



BETH CHAVERIM

HUMANISTIC JEWISH COMMUNITY



What's Happening at Beth Chaverim

Ma Nishmah

Sunday, June 25th - St. Paul Lutheran Soup Kitchen, Evanston

Wednesday, June 28th - Bible Class, 2pm

Wednesday, July 5th - Book Group, 7pm

Saturday, July 8th - Deerfield Farmers' Market Gleanings

Wednesday, July 26th - Bible Class, 2pm

Friday, August 25th - Shabbat Under the Stars, Maplewood Park in Deerfield, 6pm

Saturday, August 26th - Deerfield Farmers' Market Gleanings

*We are continuing to evaluate the safety and logistics of in person events.
Please watch your email and our website for the most up to date information.*



You can find all of this information & more on our [website](#) under "[News & Events](#)"

Beth Chaverim Steering Committee

President - Carolyn Lewis

Secretary - Steve Rusnak

Treasurer - Deb Rusnak

Past President - Deb Rusnak

Members at Large - Dan Lewis, Alan Solid, and Rachelle Durrer

Marking Milestones

Human beings are the only creatures that recognize the passage of time. We parse it into divisible units; we measure it yearly, seasonally, monthly, and daily. We celebrate the accumulation of days, weeks, months and years even as we lament the speed with which they pass. The pandemic caused an anecdotal phenomenon where each of us have memory lapses about when things occurred or how much time has passed since we last did something or saw someone. Without our usual anchors that moor us to time's passage, we were adrift; and we continue at times to reel in confusion. As Jews, we may have an added layer of confusion because we mark time on both the solar and the lunar calendar. It may be the year 2023 but it is also the year 5783. We comment on how the holidays are "early" or "late" when in fact they are unchanged; it is only in juxtaposition to the solar calendar that the holidays take on different timing. We may mark the anniversary of a loved one's death on the secular calendar, or with a timely notice from the cemetery, we may mark it on an entirely different secular date that corresponds to the Hebrew date.

It is abundantly clear though that marking the passage of time, and the milestones that punctuate it, gives our lives a great deal of purpose and meaning. Babies start out their lives with their existence counted in days and then weeks, and ultimately months; Jewishly perhaps with a naming ceremony or circumcision. As they reach their second birthday, we count the days of their lives in years. And we celebrate! We measure children's growth by other milestones - first day of kindergarten, Jewishly with a bar or bat mitzvah, graduation from middle school, then high school and ultimately college. And we celebrate! The whirlwind of romance leads to counting time akin to a new child - how many weeks, then months and ultimately years since partners have met. And we celebrate! When we lose a loved one, the loss is deep and grievous. We revert to counting first the number of days, then weeks, then months, and finally years since their death. And we commemorate and remember.

Institutions, being human creations, mark important milestones as well. Beth Chaverim was founded in 2003 by eight families. This is our twentieth anniversary year. So we celebrate! My life has been forever changed by the community we have built together, by the relationships we have formed, and by our dedication to giving back as a core value of our existence. I celebrated our first bar mitzvah of the son of one of our founding families; years later, I married that son; and now he and his wife are expecting their first child. In the mirror of those events, I see my purpose reflected back at me. I hope you will join us at one of the community service projects, 20 for 20, and help mark this important milestone.



*B'shalom,
Rabbi Jodi*



Beth Chaverim Mission Statement

Beth Chaverim is a place for individuals and families to explore their Jewish heritage and traditions, to learn to think critically and independently about religious and theological issues, and to develop meaningful and relevant Jewish identities through education.

President's Column

A little over 14 years ago, a young(ish) couple (Dan and Carolyn Lewis!) brought their two children to the Panera in Deerfield to learn about the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community from its leader, Jodi Kornfeld. With a third child on the way, this young(ish) couple was looking for the right Jewish fit for their family, as the eldest was soon to be entering kindergarten. Within minutes of meeting Jodi, they knew for certain that they had found their home in Beth Chaverim.

