

Editorial

Our city of Indianapolis continues to be a “happening” place with exciting events going on.

The 15th Annual Ann Katz Festival of Books and Arts is still in progress (see page 20). For the opening night of the Festival on Oct. 28, author and activist Letty Cottin Pogrebin was interviewed by local poet and psychotherapist Rusty A. Moe (see photos on page 2). Who would have expected a conversation on a book titled, *How to be a Friend to a Friend Who's Sick* to elicit so much laughter?

And the 17th annual Spirit & Place Festival (Nov. 1–10; www.spiritandplace.org) also has a few days left to enjoy. This Festival brings together artists, authors, entrepreneurs, neighborhood organizers, storytellers and scholars in a true community conversation with a diverse population through a variety of “never-seen-before” programs. One of those scholars this year is Rabbi Arthur Green.

On Oct. 13, I attended Indy’s inaugural Festival of Faiths (see article and photos on page 15). This uplifting event demonstrates that, locally, members of many different faiths desire to learn about and improve relations with one another. We hope the Festival continues and grows exponentially every year.

On Oct. 27 were two entertaining events. One was a fundraiser by the Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) with filmmaker Roberta Grossman who shared her delightful movie *Hava Nagila*. The



R. Grossman



other was the annual meeting of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society (IJHS) (see article and photos on page 18).

Hava Nagila had film clips of some surprising singers – a Who’s Who of well-known American entertainers – belting out the tune. These included Elvis, Bob Dylan, Harry Belafonte, Glen Campbell, Regina Spektor, Danny Kaye, Leonard Nimoy, and Connie Francis, who when asked if she has any Jewish blood in her replies with a grin, “ten percent on my manager’s side.”

Hava Nagila is much more than a song. A quote by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner sums it up nicely: “It is a melody that evokes new life and hope and joy. That’s a wonderful symbol for the Jewish people to have and for the rest of the world to think of as being a Jewish symbol.”

The movie is entertaining, educational and humorous, and because it covers some Jewish history going back to the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe and to Israel, it has some very old footage and famous entertainers, I expect it to become a classic.

At the IJHS meeting, Isaiah Kuperstein told a fascinating history of the old Beth-El building in Indianapolis. For example, once the money to build had been raised, “on May 15, 1923, an initial design was published in the *Indianapolis Star*...and that summer, the lot on the corner of 34th and Ruckle was purchased. Once the announcement was made, an immediate remonstrance by property owners in the neighborhood was organized.”

“The leader of this vehement remonstrance was the famous engineer Daniel B. Luten, who lived in the house (still standing) right next to the Temple’s site on 3357 Ruckle. This 54 year old engineer who invented the Luten Arch, which was used in concrete bridges all over the country, fought the Temple’s construction in every way he could. The main argument: there will be a drop in property values.”

Kuperstein explained that this strong opposition took almost a year to resolve. The cornerstone, still visible today, was laid in a small ceremony on May 5, 1924. The building was finished in the beginning of 1925 and dedicated the following Hanukkah (see Sidebar, right).

The building which later also housed Congregation B’nai Torah from 1958–1967 has been empty for the past four years and is in great need of repair. Kuperstein along with others would like to see the needed funds raised for its restoration.

“We have organized a non-profit organization called the Temple Heritage Center with a Board of dedicated individuals from both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities,” Kuperstein announced. “And, through the generosity of the City and the Mapleton Fall Creek

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1925 Beth-El Dedicated

“We dedicate Beth El Congregation to God and Country. In doing so, I am sure I express the feelings of my fellow congregants. In this act of dedication, it is our sincere hope that it will bring with it a revived interest in the ideals of the Synagogue. We need be quite conscious of the sacred trust we have inherited from our ancestors. We need become aware of our obligations in preserving the heritage, and passing it on to our generations, undimmed, undiminished, undefiled.... We behold at Beth El a Synagogue building that is a delight to the senses and an encouragement to the soul. But we may not sit back and be content with this great achievement, for the work of our Synagogue must go higher and higher.... We are conversant with the fact that it takes time for a tree to grow. So does it take time for an idea to take hold and stir us to sublime action... may the ancient glory of our people shine forth, as the rising sun, to give warmth and light to mankind.”

Dedication speech by Beth-El President Jack Goodman, Hanukkah 1925 ✨

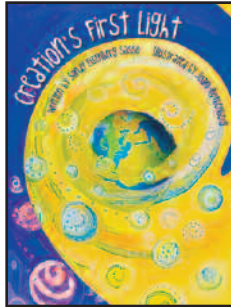
CDC, we’ve been granted \$190,000 to help stabilize the structure. The grant comes to us with a catch, however – we have to raise an additional equal amount from other private sources. The City wants

(see Editorial, page 10)

Sandy Sasso – a new look at the light of creation

Multi-award-winning author Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso releases her latest non-denominational children's book, *Creation's First Light* (IBJ Book publishing, \$17.95).

Beautifully illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg, this book not only tells of the first light, but also where one can still find it.



Sasso notes that "Few, if any, creation books talk about the light of the first day and how it differs from the sun and the moon. This book opens up a conversation about that special light that is not an artificial illumination or the visible light of the sun, moon and stars, but that inner light, the soul."

Two of Sasso's previous works earned recognition as Best Books of the Year by *Publisher's Weekly*, while one received a special mention in the *New York Times*

Book Review. Her last children's book, *The Shema in the Mezuzah* was selected as the 2012 Best Children's Illustrated Book by the National Jewish Book Council. Sasso's appeal is wide ranging.

"Rabbi Sasso has a brilliant way of communicating the deepest notions of the Jewish experience in the simplest and most elegant terms," said Mayim Bialik, Emmy-nominated *Big Bang Theory* actress and neuroscientist. "The notion of the light of Creation as part of every fiber of our existence will delight readers of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds."

Recently retired after 36 years as senior rabbi of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Sasso wrote *Creation's First Light* to encourage children and their families to discover where the extraordinary light exists in their life.

Creation's First Light is available for purchase on IBJbookpublishing.com and creationsfirstlight.com. More information and interactive content is available on Twitter (@CFLbook) and Facebook (*Creation's First Light*). A book review is forthcoming. ★



Sandy Sasso



J. Rothenberg

EDITORIAL

(continued from page 3)

to make sure that there is a group of stakeholders out there who will continue to support a sustainable use of this building."

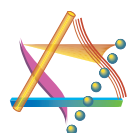
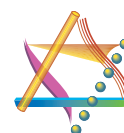
This reminded me of a front page story *JPO* published in our Nov. 12, 2008 edition about the Eldridge Street Synagogue (www.eldridgestreet.org) which opened in 1887 in New York City's Lower East Side (see photo below). The synagogue was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1996 and in 2010 after 20,000 donors and ten years of refurbishing, the rundown synagogue was rededicated. The restoration received nearly every major preservation honor and is now home to the Museum at Eldridge Street, which welcomes people from around the world for tours, school programs, concerts, lectures, festivals and other cultural events. What could be the possibilities for the Beth-El building?



Kuperstein has created a Dropbox site at www.tinyurl.com/templeheritagecenter with information about this Beth-El restoration endeavor that includes photos and a video of the building currently, along with an artist's rendering showing the potential of what it could look like if restored. He asks that if anyone can send or share photos or documents regarding the Temple, they can send them to: Temple Heritage Center, 2201 E. 46th St., Indianapolis, IN 46205 or e-mail to hq@double8foods.com. (On page 17 is one that I found.)

We wish our dear readers a light-filled Happy Hanukkah!

Jennie Cohen, November 6, 2013 ★



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