

THE Jewish Georgian

Outstanding films abound at the 15th Atlanta Jewish Film Festival

By Matthew Bernstein

In its 15th year, the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival again offers a copious array of extraordinary films that provide fresh perspectives on the place of Jews and Jewish history within our complex world. These cinematic jewels, from short films to myriad feature-length documentaries and narratives, arrive here from numerous cultures and countries, having been selected by our diligent evaluation committee.



Matthew Bernstein



The festival is a rare opportunity to see terrific movies, most of which would otherwise not be available to Atlanta audiences. It is, moreover, the chance to watch these films with an enduring community of intelligent and intensely engaged movie-lovers.

Given so many treasures, it's hard to pick favorites. For a fine documentary on the young men and women who defend Israel, check out *Beneath the Helmet: From High School to the Home Front*. See *Apples from the Desert* and, especially, *Félix and Meira* for dramas about Orthodox Jews stepping into secular life. *The Physician* is a German-made, English-language, big-budget, sweeping, old-style spectacular about a Christian English boy

who impersonates a Jew to study medicine in Middle Ages Egypt. *Zemene* movingly portrays a Jewish doctor and his ten-year-old Ethiopian patient.

We have two documentaries on American food: *Deli Man* energetically and affectionately profiles the people behind the counter, while *Streit's: Matzo and the American Dream* recounts the endeavors of an enduring family business. *The Outrageous Sophie Tucker* details the now forgotten but astonishing showbiz career of an Orthodox-raised Jewish entertainer who became "The Last of the Red Hot Mamas." Comedies include the documentary *Comedy Warriors: Healing through Humor* and the extremely funny, fish-out-of-German-and-Israeli-water

Anywhere Else.

Bottom line, I urge you to view as many films as possible; here are my standout recommendations.

24 Days

The 2006 news reports of the dire kidnapping of French-Jewish 25-year-old Ilan Halimi, just because he was Jewish and therefore presumably rich, were mind-boggling. Alexandre Arcady's intense reenactment of that ordeal is an emotionally compelling, edge-of-your-seat police procedural. The suspense is unrelenting, as Arcady cross-cuts among the African, Arab, and white French kidnapers, the massive police search effort, and the emotional unraveling of Ilan's family, whose members grow skeptical of the authorities' methods and mindset. This outstandingly played, pulsating docudrama about a major crossroads in the history of French Jews and the definition of hate crimes in France delivers a powerful, emotional wallop.

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Atlanta's Jewish history in your hand

By Jeremy Katz

Thanks to the generous support of the Weiller family, in memory of Margaret Straus Weiller, The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum is now putting the history of Jewish Atlanta in your hand. The "Historic Jewish Atlanta" app, which can be downloaded for free on any smartphone or tablet, tells the story of our community in a new, fun, and interactive way, using photos

from the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at The Breman Museum and articles written by professional scholars in the history community.

To download the app, simply search for "Historic Jewish Atlanta" in the app or play store on your smartphone or tablet. On the home screen, you can navigate to articles related to historic Jewish Atlanta or Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. You can also view all the historic locations on a map by clicking "Site Near Me," which will utilize your device's GPS capability to pinpoint your location and even give you



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Good People Fund recognizes tikkun olam spirit in Atlanta

In December of 2014, Naomi Eisenberger, founding executive director of the national tzedakah initiative The Good People Fund (www.goodpeoplefund.org) traveled to Atlanta to experience how two new grantees demonstrate their tikkun olam spirit every day and not just during the holidays.

During the 72-hour trip, Eisenberger helped volunteers from Second Helpings Atlanta (SHA) unload and deliver 1,000 pounds of fresh produce, prepared foods, and meats

housed at St. Patrick's Catholic Church. She then joined 450 volunteers to distribute toys and holiday cheer to a room of 750 eager kids at Amy's Holiday Party. Lastly, she fit in some professional development with Robyn Faintich, the Good People Fund's new education outreach consultant.



Second Helpings Atlanta President David Schoenberg, Lois Bessara, Naomi Eisenberger, and Eric and Jody Nathan

Founded 10 years ago by octogenarian Guenther Hecht, as a social action project for Temple Sinai in suburban Atlanta, SHA is today an independent, non-profit organization that utilizes more than 300 volunteers to

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Atlanta Jewish War Veterans place flags at the graves of Jewish veterans

Every year members from the Atlanta Jewish War Veterans' (JWV) Post 112 place flags at the graves of Jewish Veterans for Veterans Day.

The 2014 event took place Sunday, November 2, when hundreds of small flags were placed at Arlington, Crestlawn, and Greenwood cemeteries.

Past post commander Barry Benator led the post contingent at Arlington Cemetery and was assisted by Don Herrmann, Gabi Jones, Fred Taylor, Stefan Pollack, George Cohen, Abe Goldfarb, Mike Marable, Felicia Marable, Harrison Marable, and Jarrod Marable.

The Greenwood Cemetery contingent was led by Post Commander Richard

Chastain and Kimberly Davis, Sandy Springs Police Explorer Barbara Jean Shirley, Sandy Springs Police Officer Rodriguez Reeves, and Andrew Brodie.