I grew up as a Conservative Jew in central New Jersey, attending religious school from kindergarten through 8th grade, three times each week. I had a traditional Conservative Bat Mitzvah, was active in the Kadima and USY youth groups, and continued on for Hebrew High School long after nearly all of my classmates had stopped attending Hebrew school. Being Jewish in a secular community with a very small Jewish population brought me closer to my temple, as that was the one place where my connection to Judaism was shared with those around me. I immersed myself into my life as a Jewish teen and served on the board of my USY chapter for multiple terms. I attended regional dances with other Jewish teens and spent many weekends on Shabbatons, soaking up the opportunity to connect with Jews around the state through social, educational, spiritual, and social action platforms. But both within my family and myself, I was always connected to Judaism primarily for the community, relationships, and social action.

My husband, Dan, grew up in Skokie, surrounded by Jews of all denominations. Most of his friends and neighbors were Jewish. Dan grew up unaffiliated, never having been a member of a synagogue, not attending religious school, and never becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Culturally, he very much considered himself Jewish and was always engaged through community, relationships, and social action.

We ended up meeting each other on jDate, one of the first online dating sites for Jewish people, both feeling strongly enough about our connections to Judaism to search for a Jewish partner. As we grew to fall in love, we also grew to learn that deep in our hearts, we were both Humanistic Jews, yet at the time, had no idea what that was, no name for it, or that it even existed. Thanks to a Jewish co-worker of mine at that time, I learned about her experience growing up in Humanistic Judaism and Dan and I knew from then on that we needed to find a Humanistic congregation for ourselves.

President's Column (cont.)

Fast forward to May 2023—and fast it was. Here we are with one child completing her freshman year in college, one finishing up his junior year in high school, and another graduating from 8th grade and getting ready to start her high school career. For the past 14 years, we have had at least one child attending Sunday school each week, under the leadership of Rabbi Jodi and the educational guidance of numerous teachers, from high school students through adults. Over the past 14 years at Beth Chaverim, we have shared in community through Shabbat Under the Stars and Hanukkah parties, connected to our Jewish ancestral roots through shared Passover seders and the unrolling of the Torah scroll for Simchat Torah, watched our kids build friendships through weekly Sunday school classes, engaged in tikkun olam while cooking and delivering food for PADS and endless service projects, and shared in both joyous and sad life cycle events.

So while our journey to find our home at Beth Chaverim took some time, and while we are sad that our children are too grown to be students in Sunday school any longer, we are grateful for the 14 years of Humanistic Jewish education they received. The instruction our children received through their years in Beth Chaverim's Sunday school has prepared them to decide for themselves how Judaism does and will fit into their lives. Lora is away at college and, without us setting any expectations for her, she checked in frequently during Passover to ensure the foods she was eating were kosher for Passover. Parker is an active member of BBYO and has held multiple leadership positions over the years and in addition, will be working as a counselor at Camp Chi this summer. Marlee embraced her Beth Chaverim Holocaust studies education and brought her knowledge and leadership into her secular classroom at school, helping to educate her classmates and social studies teacher during their brief Holocaust unit.

As a family, we are looking forward to our continued membership in the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community. We know it might look a bit different now that our children are no longer in the school, but we know that we have found our forever Jewish home in Beth Chaverim. We will always be connected to Judaism for the community, relationships, and social action.

 Carolyn Lewis 

What's Happening at Beth Chaverim – Ma Nishmah

Donations

Rebecca Finkelstein in appreciation of borrowing Beth Chaverim's Torah

Chris Whittemore

Linda and Rich Horn



Laurie and Bob Matlin in honor of Rabbi Jodi in this 20th anniversary year

The Chessick and Mason families

Larry and Michele Rivkin in honor of Beth Chaverim's 20th anniversary

Leah Israel in appreciation of borrowing Beth Chaverim's Torah



Mazel Tov

Marlena Weheliye on her graduation from Evanston Township High School. She will attend Sarah Lawrence College in the fall

Aaliya Weheliye on her graduation from Evanston Township High School. She will attend Tulane University in the fall

Alexis Brill on her graduation from University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine

