were a great way to invite friends from all cultures and religions into our home to celebrate Chanukah with all the traditional foods, prayers and rituals. Latkes for everyone!

*Michele:* Even as our children grow into adulthood they still remember the traditions around Chanukah. It warms my heart to see my son lighting candles, making latkas, and treating his children to delicious Sufganiyot. Traditions you share are the true and lasting gifts of the season.

### ECC DECEMBER DATES TO REMEMBER

- 12/5 Community Pot Luck Shabbat 5:30PM -PreK Featured
- 12/9 ECC Book Fair (8:30AM -3:30PM through 12/11)
- 12/10 Permanent Impression Child Safety Program
- 12/11 PA Wine & Cheese Tasting 7:00PM
- 12/13 Tot Shabbat 10AM
- 12/16 PA Meeting 9:15AM
- 12/17 Director's Chat 9:15AM
- 12/18 Chanukah Class Parties Rooms 111-115 @ Noon
- 12/19 Chanukah Class Parties Rooms 102-108 - 1 hour prior to dismissal
- 12/22 WINTER BREAK - ECC CLOSED UNTIL 1/4
- 12/17 Tot Shabbat 10AM
- 1/5 Classes Resume

SAVE  
THIS DATE:  
4-18-15  
EPIC  
FUNDRAISER!



## MITZVAH DAY ROUND-UP

Our deepest thanks to Rinat Arinos-Schricker and Andrea Berman for co-chairing the ECC Mitzvah Day projects. Every parent who brought their children to Mitzvah Day taught a very powerful message of Tikkun Olam. We thought you would be interested in the total effort of the VBS Community at large. Rabbi Noah Farkas reports the following:

This year hundreds of community members made:

- 300+ sack lunches for homeless individuals
- 90 pasta casseroles for homeless shelter guests
- 80 patient playbooks for hospitalized children
- 75 care packages for Jewish soldiers
- 40 Thanksgiving bags for foster families
- 36 sets of Hanukkah candles for SOVA clients
- 2 Tents of Hope for Jewish World Watch
- Dozens of letters and bracelets for US and IDF soldiers

We collected:

- 1600 children's books (and made lots of bookmarks)
- 42 successful blood donations (60 registered)
- 10 New Bone Marrow Donor Registry sign-ups bringing our yearly total over 500

Your work contributed immensely to the VBS community and to the world.

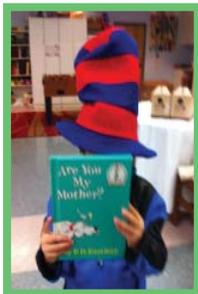


## WINTER WINE & CHEESE NIGHT

Join us on **December 11 at 7:30pm**. Bring a bottle of wine to share and come socialize with ECC parents, teachers and staff.



## ECC BOOK FAIR



Get your Hanukah shopping done early! Our Book Fair is December 9 - 11, everyday from 8:30 - 3:30. Please volunteer to help make this the most successful Book Fair yet.

<http://www.slotted.co/y3xp42zu>.

If you are out of town or can't make it to our Book Fair, you can also help support the ECC by shopping online at <http://bookfairs.scholastic.com/homepage/vbsecc>. Everything ships free to the school!

## ECC INFANT-TODDLER SPRING CLASSES

The Infant-Toddler program is now accepting registration for the 2015 Winter-Spring sessions. These classes are a great source of information and FUN for both you and your babies. Please contact Infant-Toddler Director Rita Orenstein to register for Grandparent & Me and Infant/Bridge classes. Registration is due 12/15 and classes fill up fast so don't delay!



## GIVING THANKS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS



Our outdoor classroom was transformed into a native American Indian center for learning last month. Outdoor classroom specialist Merav led the children in a drumming circle, a weaving project and gave the children a hands-on demonstration of pounding grains into flour for food. The children even learned about the Talking Stick and were fascinated to learn that the only person allowed to speak was the one holding the Talking Stick; a tradition you may want to try at home!



## ECC COMMUNITY SHABBAT POT LUCK DINNERS

Ask anyone who attended the ECC Community Pot Luck Shabbat last month- They are so much fun and a great way to build community. Join us for the 12/5 Family Shabbat Pot Luck when the PreK classes will be featured. **Everyone is invited!** Questions? Please contact Manya Monson, the ECC Community Shabbat Chairperson: [manyamonson@gmail.com](mailto:manyamonson@gmail.com).



**Tot Shabbat** Family services are filled with joyful singing, story telling and family friendly prayers. Join fellow ECC families December 13 & 27 @10:00am in Burdoff Hall.

Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

- Anne Frank

## ECLC NEWS

Chanukah is also known as the Festival of Lights. There are many symbols of light in the Jewish tradition. Certainly, the Chanukah menorah is such a symbol. But so is the soul. And so is the Torah. And so is the community. Our Etz Chaim Learning Center (ECLC) is a place where the light of childhood, Torah, soul, and community are fostered and cherished as children grow from the ECC into elementary school. Recently, our students and teachers shined the ECLC light into VBS during our community Chanukah celebration. There, students enthusiastically engaged in project-based learning activities.



Kindergarten, first, and second grade students starred as dreidel experts identifying the letters and its history, while also making Maccabee pop-up cards and headbands, which were presented to the whole 300 student program at our Chanukah song sing-off. Our third, fourth, and fifth graders reenacted Maccabee history through physical and spiritual strength-training in order to defeat Antiochus's army. Chef Danny, who they remember from the ECC, led a sufganiyot (Chanukah doughnuts) factory where students learned about the significance of oil by rolling, frying, sprinkling, and (of course) eating delicious sufganiyot. Sixth and seventh graders students wrestled with the questions Chanukah raises, especially about what it means to be minority people living in a majority world and how it is possible to maintain a positive Jewish identity.

