CAMP ENDS BUT JEWISH COMMUNITY CONTINUES...
Up Close:
Tony and Robin Furman

Although Robin Robinson met Tony Furman at the University of Texas-Austin through mutual friends, they didn’t hit it off until a few years later when they met again in Houston at a wedding. That meeting led to their own wedding in New Orleans in 1987.

With a background in customer service and management skills, Robin moved into management roles in Dallas at a temporary employment company while Tony sharpened his financial services expertise at different banks. Their first son, Adam, was born in 1989.

Everything changed with a chance meeting at Cliff and Martha Eisenberg’s 1993 New Year’s Eve party. Although Tony had grown up in El Paso and had many old friends, he didn’t know Cliff.

However, in short order, the two were to become friends and business partners. Tony had an idea for a new financial services company and Cliff was interested in expanding his family’s finance business, so the men created Interstate Capital Corp., an invoice factoring company. Tony relocated from Dallas to El Paso and started right away and Robin soon joined him shortly before their son Jordan was born.

Over the next 25 years, the company grew to become a national leader in the industry, factoring over a billion dollars a year. In 2018, the company was sold to Triumph Business Capital and Furman and Eisenberg retired.

During their 26 years in El Paso, Tony and Robin have belonged to Congregation B’nai Zion and held many leadership positions at the synagogue, the Jewish Federation, and the community. Both have served on the board of Congregation B’nai Zion.

Tony has been president of El Paso’s JCC and serves on the Federation’s finance committee, the Texas Tech University Health Sciences President’s Council, and the El Paso Children’s Hospital Foundation board. Robin has been president of the B’nai Zion Sisterhood and the El Paso chapter of National Council of Jewish Women and served on the boards of the El Paso Holocaust Museum, the Jewish Community Foundation, and the Jewish Federation. She also served as co-director of the JCC’s Camp Shamayim with Leslie Beckoff and Lori Gaman. Her work with fundraising for the Federation comes full circle this month: a former paid staff member at the Federation as the campaign director, now she is the Federation’s volunteer 2020-22 campaign co-chair with Wendy Lanski.

The Furmans love to travel and spend time with family and friends. When they’re not on the road, they share their lives and home with three beautiful – and very energetic – Golden Retrievers. Tony enjoys sailing, scuba diving, photography, and building a fine wine collection; Robin enjoys volunteer work and “connecting people,” a skill that comes in handy with today’s growing Jewish Federation outreach.

What do you value most in your friends? Both: Honesty and loyalty

What might we be surprised to learn about your interests/hobbies? Robin was a stamp collector and Tony has visited 47 of the 50 states in the U.S.

Who’s your favorite Jewish hero? Tony: The Coen Brothers Robin: My father, Arvin Robinson, for his courageous fight against Parkinson’s Disease and his leadership in making movement therapy available to more El Pasoans

Where did you go to Jewish summer camp? Tony: I went to Camp Hess Kramer in Malibu, California, for nine years, as a camper and a counselor. In the early 1970s, many El Pasoans, mostly members of Temple Mount Sinai, attended Camp Hess Kramer due to a close bond between Rabbi Floyd Fierman and Rabbi Alfred Wolf, then chief rabbi of Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles.

Robin: I attended Camp Coleman in Cleveland, Georgia. My family was living in Mobile, Alabama, at the time, so I picked this camp due to its proximity.

What’s your favorite memory from camp? Tony: Attending Shabbat services on a hillside overlooking the Pacific Ocean Robin: Song sessions with lots of banging on table tops

Why were you interested in having your sons attend a Jewish summer camp? Both: We found that Jewish summer camps provided our boys with a positive Jewish learning and recreational environment that was not available in the city. The life-long friendships we made during our years at camp inspired us to send our kids to Camp Newman in Santa Rosa, California.

What’s the best thing about being part of El Paso’s Jewish community? Tony: Great institutions and congregations, exciting early childhood education options for young families. Robin: Sense of community and support during good times and challenging times

Tony Furman
Born: St. Louis Park, Minnesota Grew up: El Paso Parents: Loree and the late Norton Furman

Robin Furman
Born: Richmond, Virginia Grew up: Durham, North Carolina Parents: Beverly and Dr. Arvin Robinson

Children Adam, married to Wendi, San Antonio, where they are both dentists Jordan, married to Allison, The Woodlands, where he works in real estate for the Howard Hughes Corp. and she works as an e-commerce manager for Neiman-Marcus

What message do you each have for people who could be but who are not involved in the Jewish community? Tony: Get involved! Volunteerism is on the decline, and our community is not as large as it once was. You will find the work to be rewarding. Robin: Support our Jewish institutions with your time and resources to ensure our community’s vibrancy for future generations.

