

Local

B"H

What is MVP?

The Mitzvah Volunteer Program is a 5 week training program for kids in grades 6-7, that teaches future Friendship Circle volunteers how to interact with children who have special needs. Participants will learn about various disabilities, appropriate conduct when volunteering, the importance of giving back to the community, and the positive impact they can have on others.

The curriculum includes an overview of Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, and others. The program also features an Anti-Bullying Program, called "Upstander - Be an Upstander, not a Bystander."

Friendship Circle's training practices ensure that participants learn through many different formats, including games that make it possible to glimpse what the world looks like through the lens of having special needs.

Alongside a Senior FC Mentor (current volunteer), participants will get to create and plan their very own program for The Friendship Circle participants, and the 6th (final) MVP Session will be facilitating the event.

You're Invited!

If you would like to learn how to make a difference in the world, join us for 5 Sessions of MVP Training (+ Pizza) this fall!

When is it?

4 Sunday Evenings, from 5:00 to 6:15 PM
November 5, 12, 19, 26

Followed by the finale at
 Chanukah Carnival Sunday Circle
Sunday, December 3 from 12:00 - 3:00 PM

Sign up!

For more info or to register, contact Mushka

✉ Mushka@fctoledo.com
 ☎ or 419.509.0105

Friendship Circle is significantly supported by JFGT's Annual Campaign

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involving hotly contested political and cultural issues can only be held behind closed doors rather than in classrooms or at faculty meetings.

But when terrorists kill over 1,400 Jews, the choice to refrain from explicitly condemning those who perpetrated these unimaginable atrocities cannot be justified. I have no clue as to why DePaul, and so many other universities, failed to condemn explicitly the terrorism. Some might attribute it to the academy's love-affair with the concept of "intersectionality," which almost always

results in a negative stance toward Israel, even if not Jews as a whole. Or could it be just plain old antisemitism dressed up in a more "intellectually respectable" exterior?

Whatever the reason, by making this choice in the wake of Oct. 7, DePaul University has sent a clear message to its Jewish students, faculty, staff and alumni. I can no longer give the benefit of the doubt.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Toledo Jewish News, JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.

Welcome to Jewish Toledo
free welcome bags

Are you new to Toledo?
 Contact Marnie Younker at 419-724-0365 or marnie@jewishtoledo.org for your free welcome bag!

Happy Tears

By Lauren Sachs

Lauren holds a bachelor's degree in English and Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Social Work, from the University of Michigan. After completing advanced clinical training at Yale University, Lauren worked as a therapist and consultant in a variety of settings. During her time in Jewish Toledo, Lauren has received the Harry Levison Young Leadership Award and the Shining Light Award, and is currently a board member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo. Lauren is also the author of a forthcoming book about her late husband, his joyful approach to life and work as an oncologist, and how examining his life helped her better cope with her grief.

After losing my husband early in the pandemic, I experienced a profound sense of isolation and loneliness. While the pandemic and related restrictions designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 surely contributed to this sense of being alone in my grief, I have come to understand the ubiquity of this metaphorical quarantine. Indeed, as I have subsequently heard the stories of countless people coping with loss, I have learned that this sense of seclusion is not unique to those of us who lost our loved ones during the dark days of the pandemic. It seems a great irony that one of the most universal aspects of being human should feel like such a singular experience. As we are all mortal beings who will eventually face death in one way or another, I find it incomprehensible that the experience of loss and mourning should be one of desolation. Over the past three years, I have pondered my loss and reflected further on how our society addresses those of us who are bereaved. Through this process of introspection and examination, I have come to understand that a good deal of the loneliness of loss stems from the false belief that we will be unable to find community in our time of bereavement.

When someone experiences a great loss, friends and family of the bereaved seem to follow a very typical pattern. People who care for the person in grief typically take time to show their love and support in the earliest months following the loss. While many others may wish to provide aid, not everyone comes forward to address the griever as so many feel uncomfortable and ill-equipped to openly address a person coping with loss. Moreover, even amongst those who are able to overcome their fears of stepping forward, the window of time that would-be supporters show up to check on the bereaved is very narrow. Indeed, most people who take the time to show up shortly after a loss quickly return to their normal lives while the bereaved person must try and grapple with a new and heart-wrenching reality. Though the intentions of those who care for the bereaved are certainly good ones, these common dynamics further exacerbate the grieving person's sense of abandonment.

Despite what may seem like an unavoidable reality in the wake of intense loss, I have come to believe that finding community is not only possible – but is actually an indispensable element in healing from loss. In my particular circumstance and given my strong connection to my Jewish identity and community, I have come to characterize this search for fellowship as "Finding My Tribe." While I gained a great deal from the outpouring of support from my local Jewish community, over time I found other essential outlets and built an even broader network in my grief. With a professional background in mental health, I was keenly aware of my need for emotional support following my husband's death and, therefore, started seeing a therapist shortly after my loss. At that time, I recall my therapist encouraging me to consider joining a spousal loss support group and directing me toward our local hospice for this purpose.

Once I got over the initial nervousness of sharing my story in a group setting, I discovered a powerful sense of kinship amongst my fellow support group members. While the meeting participants had incredibly diverse backgrounds and histories of life and loss, the sense of affinity and connection I felt with my fellow widows and widowers was unmistakable even from my initial sessions. Indeed, I soon developed a deep bond with members of the group and looked forward to the sessions as a place to feel seen, heard and understood. While the timeline and nature of each person's grief journey is unique, I feel compelled to share about my experience of finding a bereavement community as it has been such a key element to my healing. Just like the title of this column refers to the broad range of feelings experienced in grief, I have also found that our meetings encompass the full range of human emotions. As odd as it may sound, in this newfound community of grief, I have laughed just as heartily as I have cried and found a unique sort of acceptance and peace. I now know that expressing my genuine feelings with other mourners has been one of the most cathartic and healing parts of my loss and has led me down the path toward a higher love which can only be found through shared life, love and loss.