



**CENTRAL BOARD
UNITED MASHADI JEWISH COMMUNITY OF AMERICA**

February 2014

Adar I 5774

**Members of the Central Board
November 2010 – February 2014 (extended term)**

In alphabetical order

Mr. Ephraim Aminoff
Mr. Mehran Bassali
Mr. Hertzl Cohanpour
Mr. Behnam Hakimi
Mr. Bijan Hakimian
Mr. Mehran Hakimian
Mr. Khosrow Hakimian
Mr. David Hezghian
Mr. Ramin Kalaty
Mrs. Linda Kamali
Mrs. Ruth Kamali
Mrs. Mojdeh Karimzadeh
Mr. Shmuel Koren
Mr. Shmuel Livian
Mr. Hooshang Nematzadeh

End of Term Report

As the current term of the Central Board comes to conclusion we present a brief account of our community's key accomplishments over the past three years. These accomplishments were the direct result of close collaboration and the hard work of our Committees, our Synagogue Boards, the MYC and the Sisterhood.

Shaare Rachamim Synagogue and Mikveh Moshe

The Mashadi community once again rose to the occasion and made history. Our community, united and determined, overwhelmingly supported the purchase of the Shaare Rachamim Synagogue and its Mikveh Moshe in a referendum. In addition, as the

result of a community-wide fundraising, the Central Board was able to purchase Shaare Rachamim and its Mikveh in cash from the bank. Our generous community pledged enough funds that additionally allowed us to do all necessary renovations and to have the reserves necessary for one year of operation.

The YMJC synagogue was renamed "Ohr Esther"

The Central Board is also proud to announce that the Young Mashadi Jewish Center has been named "Ohr Esther". The name "Ohr Esther" is to be displayed on a plaque on an inside wall, as well as on a sign outside the building and will be used in all correspondence, speeches and other forms of communications related to this center. The renaming of the YMJC to "Ohr Esther" was offered to Mr. Amir Hadjibay's family in appreciation for their very generous donation.

Fiscal Responsibility

This term of the Central Board inherited a 4.2 million debt and a history of yearly budget deficits that were difficult to control. Yearly revenues from general pledges had been flat for years and the Central Board at times was finding itself not having enough funds to pay its routine bills.

Through a series of awareness campaigns, the appointment of a strong Fundraising Committee, and the innovative new fundraising ideas offered by the YMJC board, our community was able to:

- raise overall pledges by an average of 40% annually
- reduce annual expenditure by an average of 15%
- offer two very successful Chinese Auctions that were entirely managed and conducted by YMJC board and a large number of other dedicated volunteers
- eliminate budget deficits, create surplus that was used to reduce the debt and to fund necessary new programs at the same time.
- secure a significant donation for renaming of YMJC

As the result, we are happy to end this term with over 3.3 million less in debt (2.2 million just in the last year), and we are thrilled to inform you that with pledges that we were able to secure before the end of our term, we estimate that in the next few months our community's debt will be virtually wiped out. The Mashadi community should not have any debt and in fact we must continue this responsible trend to ensure we end up with a significant surplus that is needed for emergencies and capital improvements.

Increased Volunteerism in Our Community

The Mashadi Youth Committee (MYC) and the Sisterhood that had historically done a great deal of good work for our community and its youth, were not in session when this term began. Together with a very strong Supervisory Council, the Sisterhood and the MYC were once again revived and they are both extremely active and highly productive now. The Central Board offers its gratitude and wishes them continued success.

New Community Programs and Jewish Education Classes

Over 100 new community programs and classes were started at Ohr Esther synagogue. That board, with the help of a very capable program director, created the new programs, made them self-sufficient and offered a formal catalog that made it easy for everyone to review and sign up for these wonderful programs.

In addition, the number of Jewish education classes was increased, including new classes designed for 8 to 10 graders, and a summer Beit Midrash program that was initiated for the first time in our community.

Increased Synagogue Attendance

During our term, we closely partnered with our synagogue boards to offer solutions that would help increase attendance. At Shaare Shalom the focus was placed on the women in our community and as a result a whole new section was created and filled with new attendees. The Gym Minyan and the Ohr Esther Youth Minyan also have enjoyed an increased number of attendees through father-and-son programs and the hiring of two new young Mashadi rabbis. In addition, by putting pressure on Great Neck Park District, we were able to change the Saturday morning Little League baseball games to Sunday afternoon. This also contributed a great deal to the increased Shabbat attendance of our youth.

