



SHAI
SEPHARDIC
HERITAGE ALLIANCE



לשנה טובה

VOICE OF SHAI

SEPTEMBER 2011

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear SHAI Family,

As SHAI begins its historic 20th year of existence, I am honored and humbled to have been elected President of our Board of Trustees. I joined SHAI as a sophomore in high school and co-founded our Young SHAI division. Since then, I have witnessed the growth of an organization that is like no other.

An organization which has been at the core of our community's development, SHAI has developed partnerships with local schools, synagogues, Jewish organizations, and government. The SHAI name is met with respect and recognition within our community and the community at large. The SHAI Scholarship Fund, which assists students who demonstrate a financial need for higher education, has distributed over \$1.3 million to more than 1,000 students. As the single largest non-profit donor to the Great Neck Senior Center, under the direction of Vice President Parvaneh Khodadadian, we provide free programming, transportation and food for more than 150 Persian Jewish seniors. Our partnership with local schools has resulted in open forums with the Superintendent of Great Neck Public Schools and administrators of local private schools.

SHAI reaches across multi-generational lines in offering Farsi classes for young children, conducting community-wide blood drives and providing clothing for hundreds of local Jewish needy people through our annual Hannukah clothes and toy drive. SHAI also promotes and sponsors health and wellness seminars, environmental forums, and youth activities. SHAI is proud to host events for young professionals through the Young SHAI division and through sponsorship of the New York Chapter of 30 Years After, which promotes youth involvement in American civic life. We honor and bring to light our children's exceptional achievements at our bi-annual gala dinner. SHAI also boasts a strong presence at the annual Celebrate Israel Parade, and sponsors events held by the Persian Culture Committee and the "Ma Va Shomah TV," bringing musical and Norooz concerts as well as live theater entertainment for the community.

Our accomplishments are many. Yet we cannot sit back and rest on our laurels. We must continue to look to the future and to keep the needs of our young families in mind.

SHAI's continued focus going forward will be to strengthen all that the SHAI name is recognized for and to expand our programming to further involve the next generation. When our founders first built this organization, it was with their children in mind.

In closing, I am reminded once again of Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's words: "It takes a village to raise a child." SHAI is the perfect platform from which our village, our community, can promote our children's well-being. I look forward to continuing on the road to community and belonging for our children. For our future.

Thank you for your continued support as we embark on this journey together. May you all be inscribed in the Book of Life for a year full of health, happiness and prosperity. L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu!

Sincerely,

Pargol Khadavi
President
SEPHARDIC HERITAGE ALLIANCE INC.



SHAI

Board of Trustees

Sephardic Heritage Alliance Incorporated (SHAI), a non-profit community-based organization, has elected a new Board of Trustees to serve a two year term through 2013. Since its inception in 1992, SHAI has organized an array of events and programs geared toward meeting the needs of the Iranian Jewish community on the North Shore of Long Island.

Newly elected officers are:

SHAI President: Pargol Khadavi

Vice presidents: Raymond Eshaghoff,

Parvaneh Khodadadian, Rebecca Yousefzadeh Sassouni

Treasurer: Joseph Amirian

Secretary: David Pour

President Pargol Khadavi notes that "SHAI is the only community-based organization that is dedicated to educating and assimilating our local Persian Jews into our greater surrounding community."



Standing, L to R:

Morris Mehraban, Rafael Sassouni, Treasurer Joseph Amirian, Hercul Harounian, Secretary David Pour, Michael Harounian, Fred Ohebshalom, Shahram Delafraz, Ben Cohenmehr, Robert Gilardian, Vice President Raymond Eshaghoff, Raphy Farzan-Kashani, and Raymond Iryami.

Sitting, L to R:

Regina Ajodan, Joanna Eshaghoff, President Pargol Khadavi, Tania Eshaghoff-Friedberg, Claudine Amirian, Vice President Parvaneh Khodadadian, Parisa Bokhour, Jacqueline Harounian, and Vice President Rebecca Yousefzadeh Sassouni.

Camera Shy:

Saeed Amirian, Eleanor Askari, Kambiz Damaghi, Erika Goldstein, Dalia Harooni, Fred Lalezarzadeh, Lilly Nejat, David Ohebshalom, Khosrow Sassouni

SHAI

and the Salute to Israel Day Parade:

An Annual Tradition



Stretching from 59th Street through 79th Street along 5th Avenue, the 63rd Celebrate Israel Day Parade drew thousands of marchers and spectators. Once again, SHAI boasted a robust presence of more than 350 marchers, from our youngest to our senior community members.



