

## Shining Bright at the San Diego Hebrew Day's Diamond Jubilee Gala

By Kayla Swartzberg May 30, 2023

Hebrew Day's Head of School Rabbi Simcha Weiser says it best: "Without a Jewish day school, continuity of Jewish life would not be sustainable."

"Now, after 60 years of San Diego Hebrew Day inspiring our children, this is obvious to all."



*Rabbi Simcha Weiser speaking at the San Diego Hebrew Day's Diamond Jubilee Gala  
Photo Credit: Kayla Swartzberg*

This past week, the Jewish day school celebrated their 60th anniversary hosting a Diamond Jubilee Gala. With good food, good music, and even greater people—the event sparkled as the community honored their distinguished faculty, kindergarten teacher Alysa Segal and athletic coach Ray Mills.

“Alysa Segal,” Rabbi Weiser shares, “conveys joy in learning and growing, and affirm[s] the preciousness of each child.” Indeed, Segal adores teaching her class and especially loves to support her student’s accomplishments, big and small.

She says, “My students tell me that they were able to read the word ‘apple’ at the supermarket, or ‘stop’ at the stoplight. It’s my honor to help give them this entrance to the new world of reading.”

Not only that, but Segal is one of the incredible founders of ‘Kinder-Town’—a class project in which the kindergarten class built roads, a synagogue, a fire station, restaurants...an entire community. “Sadly, Starbucks didn’t make it,” Segal jokes, “But oh, these kids are amazing. They built the best neighborhood.”

“I’m so passionate about what I do. I’m so lucky.” And from her high-praise about her colleagues to her individualized greeting for each of her students—from handshakes to high-fives and hugs—it’s clear the school is lucky to have her too.

Ultimately, she reveals, “We’re like a family.”



*Alysa Segal (middle) being honored at the San Diego Hebrew Day’s Diamond Jubilee Gala  
Photo Credit: Kayla Swartzberg*

And Coach Ray Mills agrees. “I wish I went to a school like Hebrew Day,” he says, “these kids can run their own town, shopping and selling and creating things... it’s teaching them life.”

As an athletic coach at Hebrew Day, Mills understands the importance of sports for children, and cultivates teamwork, respect, and positivity. “You have to learn to be a good teammate and a good captain,” he shares.

“Most of all, you have to believe in yourself. You work hard to be successful.”

One poignant teaching tool Mills uses with his students is the metaphor of a “remote control.” He tells them, “Like a TV remote, YOU have the remote control to yourself. You have to learn to tell yourself the truth and be positive. Be grateful.”

Rabbi Weiser says that Coach Mills “makes children more aware of how their words and actions impact others.”



*Ray Mills (middle) being honored at the San Diego Hebrew Day’s Diamond Jubilee Gala  
Photo Credit: Kayla Swartzberg*



“[Our] teachers show their students how kindness connects one person to another,” He adds, “and why it is the greatest hallmark of Jewish community.”

Kindness is key, and the Gala’s distinguished alumnus, Stuart Katz, echoes a similar sentiment when speaking on his experience as a mental health professional. He notes that no one knows what others are going through mentally, so remaining respectful to all is vital to make the world better.



*Alumnus Stuart Katz speaking at the San Diego Hebrew Day's Diamond Jubilee Gala  
Photo Credit: Kayla Swartzberg*

“Our students learn that *Tikkun Olam* [repairing the world] begins with repairing *yourself* by becoming more empathetic, more kind and considerate,” Rabbi Weiser states.

And that, it seems, is what makes Hebrew Day shine like a diamond.