At Crestlawn Cemetery, flags were placed by Sr. Vice Commander Robert Max, Jay Bailey, George Heart, and George's eight-year-old son, Avi Heart.

At the same time, the post co-sponsored the twice-yearly blood drive at Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta.

The Jewish War Veterans, the oldest national veterans service organization in the United States, maintains posts throughout the nation. For more information, contact LTC George Heart, Ret., at 404-817-1301 or 613heart@gmail.com.



JWV Post 112 contingent at Arlington Cemetery: Don Herrmann (from left), Gabi Jones, Fred Taylor, Stefan Pollack, George Cohen, Abe Goldfarb, Mike Marable, Felicia Marable, Harrison Marable, and Jarrod Marable.



At Greenwood Cemetery: Kimberly Davis (from left), Police Explorer Barbara Jean Shirley, Police Officer Rodriguez Reeves, and Andrew Brodie

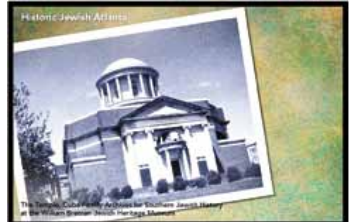
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directions to the sites. Each dreidel on the map marks a unique historic site that can be expanded by tapping it.

One unique feature of this app is the ability to create e-postcards that you can share with your friends and family through text messaging, e-mailing, or social media. The postcard tool allows you to take a picture or select a picture from your photo library and place it on one of six unique backgrounds that feature historic images of some of the sites in the tour. Users are even able to write text next to their picture to share their thoughts on the historic site.

The Breman Museum has created an



app that is the first of its kind. No other city in the country has an app devoted to its Jewish history. Additional historic sites will continually be added to the app to keep the content fresh and engaging. There are even plans to feature an online exhibition on the app in the coming year.

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pick up food, mostly from local supermarkets and some restaurants, 364 days a year.

"To know that Second Helpings Atlanta repeats this entire scenario several times each and every day is astounding," says Eisenberger. "Even more amazing is the fact that they operate with one part-time employee and a minimal budget. We couldn't help but wonder why this model couldn't be developed in so many more places, eradicating or reducing the seemingly impossible problem of hunger once and for all."

Amy's Holiday Party is a signature event of Creating Connected Communities (CCC). At the age of 12, Amy Sacks (now Amy Sacks Zeide) was stunned to learn of the theft of holiday toys at a local shelter. She immediately donated some funds to help replace those toys. The next year, as a bat mitzvah project, she organized Amy's Holiday Party, which brings together kids from local social service agencies and offers them a fun day, ending with the gifting of toys and games. This year's party was Amy's 20th; The Good People Fund was present and experienced what can only be called an extravaganza. What makes this event even more meaningful is that the teens who volunteer are responsible for much of what takes place. Amy's organization, Creating Connected Communities, provides leadership training to local teens, with a curriculum that focuses on homelessness and advocacy. The holiday party is part of the program.

"We knew Amy's story from many years ago and were not surprised to finally meet a gracious young woman who hasn't forgotten how small actions can have a significant impact," says Eisenberger.

As grantees, both groups receive funding (a combined total of nearly \$10,000 in 2014), as well as mentorship and professional guidance, to help them successfully grow and reach their full potential.

While Eisenberger's trip was filled with events, she also met and strategized

with Robyn Faintich, who now serves as the education and outreach consultant to the Good People Fund. Faintich brings over 17 years of Jewish communal professional experience in areas that include youth movements, day schools, community teen initiatives, early childhood education, congregational family education, and adult education.

In August 2010, Robyn launched JewishGPS LLC to help guide Jewish organizations in many aspects of Jewish education. Robyn is responsible for the Good People Fund's new education initiative, Grab 'n' Go Lessons, created to complement the existing curriculum. "Grab 'n' Go are *tzedakah*-based lesson plans that encapsulate a profile of a Good Person, an existing grantee, and include interactive discussion guides, a corresponding text study, specialized learning activities and suggestions for hands-on social action engagement," explains Faintich. "What sets them apart from other modular or instant lessons is that they profile a person or organization doing this good work, today."

The curriculum and Grab 'n' Go Lessons can be downloaded, free of charge, at goodpeoplefund.org/jewish-learning-about-tzedakah/gpf-grab-n-go-lessons.

Faintich has also been instrumental in the increase of GPF's social media presence.

Founded in 2008 and inspired by the concept of repairing the world, The Good People Fund responds to significant problems such as poverty, disability, trauma, and social isolation, primarily in the United States and Israel. It provides financial support and management guidance for small-to-medium grassroots efforts. GPF grant recipients are leading their non-profits with annual budgets less than \$500,000 and no professional development staff, but are driven to make a difference in their communities.

With its guiding philosophy that small actions can have huge impacts and its emphasis on the personal connection, the GPF has raised and granted more than \$6 million dollars since its inception.

Further information GPF and its grantees can be found at www.goodpeoplefund.org.



Amy Sacks Zeide, founder of Amy's Holiday Party, and Naomi Eisenberger, at the 20th Annual Party, with over 750 kids and 450 volunteers