Robin Cheskin on his graduation from Kendall Culinary School

Deb and Steve Rusnak on the wedding of their daughter Elana

What's Happening at Beth Chaverim – Ma Nishmah

Todah Rabah

Dan Lewis for teaching our pre-K class

Tracy Wilson for teaching our middle school class

Samantha Field for teaching our early primary class

Marlena Weheliye for being our teaching assistant for the last four years

Maot Chitim volunteers: George Becker, Rachelle, Ross and Anastasia Durrer, Morgan, Quinn and Dylan Gross, Rabbi Jodi

As part of Good Deeds Day

Nancy Freedkin for making the cookies to be decorated for first responders, all the supplies and helping our students, and Barbara Ratliff for delivering the cookies

Sue Pinkus for helping our students make waffles for Hope House

Hope House donors: Alan and Rhonda Solid, Elyse Magill, the Fisher-Stawinski family; and Dan Lewis for delivering the breakfasts

Fill A Heart for Kids volunteers: Alan and Rhonda Solid, Penny Weinberg and Rabbi Jodi



Beth Chaverim Remembers

Lane Shore, husband of Debbie

Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine

“Humanistic Judaism is part of the New Humanism. It does not protect the culture of the past. It does not repudiate ancestral roots. It embraces them and makes them a home for humanistic convictions and humanistic integrity.”

(Humanistic Judaism Summer/Autumn 2007)

20th Anniversary Recognition



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

April 12, 2023

Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community

Dear Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld and congregation,

I am pleased to congratulate the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community on the celebration of its 20th anniversary.

Since its founding, the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community has been a spiritual home to thousands of Illinoisans. That influence is due in no small part to the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community's resilience and commitment to its community and values.

And of course, that we can celebrate such a storied history of the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community is a testament to the faith and connection of its congregation and staff.

I am honored to join the commemoration of the Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community's 20th anniversary. On behalf of the people of Illinois, I offer my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable celebration, and for many more great years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker", written over a light blue horizontal band.

Governor JB Pritzker

What the Mail Brought In

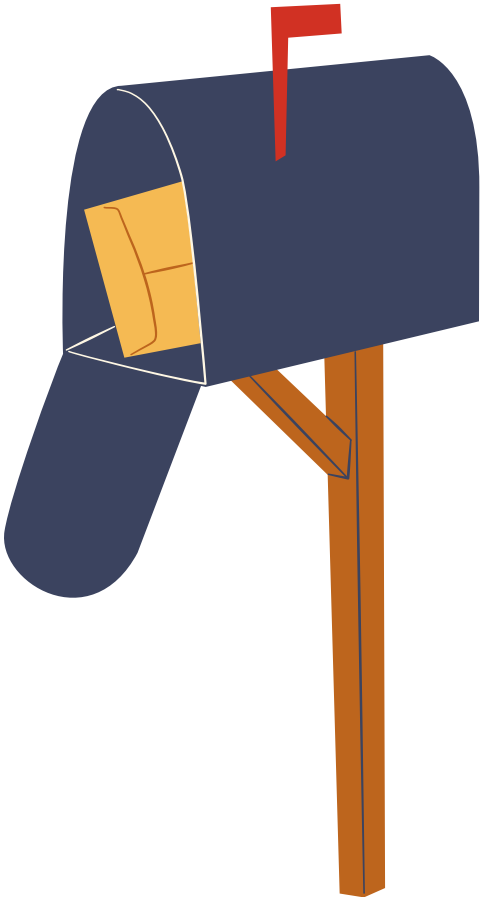
Hi Rabbi Jodi & Beth Chaverim Congregation,

Thank you for your recent breakfast meal donation to the Lake County Haven's shelter, Hope House on Monday, April 17, 2023. Our residents were incredibly grateful for the meal. It is so special for our shelter residents to know that members of their community care about them.

Your wonderful generosity and support for the residents of the Haven make a meaningful difference in the lives of the homeless women and their children we serve.



20 for 20! was
acknowledged by
Deerfield Neighbors



20 for 20!

at Beth Chaverim

BY RABBI JODI KORNFELD

IN HONOR OF OUR 20TH YEAR, Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community has planned 20 volunteer community service projects throughout 2023.

As a relatively small congregation, it didn't make sense for us to hold an anniversary gala. We've always been dedicated to community service, so we decided that our celebration would be giving, instead of getting.