What’s your message for families contemplating sending their children to a Jewish camp? Tony: Start your children at an early age – pre-teen if possible. Starting camp early allows kids to develop a stronger, healthier and lasting Jewish identity before the dating years. I believe kids who attend “sleep-away” Jewish camps generally become better, more committed Jews who remain connected to Jewish institutions and the Jewish community throughout their lives.

Robin: Do it! There is no better way to learn about Judaism in a fun way. Not that Sunday school isn’t fun, but camp provides a wonderful environment that they will never forget! They also will make lifelong friends they will run into for years to come. Our community makes available scholarships for camp so look into that.
Film Festival’s special guests stir up excitement

El Paso’s 2020 Jewish Film Festival starts this month with more movies, more special guests – and more food, always a fun highlight at any movie theatre. “We wanted to expand on the past successes of the film series,” says Dana Frank, co-chair of the Jewish Film Festival Committee. “Attendance grows every year and many movies sell out.”

Frank and co-chair Jennifer Ehrlich have been working with their dedicated committee since the end of last year’s festival to come up with the best contemporary Jewish films for our community. “Dana and I both watch a lot of movies anyway, but we went through about 75 Jewish films before picking the series,” Ehrlich says. “It became movie overload.”

For the first time ever, the series featured a “pre-season” Brews and Views movie night featuring “Lesna” at the new Flix Brewhouse on November 2 with pizza, beer, wine and soft drinks.

Another first: the committee also planned a separate celebrity chef event. Israeli restaurateur and cookbook author, Chef Michael Solomonov, the 2019 James Beard-award-winning chef, will prepare dinner for 80 guests on February 20. While that event sold out quickly, the Israeli food theme continues February 23 with another special guest.

Filmmaker Roger Sherman will introduce his hit documentary “In Search of Israeli Cuisine” and answer questions during the complementary lunch.

The hit Netflix series “Shisel” has fans over the world – and local fans can hardly believe that the show’s young co-writer, Yehonatan Indursky, is coming to El Paso from Israel for our film festival. He will introduce selected episodes from the extraordinary series, which follows complex characters dealing with love, loss, and everyday life. If you haven’t seen the series, you should still come to the event on January 22 regardless. If you’d like, you could binge watch one or both seasons of “Shisel” – you can even try Netflix for free for 30 days.

Cindy Geoff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice

Shisel! A look at a fictional Orthodox family in Jerusalem

Todah Rabah to Our Volunteers

Borderland’s Café Europa
Carlos Gamez
Kosher Cowboys Band and Singers

ElPasoConnect
Amanda and Adam Levine

LEGO Marathon Committee
Co-Chairs: Lauren Eisenberg
Adam Rosenfield
Members: Kaitlin Conner
Nefi Malvanoado
Jeff Roth
Brian Small

The Jewish Voice of El Paso, published ten times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and have relevance and appeal to the El Paso Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor’s discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 300 words. Please email to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

TMS Sisterhood, the local chapter of National Council of Jewish Women, and the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center. She is survived by her husband, Tobor Schaechner; son Robert E. Goodman Jr. (Joanne); and daughters Ellen Goodman, Susan Novick (David), and Rebecca Krause (Alan); four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; stepdaughters Lillian Schaechner (Elaine Weissman), Audrey Iavi (Eitan), and Susie Schaechner; three step-grandchildren; and numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews. We extend our deepest condolences to all her family and friends as we remember Ann’s long-lasting contributions to our community.

Want to help cover the cost of your Jewish Voice? Be a “Friend of The Voice” and send your donation to The Voice, Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso, 7110 North Mesa, El Paso, TX 79912. Thank you!

Due Date for the February issue of the Voice: Jan. 13
Due Date for the March issue of the Voice: Feb. 13
Thank you from Sylvia Cohen
Retiring from 50 Years of Federation Service

I want to thank the Federation and all the people who sent gifts and cards acknowledging my retirement. Your graciousness will help with the transition.

Thank you again, Sylvia

New CD of Jewish songs out
February 4 at Rubin Center

Award-winning songwriter and UTEP math professor Larry Lesser continues his musical career with “Sparks,” a 24-song thematic album deeply grounded in Jewish values and texts. The 2020 CD will be released on Tuesday, February 4, with events at UTEP’s Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Arts. Visit larrylesser.com/sparks for details
You care about the Jewish community in El Paso and Las Cruces – otherwise you wouldn’t be reading The Jewish Voice! Do you ever wonder who comprises that Jewish community? What’s the breakdown by age or household size or level of observance? What percentage of people who identify as Jews affiliate with a congregation or take part in Jewish educational programs? Many of us have questions like these about our community. To better serve Jewish needs and forecast for the future, the Federation is launching the Greater El Paso Jewish Community Demographic Study to find out the answers to these and other questions.