Our three buses were overflowing. SHAI's 20 foot by 30 foot flag attracted the attention of all major news media, including over-head news helicopters. We marched in unison, waving flags and wearing matching royal blue tee shirts provided compliments of SHAI as we demonstrated to the world that regardless of efforts to delegitimize her, Israel remains our spiritual homeland.



Gratitude is in order to immediate past President Shahram Delafraz, chair of SHAI's Parade Committee, for his tireless dedication in making SHAI's presence most memorable.



Young SHAI After Hours Event



On August 10, 2011, Young SHAI hosted "SHAI: After Hours," a summer social event for students and young professionals. Two hundred guests filled the private indoor and outdoor terraces of Sky Room Times Square.

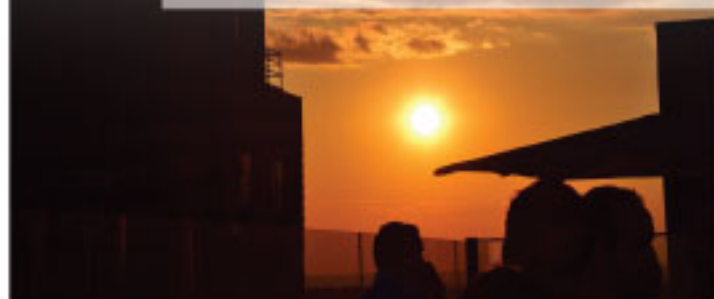
As the summer sun set, students and young professionals from the New York Metropolitan area joined together for drinks and music to celebrate the launch of SHAI's new Facebook page.

Although the event was originally scheduled from 6 - 9 pm, many guests stayed well past 11 pm. The outstanding response and positive feedback from guests exemplifies the strength of the young Sephardic community and the welcomed need for similar events in the future. The event was organized in part by the Iranian Jewish Club of NYU, a partnership SHAI began earlier this year, to further bridge the gap between last generation Iranians and first generation Iranian Americans.

Event Co-Chairs: Ashley Emrani & Daniella Lavian

Event Administrators: Chantal Elnkaveh, Bryan Kimiabakhsh, Lisa Lavi, Michael Ramin, Chelsea Sassouni, Bobby Shamsian, Davina Simhaee, Jonathan Peykar, Stephanie Torkian, & Eleana Yousefzadeh.

Photographer: Shauna Delafraz





SHAI Hosts Successful Education Panel

SHAI was the proud coordinator and host of a community-wide forum last fall regarding literacy and the ongoing importance of reading with children. Entitled, "Assuring Your Child's Academic Success: Relationships through Reading, Reading with Your Child", the event was made possible by a wonderful collaboration between SHAI, the administration of Great Neck Public Schools, the Great Neck Library, and dedicated volunteers. The audience packed the Main Library Multipurpose Room and included nearly 100 community members hailing from many different schools and demographic groups. The United Mashadi Jewish Community co-sponsored the event which was organized by SHAI Board member, Rebecca Yousefzadeh Sassouni.

The Panel included several noted authorities on education and literacy. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Dolan, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education Dr. Stephen Lando, and Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education Ms. Kelly Newman each prepared excellent presentations with useful tips for parents on incorporating conversations regarding reading into their family's lives.

Dr. Dolan spoke about the importance of aligning "text-rich classrooms" with "text-rich homes." More specifically, Dr. Dolan addressed the importance of building skills in reading non-fiction. Stressing the distinctiveness of non-fiction sources, Dr. Dolan suggested that readers begin with particular chapters, skimming the headings first, pre-reading the questions. All these are preferable to trying to read non-fiction from cover-to-cover.

Dr. Lando spoke about ways to engage middle school and high school students in conversations about reading. Dr. Lando advised that parents step back and let their teens choose what to read. He further advised parents to ask open-ended questions regarding their

children's reading, even feigning ignorance to enable the teen to explain the subject to his or her parent.

Ms. Newman spoke in detail about the reading curriculum in the Great Neck Schools since partnering with Teacher's College. Ms. Newman explained the initiatives in our classrooms that support children's individual strengths and weaknesses as readers and writers. These are based on established "research based principles for classroom practice" which are largely informed by the research of Dr. Richard Allington.