We wish you all a Hanukkah and winter of vibrant light. Please feel free to call anytime to discuss our ECLC for tours and visits. at 818-788-3584.

## HEALTHY, HAPPY CELEBRATION SNACKS

**THANK YOU** to all the parents who support our healthy celebration snack policy. Birthdays, holidays and Shabbat celebrations have been festive, nutritious, fun and yummy!



Follow us on Instagram!  
<http://instagram.com/vbsecc>



We've got a great page on Pinterest! Check out fun-filled activities, crafts, recipes and inspirational ideas specially selected for preschool parents. Search **VBS ECC Preschool** and join the fun.

Please join our Facebook community!

"Like" the Valley Beth Shalom ECC Preschool page.

Get a joyful glimpse into your child's day. This is a great way for you to share your child's preschool experience with loved ones across the world. We often post great candid shots that you can share friends and family. Remember, for security reasons,

Food for the body is not enough.  
There must be food for the soul.

- Dorothy Day

## KIDTALK



We listen very closely to your children and love sharing some of their priceless comments overheard here at the ECC.

Each morning room 108 teachers say "Good Morning" to their class in many languages. One day they greeting everyone with "Buon Giorno" and asked the class to guess what country this language was from. When the children looked stumped they gave the hint that pasta is popular in this country and an enthusiastic hand shot up immediately. "I know, I know, the country is called restaurant!"

Last month was filled with conversations about Mitzvahs. Room 107 teachers asked the class "What's a Mitzvah?"

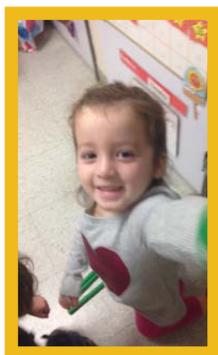
Elon answered "It's a party where only Jewish people come."



Room 108 was discussing siblings and twins Zachary and Connor had a few thoughts. "I was first in my mommy's tummy" said Connor. "Wow" said teacher Aileen. "Who came out first?"

"Our big sister" said Zachary.

Room 104 was out on the play yard and Izabel was in the sandbox surrounded by baking pans and mixing spoons. "What are you making?" asked teacher Terri and Izabel replied "I made you a cake Terri. It's called vanilla and chocolate squirrel."



When Michele toured a group of prospective parents into Room 105, they were admiring the children's self-portraits on the wall. "What are these called?" Michele asked. "They're Selfies" said Aydin.



## LINKS WE LOVE: The Healing Power of JOY!

Laughter is a natural medicine - it lifts our spirits and makes us feel happy. Laughter is contagious. It brings people together and helps us feel more alive and empowered. Laughter therapy aims to use the natural physiological process of laughter to help relieve physical or emotional stresses or discomfort. There are over 70 organizations committed to the healing power of laughter around the world. Watch as Care Clowns, Clown Doctors, and Joy activists in countries across the globe delight sick children and their care givers with giggles, bubbles, love, and joy. here's the link to learn more:

<http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4691>

**ONE LITTLE PERSON MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE!**

**Get your family involved in social action.** Contact VBS Social Action Chair Brooke Wirtschafter ([bwirtschafter@vbs.org](mailto:bwirtschafter@vbs.org)) for family-friendly opportunities to make a positive difference in the world.

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.  
Kindness in giving creates love.

- Lao Tzu

## VBS DAY SCHOOL NEWS

### Day School and ECC Buddies Blossom

The joy of being a buddy is an experience that kids remember. As part of our VBS tradition, Day School students are paired with ECC students to create a relationship of mentoring and community, and participate in activities during the year. The Sprigs class is paired with the Day School 3rd graders, Pre-K with 4th graders and TK with 5th graders. Some buddies have already met and are beginning to forge a bond, others will be meeting in the next few weeks. Parents will be notified who their child's buddy is so that parents will be able to know more about the buddy program and see their child's buddy at community events. Activities include art projects, holiday celebrations, games on the field, and viewing Day School theater productions. In spring, the

Day School will host a buddy Maccabiah games on the Day School playground and field, which promises to be a special experience. We look forward to the buddy program building meaningful experiences in the months to come.



### START A NEW HOLIDAY TRADITION: THE SOUND OF SILENCE

For many families, December is the **LOUDEST** month. Family visitors, holiday parties, crowded shopping malls and over stimulated children can make for an unruly and unsettling month. Why not try a new counter-intuitive approach to finding peace this holiday season? Practice silence. Here are some tips on how to practice an Hour of Silence Every Day:

1. Schedule your hour of silence at a particular time every day.
2. During that hour, turn off the phone, TV, radio, computer, and all other appliances and communication devices. Put down all books and other reading material.
3. Light a candle to be a witness to your hour of silence.
4. Sit quietly and rest—or look carefully at a natural object—or engage in work that does not require you to hear, see, or express words. Gentle housekeeping or gardening are excellent activities of silence, or a long walk in nature.
5. Listen to the silence, all the time enjoying this hour-long respite from thinking, reviewing, planning, and imagining. Stay in the present moment.
6. Breathe deeply and mindfully, bringing in the silence and expelling mental “noise.”
7. At the end of your hour of silence, let your first word be an expression of gratitude or love; then put out the candle and go about your day.

If an hour seems unrealistic, try 20 or 30 minutes!

Have a serene, happy Chanukah!

**HAPPY  
CHANUKAH  
FROM THE ECC**

### LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

Please contribute to the ECC Newsletter! Email your thoughts, suggestions, interesting links and adorable pictures to me, Claire Berger, your ECC News Gatherer. My email is: [cberger@vbs.org](mailto:cberger@vbs.org) We value all your contributions.

If your compassion does not include yourself it is incomplete.

- Jack Kornfield