**UTEP faculty project**

Funded with a generous grant from the Aaron Wechter Annual Memorial Scholarship at The University of Texas at El Paso through the El Paso Jewish Community Foundation, this landmark project is unprecedented in its scope. The research will be a valuable planning tool for congregations, Jewish organizations, the Federation and Foundation and ultimately help us better serve your needs.

The brief online survey will be conducted under the supervision of UTEP Assistant Professor Darlene Xiaodan Morales and graduate research assistant Karla Martinez. They composed the confidential online survey in cooperation with Federation leadership. Links to the online survey will be distributed through many channels; Morales and Martinez will compile and analyze the results later this year.

Morales, who is originally from China, completed her Ph.D. at Texas A&M University in 2015. As a social demographer, Dr. Morales’s research focuses on population studies, child health, and education. “Conducting a demographic study of Jewish population here is necessary and important,” she emphasizes. “Knowledge of the size, geographic distribution, and socio-demographic characteristics of the Jewish community will provide a context for us to understand the character, behavior, and attitudes of our community members.”

Karla Martinez, who received her undergraduate degree in mathematics at UTEP last May and is working on her master’s degree in sociology, is interested in pursuing a career as a demographer and statistician. “This project will provide a valuable glimpse in understanding the needs of a vibrant Jewish Community in the El Paso region,” she adds. Participation in the study is voluntary; you have the option to not complete the survey or to not answer specific questions. If you have limited access to technology, you can call the researchers at UTEP at 915-747-8471 to complete the survey over the phone or make other arrangements. If you have any questions about the study, you can reach the primary investigator, Dr. Danielle Morales (xdeng2@utep.edu) or the research assistant, Ms. Karla Martinez (kmartinez13@miners.utep.edu).

Answers will be kept confidential and will only be reported in anonymous results. All data will be held securely on a password-protected file on password-protected computers. Individual answers will be aggregated with other participants’ answers for reports. Taking part in the survey is easy and fast – and the more members of our community who take part in this anonymous survey, the more complete the results will be. Watch your email and mail for your link to the survey – and thank you in advance for your role in shaping the future of Jewish El Paso and Las Cruces.

Cindy Gryff Cohen
Editor
The Jewish Voice
Kids love local Jewish day camps

Camp Gan Israel - Las Cruces

At Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces, children of all ages and walks of life learn to love their heritage while enjoying the best camp experience. For one week at the beginning of every summer, Las Cruces and Southern New Mexico children get a full week of jam-packed Jewish fun and memories that will last a lifetime. Proud to be going into its sixth year, the day camp is already gearing up for the “Best Summer Yet” in 2020. Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces will continue its tradition of innovative ideas, creative programs, and new activities and field trips.

Alevy Chabad Jewish Center
Chabad - Las Cruces
2907 E Idaho Ave, Las Cruces
Directors: Rabbi Berry and Chenchie Shmukler
2020 Dates TBD
JewishLC.com/camp
575-524-1330

If five incredible years directing Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces have taught me anything, it’s that Jewish camp is the best and most memorable way to give children a good feeling and sense of pride toward Judaism and their Jewish identity. And that, actually, is the main goal of CGI — well, Jewish Pride, but also to give the campers so much FUN that they can’t wait for the next session to begin.

— Chenchie Shmukler
Director, Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces

Camp Gan Israel-El Paso

Chabad Lubavitch - El Paso
6615 Westwind Drive
2020 Dates TBD
Directors: Rabbi Yisrael and Channa Greenberg; Rabbi Levi and Shainy Greenberg
chabadelpaso.com
915-584-8218

Alevy Chabad Jewish Center
Chabad - El Paso
6615 Westwind Drive
2020 Dates TBD
Directors: Rabbi Yisrael and Channa Greenberg; Rabbi Levi and Shainy Greenberg
chabadelpaso.com
915-584-8218

The J Center for Early Learning
4408 North Stanton
June 1, 2020 through July 24, 2020
Directors: Meg Birk and Desiree Ainsa
thejelpaso.org
915-534-1234

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Director, Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces

CYJ Texas loves El Paso!

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2020 Camp Tuition: $4,500
CYJ’s Contribution: $2,000
You Pay: $2,500

(Additional tuition assistance available)

Register your child today!
www.cyjtexas.org/register

Contact us! info@cyjtexas.org or 713-723-8354

Camp Shamayim
The J Center for Early Learning
4408 North Stanton
June 1, 2020 through July 24, 2020
Directors: Meg Birk and Desiree Ainsa
thejelpaso.org
915-534-1234

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Director, Camp Gan Israel-Las Cruces
Jewish Summer Camps: Lifelong Jewish friendships and meaningful connections with the Jewish community and Israel

The most recent recipients of our Jewish Federation’s One Happy Camper grants may have attended different Jewish summer camps, but they all shared similar enthusiastic responses to their experiences.

