

Stakeholders' Report

AN ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF VANCOUVER TALMUD TORAH

FALL 2008

Dear Stakeholder,

VTT is fortunate to have such a wonderful community of supporters: faculty and administration; students, parents and grandparents; alumni, donors and community organizations. Each group, in its own important way, is committed to supporting Vancouver Talmud Torah in its mission to provide the best possible educational experience for students, and to ensure this legacy is carried on for future generations. The Board of Directors serves to give voice to all of these interest groups.

Several years ago the Board reorganized itself along portfolio lines in order to more effectively deal with the complexities of governing a large private school, and in order to involve more stakeholders in setting the strategic focus of the school. Each portfolio chairperson oversees a committee of parents and non-parents that meets regularly and works with the administration and staff to define goals and implement strategies. Each chairperson then reports monthly to the entire Board, and important issues are discussed and voted on at monthly Board meetings.

This year we were fortunate to continue the trend of an excellent Board of committed, hard-working volunteers. This newsletter includes a year-end report from each chairperson, summing up the work done by each committee.

To receive fresh perspectives and renew our enthusiasm, each year we look to add new faces to the Board and replace retiring members. We are always interested in recruiting new Board and committee members. If you would like to join a particular committee, please contact the respective Board chairperson.

Best wishes for a Shana Tova U'Metukah,

Joel Guralnick and Ron Bakonyi, Co-Presidents



Development

Ari Shiff, Chair

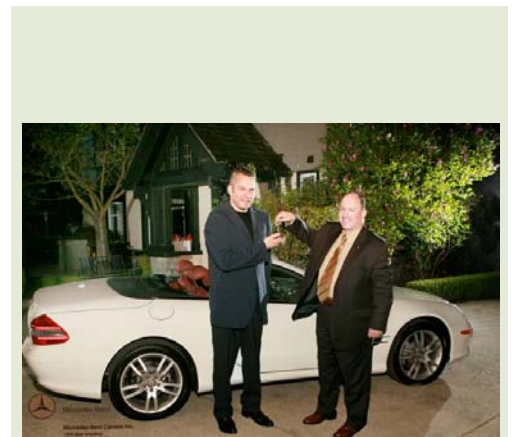
The role of the Development Committee is to cultivate major donor support for the school and enlarge the circle of support beyond the parent body. Funds raised by Development go toward general operations, capital projects, new initiatives, tuition assistance, and the Atid Endowment. This year substantial progress was made in migrating Development from a volunteer-led effort to a more sustainable Administrative department aided by volunteers. This model will provide continuity to VTT and provide a more professional level of support for event organizing committees, the Alumni committee, capital campaigns, etc.

In terms of fund-raising, this year was once again very productive, with over \$300,000 raised. Most of that was raised at the 2008 VTT Gentlemen's Dinner, where 145

gentlemen (and a few gentlewomen) joined our generous sponsors and hard-working volunteers to raise funds to support the next phase of VTT's growth. Special mention must be made of the Phylliss and Irving Snider Foundation and The Diamond Foundation who generously supported the initiative through grants.

This year we also raised over \$23,000 from 47 CJA Plus donors, a considerable improvement on the \$13,000 raised last year. We anticipate that as more people become aware of the opportunity of designating VTT as the beneficiary when increasing their CJA contribution, this source will continue to play a significant role in our fundraising efforts.

While space does not allow us to list here all of the generous donors who are helping to improve VTT's programs and facilities, we extend our sincere thanks to them and to the many devoted volunteers who helped to make this year successful.



Gent's Dinner attendee, Jeff Lowenstein, accepts keys to a Mercedes coupe after winning the evening's draw. Mr. Lowenstein won a free 3-month lease on the car.



Finance

Eran Elizur, Chair

The role of the Finance Committee is to oversee all aspects of the financial operations and needs of the school. While not directly involved in the day to day financial operations of the school the committee helps the administration to prepare the school's annual budget for Board approval, reviews changes that the Board would like to introduce to the budget and provides a financial perspective to the board and administration in the field of finance and reviews the school's financial reports.