First ever two young Mashadi Rabbis born and ordained in the USA

Rabbi Adam Sabzevari and Rabbi Moshe Aziz were hired by the Central Board to lead the Youth Minyan at Ohr Esther. Since their engagement, the attendance has been significantly increased, the feedback is very positive and in fact that Minyan is now attracting new youth from all levels of religiosity. We hope and pray that these two young rabbis continue to prosper in our community, grow with our community and together with others on the way, continue to help preserve the unity, the cultural

values, the Sephardic Halacha and the traditions of our wonderful Mashadi community for years to come.

New Yeshiva Scholarship Guidelines

The Central Board, established new guidelines by which the scholarship funds would be disbursed to yeshivas that our community members send their children to. These guidelines were agreed on by a great majority of local yeshivas. Therefore we now have a solid framework through which we can ensure that our children receive the best education that is in-line with acceptable Sephardic Jewish teachings, and is in-line with the strong bond that our community has with the beloved country of Israel.

Installation of new By-laws for the Mashadi Beit Avot in Israel

The Central Board together with members of the Milan, Hamburg and Israel Vaad Markazi approved the new by-laws of the Mashadi Beit Avot in Israel. This action was necessary to put an end to the instabilities and uncertainties that existed within the Beit Avot management board. A permanent committee of 4 from New York comprised of Mr. Abdolrahim Etessami, Mr. Mansour Karimzadeh, Mr. Shmuel Livian and Mr. Jamshid Zar will continue to oversee the Beit Avot on behalf of the New York Mashadi Community. This committee is appointed by the Central Board and may be changed by a future board if necessary.

The Drugs and Alcohol Prevention Awareness Programs

Unfortunately our community by no means is immune from the menace of drugs and alcohol addiction. The Central Board placed strong emphasis on awareness programs during this term for both parents and children alike. One of the most successful programs was held at Shaare Shalom together with Nassau County's District Attorney Office. Over 350 members of our community attended this event and learned the latest information about the trends in illicit drugs and alcohol abuse, cyber bullying and prescription drug abuse by children. A more focused version of this program was later on turned into free informational classes, included in the programs offered at Ohr Esther (explained above) to our community parents and children alike.

New Communication Committee Guidelines and the new Mashadi Website (Mashadi.org)

The Central Board, in conjunction with its communication committee devised new guidelines for communication that streamlined all announcements and information dissemination that was owned by the Central Board. In addition this board placed great emphasis on enhancing the Mashadi.org website that is now fully functional and has received a significant acceptance from our community members.

MYC Office Relocation

The MYC, together with the Ohr Esther board and other volunteers involved, were finally able to move the MYC office to its originally intended location; 130 Steamboat Road. This move greatly streamlined the services that this office provides our community and the youth in particular. Some of these services include the management of the Mashadi.org website, the publication of HaChodesh, and support for the communication committee and planning of MYC events.

Mashadi Heritage Committee

The history of the Mashadi Jews in Iran continues to amaze and impress many people around the world. Many prominent outfits in Israel are lobbying hard with us to place our books and artifacts in their upcoming new museums. The first one is the Casa Shalom which is an institute for "Anusim" ("forced converts") studies. This outfit is working with Netanya Academic College (NAC) to build a museum in Netanya that will exhibit the history of Anusim and certainly the Mashadi Jews. The Heritage committee has already worked significantly with them and has placed a large number of books on Mashadi heritage at that museum. The second interested institute is the Beit Hatfutsot museum that is on the campus of Tel Aviv University. This museum will be going through a 75 million dollar renovation and the board of directors has met with the Central Board and they are extremely interested to have us build our own permanent Mashadi exhibit there. Others to mention are a possible plan to build our own heritage center in Neve Sedegh at the site of the first ever Mashadi synagogue in Tel-Aviv, the Shabazi synagogue.

The Marriage Committee

The members of the Marriage Committee had a very active term. And thankfully, this past year our community had dozens of engagements and we hope that the Marriage Committee continues its vitally important role in helping those singles in our community that continue to have difficulty to find the right match and get married.

