

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...THE PINE BROOK JEWISH CENTER!

The Pine Brook Jewish Center is the very proud recipient of two Gold Awards from the New Jersey Region of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Norman Glikin Synagogues of Excellence Program. Both awards were earned in the category of Youth Education, more specifically, in Nursery School programs. To qualify for consideration by the Norman Glikin Synagogues of Excellence Committee, each entry must initially meet the basic criteria stipulated for its respective award category. In addition, each entry must present a) some extraordinary characteristics, b) certain unusual and outstanding aspects, or c) achievements which go beyond the expected norms, in order to receive recognition and an award.

On behalf of the Pine brook Jewish Center, Roberta Ginsburg, our dedicated Nursery School Director, submitted two entries to be considered for an award and both were chosen for a gold award. Her first entry described the Nursery School's Family Integration Program. One of the Nursery School's main goals in recent years has been an effort to not only teach the child but reach the family as well – regardless of their religious affiliation and/or membership status with the synagogue. According to Roberta, "it's important that we make the families feel connected." The Family Integration Program includes various activities such as family art projects which are offered after school, art activities for the preschool parents offered during school hours, early morning activities for the preschooler and a parent, and the Parent Buddy Program. All programs have been very well received and well attended. As clearly stated in the entry by Roberta Ginsburg, "the entire family of each preschooler plays an integral role in the Pine Brook Jewish Center Nursery School. Due to the fact that the preschool is the first opportunity that has brought many of these young families back to the synagogue since either their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and/or wedding, the preschool finds itself in a wonderful position to help in guiding these families to embrace synagogue life once again."

Roberta's second entry on behalf on PBJC, which also won a gold award, was the Yom HaAtzmaut Celebration. The PBJCNS provides its students and families with the tools necessary to connect with Judaism and the State of Israel. In honor of Israel's birthday each year, the preschool transforms the main synagogue social hall into a trip to Israel. Food crafts, souvenirs, Israeli singing and dance and Hebrew words, all play an integral role in this very comprehensive and interactive experience. Parent volunteers are the key to its success and they are always willing to help out.

As recognized by the Norman Glikin Synagogues of Excellence Committee, these two programs are a sampling of the creative and innovative programs, and wonderful opportunities available at the Pine Brook Jewish Center. It truly is a place for everyone to explore and develop their Jewish identity. In the future, we hope to have many more gold awards in recognition of the many significant events at our synagogue.

The presentation of the Glikin Awards was on Sunday, November 16, 2008 during the USCJ – New Jersey Region Biennial Convention, which was held at B'nai Shalom in West Orange.