In addition the Treasurer, through the Finance Committee, recommends and draft motions for the Board's acceptance that will establish the financial policies of the School.

Specifically the Treasurer and the Finance Committee deal with the following issues:

- Budget planning
- Budget to actual review
- Monthly financial statement review
- Audit review
- Tuition review and reform
- Tuition policies including collection, assessments, and scales
- Overseeing the Tuition Assessment Committee
- Investment management
- Salary and wage guidelines

One of the main activities this year was to start the financial planning in contemplation of a possible expansion of the school and make sure we have the means to fund this effort in the short to mid term, prior to starting a full campaign.

The financial structure of the school has been significantly strengthened over the past year. Further details will be available at the Annual General Meeting in October, after our formal audit has been completed.

The members of the Finance Committee are: Eran Elizur, Treasurer; Joel Guralnick, Alan Peretz, Norman Miller, Ari Shiff, Mark Zlotnik, Rick Cohen, Jeff Klein, and Neville Israel.



Fundraising

Sue Hector, Chair

The fundraising committee has been busy this year with friend-raising events that focus more on building community and have more modest financial goals. The first of those was the women-only Improv Night in November with local comedian, Dan Joffre. Our event chairs, Jennifer Shecter and Robbie Chesick, did a superb job of prepping the performers so they knew exactly what to poke fun at for our audience of mothers and grandmothers. It was a super successful event and great fun was had by all in attendance.

The second event was our annual Bingo night - a favourite of parents and kids alike. The big gym was packed with parents, grandparents and children and our busy Bingo chairs Deborah Youngson, Lauren Kahn and Andie Baron did an excellent job of making sure every player's needs were met with food, pens and bingo slips. Plans are already underway for 2009's community bingo night.

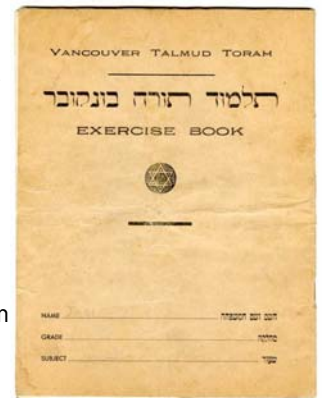
The final event for the Fundraising committee was Spring Fair 2008. This year we were blessed with no rain (unfortunately, there was no sun either). As in past years, the midway was the main attraction for the younger set and the silent auction and DJ appealed to our pre-teens and parents. A very special thank you to Spring Fair Chair Guy Seeklus and his committee for attending to every last detail to ensure a smooth and fun day for all.



Alumni

David Bogoch, Chair

Major objectives of the Alumni Committee are to identify, locate and communicate with the alumni, those who attended and/or graduated from Vancouver Talmud Torah since 1948, and to strengthen the bonds between the alumni and the school.



Accomplishments this school year include:

Historical photos and alumni memorabilia have been on display throughout the year at school events, including Open Houses, Meet the Teachers evenings, the annual Chanukah concert, and in the alumni display case on the main floor of the school.

Zichronot, the alumni newsletter was published and distributed via mail and/or email to over 2,000 alumni and school stakeholders.

The alumni choir performed again at the annual Chanukah concert.

There was a major organization of the alumni database working on class lists, family trees, and the pre-1955 history of the school.

The alumni committee also presented a VTT class pin to each of the graduating students of the class of 2008.

My sincere thanks to all of the people who have volunteered their time, gave their energy and passion to making the alumni a strong, positive, driving force for the betterment of the school. It is our desire to keep developing a strong network of VTT families and friends.



Judaics

David Kaplan, Chair

This year the Tal Am Program was introduced in Grades 1 and 2. This is a 'spiral' Judaics program with instruction in Hebrew, meaning that each year builds on the knowledge of the previous year. This implies that we can only introduce one year of the program at a time from the lower grades to the higher. Next year (2008-9) we will therefore continue by introducing Tal Am in Grade 3.

