

THE HEILICHER MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMOS & CELIA HEILICHER MINNEAPOLIS JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Students Create Connections & Community

Building Friendships Across Grades

Amazing Alumni:
Rivka Buchbinder Returns as Educator

Donor Spotlight:
Meet the Melendez/Krupp Family

Enduring Values • Extraordinary Education



From the Head of School



Dear Heilicher Community,

It has been an honor to meet so many of you during the first eight months of my tenure at Heilicher. Whether at PTO events, Yom Dor l'Dor (Grandparents and Special Persons Day), the Heilicher Annual Benefit, or in synagogue for students' B'nai Mitzvah, every person I meet has been warm and welcoming. Our family has lived in a few cities over the past 20 years, but for my wife Shannon and me, Minneapolis is truly the place that feels most like home.

In these pages, you'll read about what makes Heilicher a tremendously special place. The All-School Lunch experience, our buddy programs that pair middle school students with our youngest learners, B'nai Mitzvah blessing circles, and the Senior Walk for graduating high school alumni are just some examples of how we build and sustain connections among students of all grade levels. You'll read about Rivka Buchbinder – an outstanding Heilicher alumna who now works at our school – and you'll get to know the Melendez/Krupp family, whose volunteerism and philanthropy are examples of the impact of a Heilicher education *l'dor v'dor* (from generation to generation).

I hope to see many of you at our upcoming grades 7-8 play (see ad below), as well as at Kabbalat Shabbat programs, holiday celebrations, and family social and educational events. Please also consider volunteering at Heilicher this spring – there are numerous ways to get involved, whether in the classrooms, the art room, or the main office. Contact Ali Berdass (aberdass@hmjds.org) to find an opportunity that fits your schedule and interests.

Wishing you all a wonderful (coming) spring,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Ahlstrom".

Dan Ahlstrom, Ed.D.
Head of School

Join us for the grades 7-8 play!

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN (REVISED)

A colorful illustration of the Peanuts cast. Charlie Brown is in the center, looking down. To his left is Snoopy, and to his right is Woodstock. Other characters include Lucy, Linus, Sally, and the rest of the gang, all in their characteristic poses and clothing.

7 P.M. THURSDAY, MARCH 23 2 P.M. SUNDAY, MARCH 26
DOLLY AND EDWARD FITERMAN THEATRE, BARRY FAMILY CAMPUS

Tickets will be available at hmjds.org/news-events/charlie-brown

BASED ON THE COMIC STRIP PEANUTS BY CHARLES M. SCHULZ | BOOK, MUSIC AND LYRICS BY CLARK GESNER
ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE BY MICHAEL MAYER | ADDITIONAL MUSIC AND LYRICS BY ANDREW LIPPA

On cover: The seventh-grade class lifts Mati O. in a blessing circle celebrating his Bar Mitzvah.
Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Schmiege Photography

Students Make Meaningful Connections and Build Community

A Heilicher education fosters connections and community across grade levels, among families, and in the greater world.

The weekly schedule includes all-school activities that bring together the entire community of students, teachers, staff, administrators, and family volunteers. Mondays begin with all-school *t'filah* (prayer). Wednesdays feature All-School Lunch, where students of different grades sit together at community tables. Students mix in other ways, too, through middle school electives, Kabbalat Shabbat for K-4 and 5-8, Maccabiah (field day), K/8 Buddies, and other programs throughout the year.

All-School Lunch

At All-School Lunch, sixth graders serve food to first graders. Seventh graders lead *Birkat Hamazon* (blessing after meals). Eighth graders eat with their kindergarten buddies. Students interact across grade levels with students and teachers they may not otherwise have met.

“Our table gelled quickly, and now it feels like our little family inside of our broader school community,” middle school teacher Davida Cytron said. “I love seeing the kids from our table in the hallways – it’s like we have an exciting connection. These connections can be very special. My son, who is now a college freshman, still talks about the little kids at his table when he was in middle school.”

K/8 Buddies

While All-School Lunch offers cross-grade interaction and learning opportunities, the long-standing K/8 Buddies program helps personal



All-School Lunch Table 8 enjoys a weekly Wednesday lunch together. Back row from left: Sammi T. (Grade 4), Max R. (Grade 7), Sasha G. (Grade 5), and teacher Hadassa Slager. Front row from left: Francesca K. (Grade 2), Shira S. (Grade 3), Louie H. (Grade 3), teacher Davida Cytron, and Yoni F. (Grade 2).

connections evolve between the school’s youngest and oldest cohorts.

Eighth-grade students take kindergarteners under their wings, welcoming them into the school community from day one. At Opening Ceremonies, they pair with a kindergartener and walk them under the *chuppah* (canopy).

Throughout the year, the kindergarten and eighth-grade buddies sit together at All-School Lunch, read, play games, create art, and enjoy other activities together.

“I like that I get to experience a little bit of kindergarten again,” eighth-grade student Laila S. said.

Eighth grader Nadav F. said he enjoys the bonding. He came to Heilicher as an eighth grader, so he and his buddy Jonah S. went through adjusting to a new school together.