The work of the committee includes:

- Town Hall Meeting with the Singles
- Survey of the Singles
- Event for the Singles with a panel formed of couples married for 1 year, 5 years, 10 years and 15 years
- Town Hall Meeting with Parents

- Publishing and publicizing the results of the survey and town hall meetings
- Negotiating package deal with Moshe from Ledderman for weddings
- Establishment of an MYC Directory of our community's singles online
- We are in the process of having a team of approved matchmakers get trained by professionals

Mashadi Talmud Torah

The management at Talmud Torah added additional assistant teachers in classrooms that required this additional help with special needs students. In addition, more assistant teachers were added to work individually with students that required help in improving their level of reading.

The management at Talmud Torah also placed special attention on familiarizing our students with the siddurim that are used in different Minyanim of UMJCA. This new initiative started by using Succat David Hashalem and Kol Miriam in their classrooms starting with 2nd and 3rd grades. In addition, more emphasis was placed on reciting and learning Shema Israel and Shabbath Amidah in order to prepare all students to attend and participate in a Shabbat Minyan.

Higher Education Committee

During this term of the Higher Education Committee, our Mashadi Community students reached all-time highs in terms of scholastic achievements. An increasing number of the college graduates now pursue graduate and post graduate studies, and on average every year our community has at least two medical school and two law school graduates.

The Central Board continued to facilitate the fund raising efforts of higher education committee and awarded tuition loans to the Mashadi Community students during the past term. In addition, the Higher Education Committee also conducted annual community wide graduation ceremonies in order to encourage and inspire our young graduates; these events draw over 800 participants every year.

Guidelines for the Community Calendar

The Central Board devised a series of guidelines that help our community members book their family events appropriately without any conflict with any other private or Central Board events. These guidelines were implemented during the first year of this term and are being enforced by our calendar administrators on behalf of the Central Board.

Israel and Zionism

The Israel and Zionism Committee was extremely active during the past three years. This committee facilitated community members' attendance to AIPAC Conferences, the Israel Day Parade in New York City and conducted the Haazmauth celebration day together with our Talmud Torah children.

Conducted a series of speeches and awareness campaigns using detailed publications to prepare and inform our college-bound students of the issues related to Anti Zionism on college campuses.

The committee put together the first ever senior Auschwitz trip in 2011 and later on the first Teens Auschwitz trip in 2013. A photographic exhibition of the Poland trip was also held subsequent to this trip.

This committee also hosted eighteen IDF soldiers and paramedics with severe Lebanon war traumatic experiences; this was a highly emotional and heart-felt event.

Created a publication dedicated to Ghilad Shalit with letters that our Talmud Torah children wrote to Ghilad after his release. The committee also put together another publication dedicated to the Mashadi IDF fallen soldiers.

Together with the MYC, various basketball games were organized that collected \$100,000 for the purchase of a new ambulance. This state-of-the-art ambulance was donated by UMJCA to Magen David Adom in Israel. Prior to the shipment of the ambulance to Israel, it was placed on display for our community's viewing as part of a ceremony that was held at Shaare Shalom.

Shalom Early Childhood Program

The Shalom Early Childhood program which is in its seventh year has become THE pre-school program of choice in the market. The sold out program, which has a waiting list, is considering converting available office space into classrooms to accommodate wait-listed families. As a result, for the last two years, the pre-school program has been self-sufficient and profitable. Parents rave about the quality of the program, which under the guidance of Irene Dicker has been responsive to our parents' needs while delivering a strong early childhood and Jewish education, preparing our toddlers for success. The roster of A List Mashadi and Non Mashadi teachers, working in the friendly and practical Ohr Esther classrooms (the newest and best designed facility in the area) provide for a loving atmosphere during our children's formative years. The long list of learning activities at Shalom, have earned it the envious coveted position.

Capital Improvement Projects

- A back-up Generator for Shaare Shalom was purchased and will be installed in time for the upcoming hurricane season.
- New front doors for Shaare Shalom as well as new doors for Ohr Esther Youth Minyan.
- Major upgrade to Shaare Shalom security camera system.
- New Hekhal for Ohr Esther Youth Minyan.
- New chandelier for Ohr Esther.
- A brand new playground at Ohr Esther.
- Shaare Rachamim interior redecoration and facelift prior to its upcoming grand opening.

The UMJCA Central Board