

Jane West Walsh (MAJE '85) effuses enthusiasm for Jewish learning and the field of Jewish education. As the recently appointed Educational Research Fellow at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center for the American Jewish Archives at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati, she is developing strategies and materials for teaching and learning about the American Jewish experience using archival documents. Continuing the legacy of Dr. Marcus, z"l, and working with Executive Director Dr. Gary Zola, archival staff, and educator colleagues around the world, her mission is to bring the historical riches of the American Jewish experience into the hands of Jewish educators, rabbis, and community leaders. She is an innovator – seeking new ways to engage teachers and learners in the study of Jewish tradition and culture.

It is hard to believe that West Walsh was not always so involved in Jewish communal life, Jewish learning, and the field of Jewish education. Initially pursuing a career in science communications in Denver where she lived primarily as a secular Jew, it was only during her late 20's as an adult learner, that she started to look deeper at Jewish tradition, texts, and culture. She realized that there was "a great treasure to uncover." Adult education classes and a wonderful experience teaching sixth grade at Temple Emanuel in Denver, under the supervision of Max Frankel, kindled a love for teaching and her desire to continue learning more about Judaism.

Whereas previously she had used her artistic and graphic talents to teach about science and ecology, she now decided to make her focus the heritage and values of Judaism. Her studies at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education (RHSOE) were "the most challenging and enriching experiences of my life to that point," she noted. She credits the faculty, their excellent teaching, and their commitment to research and practice in the field. She also credits the Rhea Hirsch School's core vision of creating a "collegial network of Jewish educators" for ongoing success in linking the ever expanding network of graduates. To strengthen this network, she is actively involved in the RHSOE Alumni Association, which supports ongoing professional development for alumni, and programs of the RHSOE and the College-Institute.

With West Walsh's passionate commitment and achievements in Jewish education (she directed the religious education programs at Temple Israel in Omaha, Nebraska, and Temple Shaaray Tefila in New York City, was involved in Jewish communal education work in Baltimore and Cleveland, taught at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies and Baltimore Hebrew University, and was a participant in the Senior Educator's Fellowship Program at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at Hebrew University in

Goleman's research on emotional intelligence. A highlight of her residency was the program "A Conversation in Muslim and Jewish Education," in which she and a Muslim educator colleague, Nadira Charaniya, facilitated an interreligious learning program. West Walsh and Charaniya based the program on a curriculum analysis they had done comparing Muslim and

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## How a science communications professional became a leading Reform Jewish educator, thanks to the Rhea Hirsch School of Education



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Jerusalem), it comes as no surprise that a committee of the alumni of the RHSOE honored her as the first-ever RHSOE alumnus/a-in-residence. Launched during the Fall 1998 semester, this program was sponsored by the alumni association's Lee-Rothberg Fund, created to honor RHSOE Director Professor Sara Lee for receiving the prestigious Rothberg Prize for significant achievement in the field of Jewish Education, at Hebrew University in 1997.

As Alumna-in-residence, West Walsh taught education classes, delivered a *dvar Torah* and read Torah during student services, and prepared a *Yom Iyyun* (day of study for clinical faculty and students) based on Daniel

*The Rhea Hirsch School of Education in Los Angeles, which offers programs leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Jewish Education, Master of Arts degree in Jewish Education, and Joint Masters degree in Jewish Education and Jewish Communal Service, will celebrate its 30th anniversary in the year 2000. To date, there are 208 RHSOE alumni serving the Reform Movement and world Jewry. HUC-JIR's first honorary doctoral degrees for distinguished alumni, the Doctor of Sacred Education, are anticipated to be awarded at Graduation in the Spring of 2000.*

***Please help HUC-JIR recruit talented and motivated students for careers in Jewish Education. Please direct potential candidates to: Professor Sara Lee, Director, Rhea Hirsch School of Education, HUC-JIR, 3077 University Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007-3796; (213) 749-3424; slee@huc.edu***

Jewish educational materials. By presenting aspects of their reflections on the uses of Hebrew and Arabic, values stories, use of historical leaders as role models, and responses to the challenges of teaching Jewish and Muslim traditions while living in a predominantly Christian and secular society, they introduced the Los Angeles School community to Ismaili Muslim education, tradition,

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## Reflections on the First Thirty Years of the Irwin Daniels School of Jewish Communal Service

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headed by Mike Nissenson, has served as a critical link between the community and the Daniels School. In addition to offering guidance to the School on policies and programs, advisory members have aided the School financially and have functioned as mentors to our students during their years of study.