In order to ensure successful implementation of the program our Grades One and Two teachers attended a professional development institute last summer and again in the winter. This year our Grade Three teachers will attend the institute. We are fortunate to have the skilled and dedicated teachers to deliver this rich content program.

We have seen the power of Tal Am in Grade One and Grade Two this year. Our students have more knowledge of Judaism and are further ahead in language acquisition using this program than the previous program. Knowledge is acquired through a variety of activities, using each of the five senses. In addition to studying from textbooks, students use music, games and visual aids to learn the Hebrew language and to develop a keen understanding of Jewish concepts and values.

Students develop their Hebrew and heritage literacy in a gradual and spiraled process, building new ideas and concepts atop an expanding foundation of knowledge. The program gradually helps foster Jewish identity by allowing children to explore their Jewish roots and traditions in a fun and exciting manner. By making the study of Hebrew and Judaism relevant to the children's everyday lives, the program enables them to develop a true appreciation of their heritage and understand the need for continued, lifelong Jewish study. (www.Talam.org)

In June, the Board adopted a definition of a Vision For Excellence in Judaics which will guide us as we continuously upgrade the quality of education and experiences we offer.

Our Grade four students participated in a year-long distance education pilot. Every week the students learnt the book of Joshua via the big screen with "Morah Semadar" at Israel's Lookstein Institute. As video-conferencing tools were used, teacher and students could see and talk to one another. This program received positive feedback from both faculty and administration. Given the success of this pilot program, distance learning through video-conferencing will probably be more widely used at our school over time. Many thanks to Board member Stan Shaw, Head of the Board's Technology Committee, for the many hours he invested to make the program feasible, and to the anonymous donors who financed it.

Our wonderful new VP of Judaics, Judith Wolfman, joined the administration team this year. Judith was well-known to our teachers through her work at the Jewish Federation in teacher professional development. We look forward to supporting her many initiatives in Judaic studies.

This year, a Judaics search committee was convened and conducted an extensive fourteen-month world-wide search for a school Rabbi who would be engaging to students, model best practices to teachers, relate well to parents and would make a career in Vancouver. Thanks to Cathy Lowenstein and the committee members, we were able to access candidates throughout North America and beyond and ultimately were fortunate to hire what we felt to be the ideal candidate – Rabbi Matthew Bellas, a native Vancouverite who is returning "home." We are excited that Rabbi Bellas will be joining us and look forward to experiencing his enthusiasm and knowledge.

Many, many thanks to members of the search committee for the hours spent searching, interviewing and discussing. Much appreciation to the members of the Judaics committee who researched leading schools and helped craft the vision of excellence for Judaics adopted by the Board.

Parent Committees

Heather Sirlin-Kenney, Chair

The purpose of the PPP is to provide all the "extras" to the students, in particular with regard to Jewish holidays. PPP is responsible for administering the 12 volunteer hours required by each VTT family. While the PPP is made up of many volunteers, all grade and class representatives are also part of the PPP and are paramount in recruiting volunteers and organizing many of the events.

Some of the many events offered by the PPP include: classroom Shabbat challahs, Sukkot juice and cookies, Hannukah gifts, Tu'BshVat dried fruit bags, Passover seders, Shavuot ice cream, Purim treats, Lag B'Omer sandwiches, Sports Day water and chips, Annual student school supply group purchase, year-end staff event.

PPP activities are funded completely by PPP fundraising such as hot lunch, gift wrap, kippot sales, school supply sales, and PPP cheques cashed when volunteer hours are not completed.

The purpose of the Ruach committee is to spread a little extra "Ruach" (spirit) in the school and promote the community spirit and "hamish-ness" that makes VTT special. Some of the events provided by Ruach include: opening day tea/coffee in the playground, welcome treats for teachers on the first day of school, new parent tea, gift boxes and mentoring, hot lunches, Chanukah candle sales, Teacher Appreciation luncheon, Passover chocolate sales, end of year staff luncheon. Ruach activities are also self-funded through fundraising events.

