

Women of Reform Judaism Support Student Learning



Reform statehood members take part in a demonstration for women's suffrage, circa 1900.

The **Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ)** is the single largest cumulative donor to the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: it has provided devoted support to the College-Institute annually since 1913. Through the YES Fund (Youth, Education, and Special Projects), WRJ has traditionally provided scholarship aid to North American rabbinical students and students in our Israel Rabbinical Program, as well as cantorial prizes to students at HUC-JIR's School of Sacred Music. In addition, the WRJ has subsidized HUC-JIR's *Pesach* Project in the Former Soviet Union, whereby scores of students lead Passover *sedarim* in Jewish communities large and small throughout Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Shelley Lindauer, WRJ Executive Director (center), meeting with HUC-JIR students (from left) Zoe Jacobs, Andrew Goodman, and Erica Greenbaum.



WRJ is the collective voice and presence of women in Reform congregational life and works to ensure the future of Progressive Judaism in North America, Israel, and around the world. The organization has recently strengthened its dedication to HUC-JIR students by committing to named scholarships to fund rabbinical, cantorial, and education students at all three HUC-JIR stateside campuses, and continuing to fund students in our Israel Rabbinical Program

The 2007-08 recipients of the WRJ Scholarships are rabbinical students **Karen Kriger**, C '11, **Rochelle Kamins**, L '09, **Judith Bacharach**, N '09, cantorial student **Leah Holland**, N '09; education students **Olga Bluman**, RHSOE '08, L '09, and **Sarah Ruderman**, NYSOE '09; and communal service student **Anna Schwarz**, SJCS '09. For the duration of their careers as Jewish leaders, these students will carry the name of the WRJ as part of their identity. During the course of their studies, these WRJ Scholars will benefit from a close relationship with the WRJ, its scholars, and its programs, and an enriched understanding of the role of women's leadership in the congregational setting. They will be better prepared to engage the active involvement of women and Sisterhoods within the professional settings in which they will work.

Rosanne M. Selfon, President of WRJ, explains, "We've always had a strong relationship with HUC-JIR students, but moving forward, we need to have a stronger, better commitment to them. WRJ is building connections to HUC-JIR students and these students are learning more about our support of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the URJ's Youth Programming, and the Religious Action Center." Selfon says, "Our hope is that with these scholarships, we will be able to increase interest in WRJ and the important work that we do."

WRJ also continues to work with the entire HUC-JIR student body and faculty and provides exceptional support and resources. The WRJ, in partnership with the URJ Press, has just published *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, edited by Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi,

Professor of Bible, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, and Dr. Andrea Weiss, Assistant Professor of Bible, HUC-JIR/New York. WRJ commissioned the work of the world's leading Jewish female Bible scholars, rabbis, historians, philosophers, and archaeologists for the Commentary – the first of its kind. WRJ gave HUC-JIR students early access to preview materials from the Commentary, which debuted at the 2007 WRJ Assembly, and students have been able to use Torah studies and program materials provided by WRJ in their coursework and student pulpits.

Selfon lauds Rabbi David Ellenson's "immense support of the *Torah* Commentary" and looks forward to its use in HUC-JIR's curriculum and by HUC-JIR's students. With the generous endowment support of Elizabeth Blaustein Roswell and Arthur Roswell, all 2nd-year students at HUC-JIR will receive a copy of this extraordinary volume from the WRJ for the next three years. This year, the WRJ will underwrite the expense for students in their 3rd to 5th years. This wonderful gift will ensure that this important scholarly work will inform the learning of all of HUC-JIR's students in the future.

As a New Year's gift this past *Rosh Hashanah*, WRJ donated copies of *Covenant of the Spirit: New Prayers, Poems, and Meditations from Women of Reform Judaism* to every HUC-JIR student as a resource for their internships, pulpits, and everyday life. The volume is a collection of original prayers for all types of occasions and for each individual's daily life – from "Torah: Source of our Covenant" through "Lifecycle Events: Living the Covenant," and includes meditations on illness and hope, the *Shoah* and Israel, prayers for peace and gratitude, holidays and *Shabbat*, and blessings and benedictions for meetings, gatherings, and rituals.

"Our support of HUC-JIR is one of the proudest things our organization has done," says Shelley Lindauer, WRJ Executive Director. "In some way, WRJ has supported every HUC-JIR student since 1913. By supporting HUC-JIR, we have helped to ensure the future of Reform Judaism."