Dr. Jack Mayer, a former director of the SJCS, recently observed that Jews have always been involved in *Tikkun Olam*. Opening a school for Jewish communal professionals did not create the notion of repairing the world. However, according to Dr. Mayer, it changed the *Tikkun Olam* concept by giving it a professional focus. Dr. Mayer adds that while HUC-JIR represents Reform Judaism in its Schools of Sacred Music, Education, and Rabbinic Studies, the School of Jewish Communal Service is pluralistic. Its students represent all branches of Judaism. He calls this the gift of the Reform Movement to the total Jewish community and yet another way in which the world can be repaired.

At HUC-JIR, future rabbis are schooled in Torah and service to the Jewish people. Despite the push-pull of political movements, the SJCS specifically seeks to inspire and direct its students by combining the principles of Torah with acts of human caring and social service. In doing so, the School seeks not only to challenge its graduates, but to push the world in the direction of *Gimelut Hasadim*, loving acts of kindness. And thus the world may be sustained.

It is the responsibility of the Jewish community to repair the world. We are not expected to complete the work, only to do our share. For thirty years, HUC-JIR's SJCS in Los Angeles has been preparing others to do their share. As Rabbi Tarfon said: *You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to abstain from it.* [Pirke Avot 2:21]

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introduced the Los Angeles School community to Ismaili Muslim education, tradition, and history, and fostered deeper reflection about Jewish education, within a context of interreligious learning. In fact, Jewish-Muslim interreligious learning is the theme of West Walsh's doctoral research currently underway in the field of adult education. Working with Charaniya, she will be researching the learning processes that take place when Jews and Muslims engage in interreligious dialogue for a significant amount of time. They currently are seeking people who are willing to talk about their Jewish-Muslim interreligious dialogue experiences to participate in their research study.

While engaged in her own work with the Marcus Center and her doctoral studies, West Walsh remains committed to the practice of Jewish education and the practical concerns of recruiting new students for the RHSOE. More "top-notch" people — those starting out in their first career, and those on their next one, like West Walsh — need to be recruited. They will continue to bring needed leadership to our expanding Reform congregational religious education programs and the exciting new initiatives in our Movement-wide camps, adult *kallot*, and youth programs. Too many openings are left unfilled each year in communities across the country. West Walsh stated that currently there are not enough HUC-JIR graduates to fill available positions and that a "tremendous amount of work" still needs to be done by the leaders of our

Movement to advocate that the best and the brightest Jewish minds consider entering the field. She noted, "It is the responsibility of all Reform Jews to work together in order to meet this challenge."

West Walsh believes that professional opportunities for Reform Jewish educators have expanded, as the demand for innovative Jewish learning experiences has grown across the country in recent years. While both opportunity and need are still there, no longer is the professional Reform Jewish educator limited to working in an afternoon

or weekend school or classroom setting. The spectrum has widened to include "informal" and non-formal education settings such as retreat programs, camps, and Israel trips; day school settings including

Jewish early childhood and family life programs; and communal agency settings serving local, regional, national, and international populations. Reform Jewish educators are having a large impact on Jewish family and adult education initiatives being implemented all over the Jewish world.

Wherever they work, Rhea Hirsch School of Education graduates become influential Jewish leaders. They have become full partners in forming, shaping, and carrying forward the current renaissance of Jewish learning and living. Thanks to the graduates of the RHSOE, like Jane West Walsh, the doors are wide open for our future Reform Jewish educators.



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