The purpose of the Staff Appreciation Committee is to give the parents and board members an opportunity to show our faculty and staff how much we appreciate the effort and care they show our children and the school. Appreciation Committee events are funded by the Ruach committee's efforts.

Bargaining Committee

Joel Bellas, Chair

This portfolio deals with the negotiation of a collective agreement that outlines the contract under which the teachers at Talmud Torah work. The Board's negotiation team meets with its Association counterpart to reach this collective agreement. Ideally, we try to have a new collective agreement in place before the current one expires. If that is not achieved, then the old agreement is used until the new agreement is finalized.

The current contract expired August 31st, 2007. A steering committee was put together by the Board and made up of board members, the administration, and other qualified and interested individuals. Its initial task was to meet and draw up a set of articles for negotiations. Additions or deletions and other changes to the current agreement were set out in these articles. The Association's

team completed the same task. These articles were exchanged at the initial meeting of the two bargaining teams over a year ago. Over the course of the next year, many meetings were held, and I am pleased that it came to a successful conclusion before the start of the 2008/2009 school year. My thanks go to all the members of the Negotiating Team and the Steering Committee.

The Employer's steering committee was composed of: Ari Shiff, David Kauffman, Cathy Lowenstein, Alan Peretz, Alan Shuster, Joel Guralnick, Paul Pulver (gatekeeper) and myself as chairperson. The Employer's bargaining team was: Colin Gibson (our legal counsel from Harris and Co.) as the chief negotiator, Mark Maibauer, Paula Boddie, the VTT administrative team and myself at the outset. The steering committee was called upon for advice and strategy throughout the process. It proved to be invaluable. My thanks to the finance committee for its input.

Human Resources, Doug Pulver, Chair

The Human Resources Committee's role is to guide and support the Administration with regards to the administration of the collective agreement and other human resources issues. We also negotiate the terms of employment of the Principal and other administrators. The HR Committee is headed by Doug Pulver and adds members as needed. Thanks to board member Michelle Gerber for her great assistance this year with the HR committee.

The Human Resources portfolio has been a busy one this year. We have been involved, along with other members of the Board, in addressing administrators' terms of employment and providing assistance to the Negotiations Committee in connection with the renewal of the collective agreement with the Teachers' Association. We have also continued to advise the administration on human resources issues and association concerns as they arise.

Governance

Gary Lyons, Chair

The members of the governance committee are Gary Lyons, Joel Guralnick, & Sorel Leinburd.

The role of governance is broad and covers the following areas:

- Board leadership and development
- Succession planning and recruitment of new board members
- Provide background information to the board on school structure and policy
- Review of board effectiveness
- Policy & By-law review and implementation
- Ensure that all board & committee activities are aligned with the strategic plan
- Assist with any legal Issues that arise
- Ensure that the School is structured to comply with existing and future legal requirements

While this has been a quieter year for governance than in the past, we have completed a number of initiatives:

- Insurance review has been completed and coverage increased.
- Board organization chart has been completed and will be used to realign the various committees so as to facilitate the board working together to achieve our common goals.
- Assisted in the relationship with the Beth Israel on the potential site re-development and school expansion.
- We are very pleased with the efforts of our nominations sub-committee. We have attracted very high quality individuals to the Board and will continue with this effort.

House Committee

Joe Khalifa, Stanley Yasin

The House Committee is an advisory group committed to helping the administration with issues relating to maintenance, security and operations of the school building. In 2006/07 we completed significant work regarding the school's lighting, air quality, windows, doors and many other facets of the school building facilities. This year was a quieter year as no major house issues arose. The summer was a busy time as many classrooms were improved to accommodate the increase in the number of students.

While in previous years the house committee played a hands-on role, we are delighted with the leadership role that Mark Maibauer, VTT's Director of Operations, is assuming with regards to house issues. Space allocation as the student body grows, and improvements to the aging building will continue to be a work in progress.

This year the house committee struck a new committee to explore the feasibility of long-term house issues, including parking, expansion of the building and other issues necessary as the school population continues to grow. Stay tuned for reports on this initiative in the months to follow.