One Happy Camper grants up to $1,000 are awarded to any first-time camper, thanks to our Federation’s partnership with the national Happy Camper organization. For information on the 155 Jewish camps eligible for One Happy Camper funds, visit onehappycamper.org. To apply for a grant or to contribute to the fund, call the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso at 915-842-9554.
BETTER TOGETHER

The Jewish Voice

8 | January 2020

Benjamin Ryan Maman
Born July 24
in Houston
Son of Maura Ryan and Yaniv Maman
Grandson of Suzi Davidoff and Carl Ryan, El Paso

Eva Ruth Karol
Born November 3 in New York City
Daughter of Adam and Rabbi Juli Karol and sister of Joshua Karol
Granddaughter of Rabbi Larry and Rhonda Karol, Las Cruces

Aurora Belle Louise Goodman
Born April 3
in El Paso
Daughter of Rachel Goodman and sister of Clara Goodman

Rose Duggins
Born May 25 in Las Cruces
Daughter of Sean and Rachel Duggins

Babies of 2019

FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS
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GECU Investment & Trust Services

Visit gecu.com/invest, or call 774.1765, today for your no-cost, no-obligation appointment.
Mitzvah Corps students: Volunteering and giving

With thanks to a generous grant from the Jewish Community Foundation, middle school students in Temple Mount Sinai’s Floyd S. Fierman Religious School apply the ideas of Tikkun Olam, or repairing the world, to work within the broader community. These Mitzvah Corps students create connections outside of the classroom, continually examining how their Jewish values impact the world around them.

Students embraced the history of our community through multiple visits to The Legacy at Cimarron retirement community, taking time to assist residents at the El Paso Senior Living and Memory Care center through dialogue and various art projects. During one visit, the group brought painting supplies and worked one-on-one with residents to paint abstract and landscape scenes. When they returned weeks later, this time with puzzles on hand, many residents expressed joy at seeing the students again. Volunteers at Legacy shared that the visit had been the subject of discussion for days!

Through visits to the Annunciation House and the opportunity to talk with a family of refugees, the seventh- and eighth-grade students in the Mitzvah Corps became aware of the needs in their broader community. They applied the Jewish concept of tzedakah, or justice and charity, and made blankets for those out in the cold. As the students approached 2020, they shared their thoughts on previous trips and why some were particularly meaningful for each of them. “My family is very involved with the immigration issue,” said one student. “It was good we went.”

Others in the class were ready to share ideas of what future trips might look like. “I think we should work with animals or maybe go to the movies and take the kids from the Crisis Center who may not get to go,” said another student.

While planning future community visits and volunteering, the students of the class were filled with ideas and enthusiasm.
Temple Beth-El Las Cruces Programs

Members of different faith communities in Las Cruces met for Temple’s “Welcome: An Interfaith Conversation” program.


Genie Milgrom spoke about her centuries-long Sephardic heritage in November in her talk, “My 15 Grandmothers.”

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Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

BETTER TOGETHER

The Jewish Voice
January 2020
FACES AND PLACES
3-DAY LEGO MARATHON

WORLD’S LARGEST LEGO MENORAH

JERUSALEM – CITY OF LEGOS
A BAG OF MARBLES
(French, English subtitles)
Co-sponsor:
El Paso Holocaust Museum
and Study Center

SUNDAY
JAN. 12, 2020
2:00 PM

WHAT WILL BECOME OF US
(English)

SUNDAY
JAN. 26, 2020
2:00 PM

THE UNORTHODOX
(Hebrew, English Subtitles)

SUNDAY
FEB. 9, 2020
2:00 PM

SHTISEL
An evening with
Yehonatan Indursky,
c-co-creator of “Shtisel”
(Hebrew, English Subtitles & English discussion)

WEDNESDAY
JAN. 22, 2020
6:00 PM

NEW FACE OF ISRAELI CUISINE:
AN INTERACTIVE FILM DISCUSSION

SUNDAY
FEB. 23, 2020
12:30 PM
LIGHT LUNCH FOLLOWED BY PRESENTATION

MICHAEL SOLOMONOV DINNER

THURSDAY
FEB. 20, 2020
6:00 PM
PRIVATE HOME
SOLD OUT

General Admission Festival Pass (5 Films) $36.00 / $10 per movie
Senior, Student, Military Festival Pass (5 Films) $25.00 / $7 per movie

Visit j ew ishelpaso.org/jff or call 915-842-9554 for more information on sponsorships or tickets