The community service projects that Beth Chaverim volunteers have slated for this year include: assisting PADS (Providing Advocacy, Dignity, and Shelter) of Lake County by supplying breakfast bags for the homeless sheltered at First Presbyterian Church in Deerfield; sorting and packing food for Northern Illinois Food Bank in Lake Forest; and helping at Bernie's Book Bank, the leading provider of quality books to under-served children in the Chicago area.

Founded in 2003 by eight families, over the next two decades, Beth Chaverim has touched the lives of more than 100 families and individuals. In many ways, the congregation's 20th anniversary is an opportunity to attract and welcome young families and individuals who may not be familiar with Humanistic Judaism or know of our work. A generation has gone by since our founding, and we know there are people looking for giving opportunities that they can share with their children, so they can learn the value of being part of a community of people of similar beliefs and commitments.

Beth Chaverim means "House of Friends" in Hebrew. It is a place for individuals and families to explore their Jewish heritage and traditions, to learn to think critically and independently about religious and theological issues, and to develop meaningful and relevant Jewish identities through education. We identify social action as the way to be responsible members of the community.

To learn more about Beth Chaverim and our volunteer service opportunities, visit: bethchaverim.net.

MARTHA ABELSON
PHOTOGRAPHY

PORTRAITS | HEADSHOTS | BRANDING

Telling YOUR story, one frame at a time

martha@mabelsonphoto.com
312.576.6192
www.mabelsonphoto.com

Deerfield Neighbors / May 2023 9

Beth Chaverim Book Club

Please join us as we discuss the following books



On July 5, we will discuss "Signal Fires" by Dani Shapiro. Winner of the National Jewish Book Award, it tells the story beginning with "An ancient majestic oak stands beneath the stars on Division Street. And under the tree sits Ben Wilf, a retired doctor, and ten-year-old Waldo Shenkman, a brilliant, lonely boy who is pointing out his favorite constellations. Waldo doesn't realize it but he and Ben have met before. And they will again, and again. Across time and space, and shared destiny. Division Street is full of secrets. An impulsive lie begets a secret—one which will forever haunt the Wilf family. And the Shenkmans, who move into the neighborhood many years later, bring secrets of their own. Spanning fifty kaleidoscopic years, on a street—and in a galaxy—where stars collapse and stories collide, these two families become bound in ways they never could have imagined. Urgent and compassionate, *Signal Fires* is a magical story for our times, a literary tour de force by a masterful storyteller at the height of her powers. A luminous meditation on family, memory, and the healing power of interconnectedness."

(danishapiro.com)



In August we will consider "Hotel Cuba" by Aaron Hamburger. According to goodreads.com, "Fleeing the chaos of World War I and the terror of the Soviet Revolution, practical, sensible Pearl Kahn and her lovestruck, impulsive younger sibling Frieda sail for America to join their sister in New York. But discriminatory new immigration laws bar their entry, and the young women are turned back at Ellis Island. With few options, Pearl and Frieda head for Havana, Cuba, convinced they will find a way to overcome this setback. At first, life in big-city Prohibition-era Havana is overwhelming, like nothing Pearl and Frieda have ever experienced--or could have ever imagined in the rural shtetl where they grew up. As the sisters begin to adjust, their plans for going to America together become complicated. Frieda falls for the not-so-dreamy man of her dreams while Pearl's life opens up unexpectedly, offering her a taste of freedom and heady romance, and an opportunity to build a future on her own terms--though to do so, she must confront her past and the shame she has long carried. A heartbreaking, epic family story, *Hotel Cuba* explores the profound courage of two women who strive to create a new future in an enticing and dangerous world far different from anything they have ever known."

Past and Future Celebrations

We celebrated Passover with our second night community seder in person for the first time since 2019!



.....
SAVE THE DATE - OCTOBER 21



The annual FALL PRODUCTION sponsored by Religious Leaders United. This year will be a musical performance by an ensemble from Salaam-Shalom Project. According to its website, it is “Many religions. Many cultures. One Voice. . . . As folk musicians, we listen, teach, perform, and preserve our cultural treasures. Learning, respecting, finding common ground – this is what is means to be a musician, and it is how we engage with each other.”