Following the presentations by our Superintendents, audience members were fortunate to have the benefit of presentations by the Librarian of the North Shore Hebrew Academy, Ms. Michal Malen, the Children's Room Librarian Mr. Justin Fuchs, and Reading Specialist Ms. Barbara Spun. Great Neck Public Schools Licensed Certified Social Worker Ms. Shahnaz Goldman artfully moderated the panel's discussion and the follow up questions from the audience.

Ms. Malen spoke of ways parents and children could engage one another in conversations over time regarding books and series. Ms. Spun explained the importance of modeling reading, acting, and intonation with even the littlest of learners. Beginning reading at an early age correlates to future reading ease. Mr. Fuchs presented the numerous resources available on line and in the library for identifying proper reading materials. Included are websites that read books aloud online, which can be especially useful in households where more than one language is spoken. In addition, it was noted that the library catalog now includes downloadable books that may be put on ipads and nooks at no charge.

As SHAI's mission has always focused on education, SHAI will continue to host education related events in the near future.



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75 CENTS

GN Park District Receives New Village Green Tree from SHAI

By Michele Bernstein Siegel

On June 24, 2010, Great Neck was ravaged by a severe storm which brought down thousands of trees, utility poles and power lines. The Great Neck Park District's Village Green was hit extremely hard with beautiful, old trees completely obliterated. Some of the new Victorian lighting had been destroyed and the new fountain demolished by the fallen trees, as well. Making the best of a bad situation, almost 100 new trees, in total, are expected to be planted by spring 2011.

The Park District will have an additional tree, thanks to the Sephardic Heritage Alliance Incorporated (SHAI), a non-profit community-based organization dedicated to meeting the needs of the greater Iranian Jewish community on the North Shore of Long Island.

Since its inception in 1992, SHAI has reached out to develop partnerships with local schools, municipalities/governments, synagogues, and other Jewish organizations. SHAI Vice President Pargol Khadavi stated: "As the only community-based organization that is dedicated to educating and assimilating our local Persian Jews into our greater surrounding community, we are happy to give back to the community which has given us so much. Following the devastation left by the microburst, our tree dedication is a small token of our partnership and appreciation for all that Great Neck has to offer."

Commissioner Ruth Tamaris appreciatively affirmed, "The Great Neck Park District is extremely grateful to the continuing efforts by the Friends of the Parks Foundation to raise funds for the restoration of the Village Green to which the Shai organization generously responded."

At the tree dedication in December 2010, SHAI President Shahram Delafraz reinforced to the Commissioners that "SHAI is looking forward to many years of continued respect and admiration for what the Village Green stands for." We all look forward to a future with new generations of beautiful trees in the Village Green.



In attendance at the tree dedication were (from left): GNPD Commissioner Ivor R. Segalowitz, SHAI President Shahram Delafraz, GNPD Commissioner Ruth J. Tamaris, SHAI board members Parisa Bokhour and Rebecca Sassouni, SHAI secretary David Posa, SHAI VP's Pargol Khadavi and Parvaneh Khodadadian, GNPD Commissioner Robert A. Lincoln, Jr. and GNPD Superintendent Leonard Cellura, Jr.

Our Soldiers Speak

The following excerpt was written by Sergeant Benjamin Anthony, a reservist in the Israel Defense Forces and founder of Our Soldiers Speaks, a non-profit NGO dedicated to educating the Jews of the Diaspora about the mission of the IDF with fact-based insight into Israel's military campaign. SHAI hosted Sgt. Anthony at Ahavat Shalom on Shabbat morning, August 27, 2011. SHAI is most pleased to host Sgt. Anthony at Temple Israel of Great Neck on Thursday, December 1, 2011. Details of that upcoming event will soon follow.

Some ten days ago, I was invited to meet with three of the SHAI board members in Great Neck, New York. Our meeting was one conducted in an atmosphere of focus, with a palpable sense of mission dictating the direction and tone of the conversation. Our respective groups were to collaborate with a view to assisting Our

Soldiers Speak in their effort to bring the proud truth of Israel soldiers from the front line of combat to Diaspora communities across the English speaking world.

It was immediately apparent to me that Our Soldiers Speak and SHAI spoke with a united voice, one that champions the importance of strengthening the links between those Jews living within Israel and the Jewish communities that exist beyond her borders. The meeting concluded with each party granting their respective assurances. SHAI would grant me audience at a major synagogue within Great Neck. I would appear on that platform with a view to providing a positive and truthful message about the Israel Defense Forces, the battles we face on campuses throughout the United States and the obligation upon Jewish communities everywhere to ensure that their children and grandchildren embark upon their college careers imbued with the knowledge

of and historical appreciation for the importance of the State of Israel.