When the year is complete, the kindergarteners once again walk



Eighth grader Laila S. reads to her kindergarten buddies, Brielle S. and Arne D.

in – this time with the outgoing seventh graders – during Heilicher Closing Ceremonies. From there, the kindergarten students are on a journey toward becoming leaders of their own.

Peer-to-Peer Blessings

In addition to cross-grade connections, students within grades have special programs to connect and support one another. For each student about to become B’nai Mitzvah, the entire class



Evan P. (Grade 3) helps Harrison W. (Grade 1) during All-School Lunch.

creates a blessing circle where they and their teachers offer messages of *mazal tov* (good luck) and support. Peers hoisted seventh grader Mati O. in a chair (see photo on cover) ahead of his January Bar Mitzvah. Then, at synagogue, his Heilicher classmates joined him on the *bimah* (pulpit) for the *Adon Olam* closing prayer.

Pre-School Connections

All students, in particular middle schoolers, are mentors throughout the year. Seventh graders read to Pre-K students in the campus' Early Childhood Center, where friendships blossom and lots of laughter ensues.

New this year are monthly Sunday Family Fun Days community outreach events for early childhood and kindergarten/first-grade students and their families. The initiative by Director of Admissions Deborah Getsug invites young families for community building, crafts, and learning. The January event –

a week before Tu B'Shvat, the “birthday” of the trees – brought together nearly 30 families to plant parsley for spring and Passover, finger paint trees, and engage in other activities related to the holiday.

“Watching children and families connect brings me so much joy,” Deborah said. “My hope is that these monthly programs enable our current families to connect with prospective families and share positive experiences, and for every member of the Jewish community to feel welcome in the halls of Heilicher.”

All in the Family

Parents, grandparents, and special elders are another important part of the connections and community forged at Heilicher.

An active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) plans educational and social programs throughout the year that allow families to share Shabbat and do service projects together. The PTO's Chesed Committee offers support by providing meals, rides, and other help for Heilicher families in need.

“Through my work on this committee, I am teaching my kids by example,” said Sharon Rosenblum, Chesed Committee chair. “This is a core example of being part of a community.”

Yom Dor l'Dor (Grandparents and Special Persons Day) is an annual event for grandparents and special elders to engage



Judith Smertenko with granddaughter Zoey C. (Grade 3) at Yom Dor l'Dor in November 2022.



Millie L. with her homemade *hanukiah* at a Sunday Family Fun Day.

with their students at school and see all that they are accomplishing. Grandparents and relatives also get involved in school life by helping set up All-School Lunch and other volunteer opportunities.

Heilicher fosters connections and community at every level, resulting in a strong, supportive learning environment that nurtures kindness and leadership at all ages and stages.

Reflections on K/8 Buddies —Abby L.



My favorite part about having Oreen for a buddy is the boost of spirit! The middle schoolers have a packed schedule on Wednesdays, but I can always count on seeing him at All-School Lunch to be the highlight of my day. I was really looking forward to being an eighth-grade buddy, and, so far, it has been a great experience.



High school senior Gigi Stillman and other Heilicher alumni from the eighth-grade class of 2018 enthusiastically greet current Heilicher students at the Senior Walk in June 2022.

Alum Rivka Buchbinder Joins Heilicher Staff



Rivka Buchbinder

From an early age, Rivka Buchbinder (Heilicher '12) knew she wanted to be an educator. Her mom was a teacher, and Rivka fondly remembers the connections she had with her teachers at Heilicher.

"My Heilicher teachers really inspired me to want to teach," Rivka said. "I want to be able to connect with students on a personal level like they did. They always made learning fun and exciting."

As a college student in 2018, Rivka reconnected with Heilicher to do her fieldwork in the second-grade classroom with teachers Sheree Goldblatt and Crystal Reese. After that experience, Rivka knew she wanted to continue to work with the students in some capacity and got involved with the HaBonim after-school program.



Rivka (in hat) as a student at Heilicher with some classmates.

Last spring, Rivka student-taught in Crystal's second-grade class and graduated with an education degree from Augsburg University. When Heilicher's School's Out and HaBonim coordinator position became available, Rivka saw a great fit.

"I always felt comfortable at Heilicher because the school understands my religious needs and is always



Rivka works with Tovah L. (Grade 3) in the Makerspace.

accommodating," she said. "This school community shares my values."

"I always knew, whether I was a student or staff, I would be taken care of. We work as an entire team where no one is left behind. Everyone jumps in to support in any way they can. I felt it as a student and now feel it as a staff member."

Rivka learned this firsthand when she was faced with difficult times while a student at Heilicher. Rivka is a three-time cancer survivor; she was first diagnosed in seventh grade. The immense support she and her family felt from the Heilicher community is something she will never forget.

"When I got sick, everyone had my back and rallied around me," Rivka recalled. "My friends at school weren't just my classmates; they were my support system."

She still keeps the cards that her seventh-grade classmates made for her that adorned her hospital room in Boston, where she spent three months in treatment. When she finally was able to return to school, she wore a wig with a hat because of hair loss. She still remembers walking into her classroom

on her first day back and seeing her classmates in baseball caps to show their support. "I was surrounded by the love of the school," she said.