Standing on One Foot

Judaism in roughly 140 characters

“The whole world is a very narrow bridge and the main thing is to have no fear at all.”
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

Adult Education

We will study biblical text mentioning or relating to animals. We will examine talking animals, the use of animals for sacrifices, the treatment of animals, and the centrality of animals to particular books of the Bible. This promises to be a fascinating look at the stories of real and imagined creatures, and how they advanced the political and theological agenda of the biblical writer.



Support Beth Chaverim through Donation Matching

Amazon has discontinued its Amazon Smile donation program. Thank you for everyone who has used it over the past number of years to generate donations for Beth Chaverim.

If your employer has a matching program for donations you make, please note that Beth Chaverim is a certified 501 (c)(3) organization; if needed we can supply the necessary documentation to receive matching donations.

Good Deeds Day & 20 for 20 Celebrations

Good Deeds Day is an international day of doing good deeds. Since its founding by Shari Arison in 2007 and its launch in Israel, it has spread to 108 countries around the world. She said, "I believe that if people will think good, speak good and do good, the circles of goodness will grow in the world." Our students decorated cookies for first responders, made dog tug toys from old t-shirts, and made breakfast for Hope Haven, a women's shelter in Lake County.



Fill A Heart for Kids



We made dog pull toys for the Anti-Cruelty Society



Alan and Rhonda Solid at the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade



We decorated cookies for first responders.



We made waffles with Sue Pinkus for a Lake County Women's Shelter

Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Laughing is a good first start

Humanists are often accused of being hyper-rational, over-analytic and lacking a spiritual side. It is an unfair and inaccurate claim. Positive humanism is just that, positive; it does not negate or undermine human emotions, our sense of wonder or our sense of awe. Yes, humanists focus on human reason, scientific evidence and knowledge as the basis for understanding this world. But we are hardly a humorless lot! Indeed we are often irreverent, and find that humor can get us through some of our darkest hours. Bernard Schweitzer wrote in “The Keys to Irreverent Comedy” in secularhumanism.org, “As for the overarching question—Why is it that humor cannot seem to leave religion alone?—the answer is: boundaries! Humor is (sometimes fatally) attracted to all kinds of symbolical, social, legal, behavioral, and literal boundaries. That is one reason humor latches on to the legal system, zeroes in on ideological divisions, enjoys breaking sexual taboos, targets literal border walls, and gets involved again and again in the rules, axioms, prohibitions, distinctions, and doctrines of religion. Humor is a trickster found at the threshold, the boundary, the place of transition. And like a trickster, the nature of humor is shape-shifting, evasive, and unpredictable. . . . [H]umor aims to subvert and weaken existing boundaries, as evidenced in the countless jokes at the expense of tyrants, bureaucrats, and popes. The world’s despots have forever feared the subversive sting of jokes and satires because it rattles (although it does not usually weaken) the foundations of power.” As Humanistic Jews, we can be guided by the words of Rabbi Sherwin Wine: “Laughing has always seemed to me more Jewish than praying.” So go ahead - enjoy the joke, challenge the existing power structure with humor, and have a good laugh!



Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Baba Ganoush

Recipe from (<https://cookieandkate.com/epic-baba-ganoush-recipe/#tasty-recipes-26511-jump-target>)

Serves: 6

Prep Time: 20 Minutes | Cook Time: 35 Minutes | Total Time: 55 Minutes

Ingredients

- 2 pounds Italian Eggplants (~2 small-medium eggplants)
- 2 medium cloves of garlic, pressed or minced
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, more if necessary
- ¼ cup tahini
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing the eggplant and garnish
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus extra for garnish
- ¾ teaspoon salt, to taste
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch of smoked paprika, for garnish



Serving suggestions: warmed or toasted pita wedges, carrot sticks, bell pepper strips, cucumber slices, etc.