Our minds met, we shook hands and parted company, only to meet again this past Shabbat at Temple Ahavat Shalom. It seemed to me that there was no disparity between what we hoped to achieve. Yet upon entering the Synagogue, I was politely asked to don a tallit, something that is not a tradition within the Ashkenazik community from which I hail. This constituted the first difference between our traditions.

Shortly afterward, other cultural differences were pointed out to me, such as the tradition that dictates that men ought not to cross their legs whilst sitting during the services in a Persian Synagogue. Differing traditions that were a curiosity for me. Following that came a kind introduction of myself by the Rabbi of the synagogue - an introduction conducted entirely in Farsi. Yet another difference, one in which I took a marked interest. As such, I became acutely aware of the cultural differences that exist between Jewish communities of European descent and Jewish communities of Middle-Eastern descent. Yet, it is all too easy for one to concentrate one's energies upon the task of identifying differences among Jews. My service in Tzahal, the melting pot of Israeli society, has taught me the virtue of focusing on the similarities that bind the Jewish people together.

It was upon taking the podium that I noted, with silent, visceral confidence that when the subject of discussion turned to Israel, the IDF and the proud representation of both, there truly existed no barrier, no differences of opinion, between myself and the members of the Persian community.

As those present at Ahavat Shalom graciously lent me their attention for the duration of my address, one could positively feel the pride that this community has in Israel and her existence. Gone was any notion of difference. Blurred entirely became that oftentimes, tragic divide between Ashkenazi and Persian Jews. Replacing those was a sense of total solidarity centered around the subject of Israel and a mutual respect and admiration for the commitment we as Jews, one small but proud nation, demonstrate on a daily basis. My lecture was immediately followed by a kind translation of my words, and as I listened respectfully, but without comprehension, I was struck by the following realization. We, the Jewish People have found ourselves scattered 'L'arba Kanfot Haaretz' - to the four corners of the globe. Typically we have been scattered following a dreadful twist of historical

circumstance. The Ashkenazi communities of the world know that to be an absolute truth, as do the Persian communities, as do the Sephardic and many more beside. Throughout our sojourn among the nations, there has been one hope that has sustained us as a people across millennia - the hope that we would one day return to Zion and to Jerusalem. We as a people have an obligation, duty and responsibility to nurture, protect and be united in the defense and flourishing of our Homeland and those members of the IDF who watch over her for all our sake. Such was the message I conveyed this past Shabbat. It is a message I have worked to spread for some 5 years now.

Whilst meeting the members of Ahavat Shalom, two things became abundantly clear to me. The first was that the unity and solidarity that exists between the Persian, Jewish community and Israel is one that is truly unbreakable, unwavering and unconditional. The second is that such support can never be impeded by the absence of a common language, nor by the need for a translator; for when it comes to the subject of Israel, there can surely be no time for division among our people. My very presence in Ahavat Shalom, sponsored by SHAI, certainly demonstrated to me the importance they place upon the very same ideas. We face an uncertain time in Israel at the moment. As a reservist, I often ponder what may be required of us in the defense of our great Homeland. There is but one certainty that I will carry with me from this day forward, added to my collection of enduring signs for encouragement.

With solidarity such as that demonstrated by SHAI, with the level of activism championed by SHAI, with the educational initiatives promoted by SHAI and with the rejection of differences, in favor of the spread of solidarity exemplified by SHAI, with friends like SHAI, we in Israel have nothing to fear from our enemies.

SHAI constitutes an example to me, a lesson learned by me and a principle I shall surely pass along to the members of my unit, the next time I am called upon to stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

I thank G-d for the efforts undertaken by your organization, and I, in turn, thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with Israel. May we all go from strength to strength. May we do so together. May we soon know Shalom Al Yisrael.

For more information regarding Our Soldiers Speak please visit:

www.oursoldiersspeak.org

Make an impact with a gift of education!

SHAI counts on your continued support to further the service to the needs of the Persian Jewish Community.
Please accept the following contribution to SHAI.

Recommended amounts \$36 \$52 \$180 Other

Please mail me additional information about SHAI

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Check enclosed. Please make checks payable to:

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