Rivka is the first alum to join the staff in an educational role. Her return in a professional capacity was an easy decision. "You don't think about how much your community means to you until you are in a real need," she explained. "The Heilicher community shows up."

Hey, Alumni! We Want To Hear From You

If you are a Heilicher (HMJDS or MJDS) alum or alum parent, please scan this QR code to help us keep in touch.



The Melendez and Krupp Families: Investing in the Jewish Future

When Shana and Michel Melendez moved to Minnesota from New York in August 2019, they were excited to raise their children – Marco, Isa, and Mia – in the community where Shana grew up. Choosing a school was one of their most important decisions. Swayed by the strong community dynamic, the positive reviews of current Heilicher parents, and the comfort that their children felt while touring the school, they were soon confident that Heilicher was the right choice.

Shana's family has a long history at Heilicher. Her parents, Gary and Barbara Krupp, moved their younger daughters Sophie and Mollie (now adults) to the school in grades 3 and 5, respectively. Jewish education was a priority for the Krupps, and the integration of Jewish and General Studies, along with the connections between the school and their home synagogue of Beth El, made it the perfect choice. Barbara and Gary have many special memories from those years, including the quality of the teaching, the individual attention



From left: Kelly and Mollie Walsh and their daughter Maddie (not pictured: baby daughter Grace), Sophie Krupp, Gary and Barbara Krupp, and Mia, Shana, Isa, Michel, and Marco Melendez.

to their daughters' learning styles, and meaningful programs such as the sixth-grade trip to Chicago and the *talit* (prayer shawl) project.

"When it comes to living Jewish values, that really resonated with us and our children," said Barbara. "It is something that is unique and is a priority of the school." The Krupps are now thrilled to be able to share Heilicher experiences with their grandchildren. "I can't think of a better investment with more lasting returns than to give children the gift of a Jewish education," said Gary. "That is something that will stay with them their whole lives."

The Krupps' youngest daughter, Sophie, now a midwife and health educator, also fondly recalls her Heilicher (then MJDS) years. Her remembrances include amazing faculty members like her third-grade teacher Helen Siegel, swimming in the JCC pool, and participating in

Jewish Studies plays directed by former Heilicher teacher Yefet Zadaka (with his accordion!). "The best thing about MJDS was that everyone felt like one big family," Sophie said. Many friends from her elementary school days remain close companions today.

Shana and Michel were proud to build on this Heilicher legacy when they enrolled their own children at the school. Heilicher has a strong community feel that reminds Shana of childhood family Shabbat dinners at the home of her grandparents, Mayer and Faye Krupp (z"l). The get-togethers were warm and infused with Jewish *n'shamah* (soul), and Shana recalls that coming to Heilicher felt like a chance to recreate those special childhood memories with other school families.

Shana believes the most unique aspect of Heilicher is its teachers. "They spend the time getting to know your children



Gary Krupp with granddaughter Mia M. at Yom Dor l'Dor in November 2022.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT continued

as individuals,” she said. “My kids have been nurtured at Heilicher, and as a result they have flourished.”

The oldest Melendez child, Marco, is now a ninth grader at Breck School, while Isa and Mia are in grades 8 and 5, respectively, at Heilicher. All are deeply involved in the Jewish community. Regarding his children’s Jewish education, Michel shared, “Although I am not Jewish, I cherish Jewish values, including the importance of education, family, and community. Heilicher’s reflection of these values has been invaluable for our children.”

Michel and Shana, as well as Gary and Barbara, are philanthropically generous to the school, giving to the Annual Fund and other special campaigns in addition to recommending contributions from the Mayer and Faye Krupp Family Foundation.

“We are proud to continue that legacy,” Shana said. “We feel that our parents and grandparents have taught us through their practices that giving is not only good, but is our duty to help ensure that Heilicher continues to thrive for many years to come.” Shana is also involved as a PTO leader at Heilicher, generously giving her time to help the school succeed.

Gary shared, “Words speak, but behavior shouts. You can talk about philanthropy with your children and grandchildren, but what is really important is giving them the chance to see it in action.”

Through both their words and their actions, the Krupp and Melendez families continue to strengthen Heilicher and invest in the Jewish future.

Fall 2022 Annual Benefit Breaks Record

Thank you so much to all who joined us for the Fall 2022 Annual Benefit honoring Wendy Lovell-Smith and Colin Smith and to everyone who came together as a community to support our school. The gala raised more than \$557,000 – our highest achievement ever. The total includes corporate and community sponsorships, ticket sales and tribute gifts, and funds raised at our live auction and fund-a-need appeal. We are deeply grateful to our honorees and for the generosity of the entire Heilicher community.



TOP: Honorees Colin Smith and Wendy Lovell-Smith with their children (L to R) Noah, Maya, Leah, and Jonah. **MIDDLE:** Heilicher parents celebrate together. Back row L to R: Andrea Golden, Mollie Divine, and Anna Latzer. Front row: Casey Reiter and Jenny Hage. **BOTTOM:** Heilicher guests lit up the ballroom connecting over food, drink, and 80s- and 90s-themed music and arcade games.





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