Humanist Café - Food for the Mind & the Appetite

Baba Ganoush Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit with a rack in the upper third of the oven. Line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper to prevent the eggplant from sticking to the pan. Halve the eggplants lengthwise and brush the cut sides lightly with olive oil. Place them in the prepared pan with the halved sides down.
2. Roast the eggplant until the interior is very tender throughout and the skin is collapsing, about 35 to 40 minutes (this might take longer if you are using 1 large eggplant). Set the eggplant aside to cool for a few minutes. Flip the eggplants over and scoop out the flesh with a large spoon, leaving the skin behind.
3. Place a mesh strainer over a mixing bowl, then transfer the flesh to the strainer and discard the skins. Pick out any stray bits of eggplant skin and discard. You want to remove as much moisture from the eggplant here as possible, so let the eggplant rest for a few minutes and shake/stir the eggplant to release some more moisture.
4. Discard all of the eggplant drippings, drain and wipe out the bowl, and dump the eggplant into the bowl. Add the garlic and lemon juice to the eggplant and stir vigorously with a fork until eggplant breaks down. Add the tahini to the bowl and stir until it's incorporated. While stirring, slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Continue stirring until the mixture is pale and creamy, and use your fork to break up any particularly long strings of eggplant.
5. Stir in the parsley, salt and cumin. Season to taste with more salt (I usually add another $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon) and more lemon juice, if you'd like a more tart flavor.
6. Transfer the baba ganoush to a serving bowl and lightly drizzle olive oil on top. Lastly, sprinkle parsley and smoked paprika on top. Serve with accompaniments of your choice. It's also great on sandwiches!

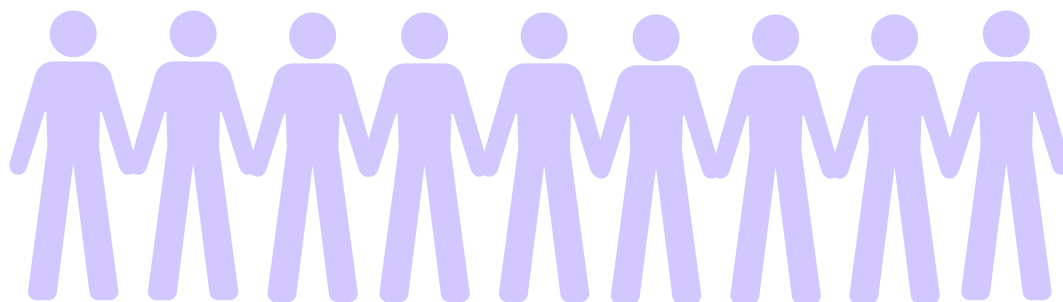
Can You Help?

Over the past few years, we have had several families within our community that have had a temporary set back, ie: a surgery, loss of a job, family crises, etc. "Helping Hands" is available to help with the needs of these families, either through delivering a meal, or driving to a doctor's appointment or any other minor needs a family could use. If you would like to be added to the list of members who will assist when needed, please email us and we will contact you when the need arises. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered already; it is greatly appreciated. Any family needing assistance can seek it by contacting Rabbi Jodi.



We are always looking for some assistance, large and small, for our events.

Please let us know if you are interested in helping.



Humanistic Judaism 101



- Defines Judaism as the collective historic experience of the Jewish people and promotes a community of shared Jewish values.
- Promotes the development of a strong Jewish identity, especially for those Jews who cannot intellectually or emotionally embrace a supernatural being, or who are unsure about the existence of such a being and want to express their Judaism in an honest and meaningful way.
- Emphasizes the capacity in all human beings to improve themselves and the world through learning and the performance of good deeds.
- Teaches that ethical behavior is conduct which enhances the dignity of every individual.
- Understands that ritual without meaning is simply empty ritual and that liberal Judaism is authentic Judaism without apologies to the present or nostalgic bows to the past. Beth Chaverim is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Did you know?

Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld is available to conduct life cycle ceremonies including weddings, baby namings, and funerals for members and non-members. Contact Rabbi Jodi for further information at:

(847) 945-6512

rabbijodi@gmail.com

Thank You for Reading!

This is a quarterly publication by



Beth Chaverim

Humanistic Jewish Community

Deerfield, IL (847) 945-6512

<http://bethchaverim.net/>

Rabbi - Jodi Kornfeld

Administrator - Linda Horn

Editor - Lindsey Grant



Beth Chaverim is proudly affiliated with:



Visit our website to learn more about us!

<http://bethchaverim.net/>

