

OUR COMMUNITY

An IDF officer places new flags, each with a black ribbon, on the graves of IDF soldiers for Yom HaZikaron.

The Days of Yom

Federation and community partners plan public events for the holidays.

STACY GITTLEMAN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

IDF FACEBOOK

In its efforts to continue to provide Jewish Detroiters a way to virtually connect during the modern Jewish holidays leading up to Israel Independence Day, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, together with JFamily of the Jewish Community Center and the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills, invite all to virtually attend “Two Countries. One Family — Days of Memory and Meaning” April 8, 13 and 18. Advance registration is required by going to www.jewishdetroit.org/yom.

Yiftah Leket, senior community *shaliach* (emissary) for Federation said because of the persistence of the pandemic, most events will be virtual, except for a space-limited socially distanced hike and a take-home picnic in Beverly Park on April 18.

Much of the programming has been planned by Detroit’s *ShinShinim* — young adult Israeli ambassadors who spend a gap year between high school and their service in the Israeli army

as educators in Jewish communities around the United States. Detroit’s *ShinShinim* come from the Central Galilee region of Israel, where several attended Camp Tamarack as younger children through the Federation’s Partnership2Gether program.

Leket hopes that the community can shake off Zoom fatigue and virtually attend these events that culminate 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 18, with a live concert from Tel Aviv by recording artist Kobi Oz in partnership with Milwaukee Jewish Federation and the Jewish Federation of Greater Oklahoma City.

“We wanted all these events to be inclusive as possible,” Leket said. “You do not have to be Israeli to celebrate holidays such as Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut. In the coming months, I along with our *ShinShinim*, hope to deepen Detroit’s Jewish community with Israel by having conversations about Israel’s complex culture and society.”

YOM HASHOAH

The events begin with a Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) event,

7 p.m. Thursday, April 8, on the museum’s website, holocaustcenter.org, where one can register. It will include tributes from Holocaust survivors, 2G and 3G survivors and local clergy. The HMC will also have a social media campaign, where people can post photographs of themselves lighting memorial candles on Facebook or Instagram with the hashtag #HMCRemember.

HMC Director of Events Sarah Saltzman said while the physical presence



Sarah Saltzman

of large gatherings at the museum is missed, having an online forum means that survivors and their children and grandchildren with Detroit roots who live out of town can participate and remember the victims.

“Although we are not physically together, we are connected by our shared commitment to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust,” Saltzman said. “Teaching the lessons of the Holocaust is central to our organization ... We must each stand up for

one another in the face of hate to prevent acts of violence, and genocide.”

YOM HAZIKARON & YOM HAATZMAUT

This year’s Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day) ceremony, 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 13, will focus on stories of the siblings of fallen soldiers or victims of terror attacks.

For American Jews, Leket said Yom HaZikaron provides them an opportunity to support and comfort Israelis on one of the country’s most solemn days.

“Yom HaZikaron is not an easy day for Israelis, and many of us have personally lost friends or loved ones,” Leket said. “We invite the rest of the community to join us in commemorating this day.”

To celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut (Independence Day), JFamily will host an outdoor hike from 10 a.m.-noon Sunday, April 18, at Beverly Park in Beverly Hills. To assure COVID safety, families wishing to attend need to register in advance to reserve one of eight time slots limited to a maximum of six families for each guided 15-minute hike. The community is also invited to come to the park to receive a take-home picnic, complete with a blanket, and a QR code leading to Israeli recipes and a playlist of the latest Israeli tunes.

“Hiking is the classic outdoor Israeli activity, and we could not think of a better way to begin to reconnect in person than on the family-friendly path of Beverly Park,” said JFamily



Shoshana Fain

Outreach Coordinator Shoshana Fain. “This is a great way for families who are excited to get together in person again to celebrate Israel’s independence.”

UNDERSTANDING ISRAEL

After the festivities are over, Leket hopes conversations will continue to develop a better understanding about the Jewish state.

“They are the most powerful tool we have in terms of Israeli education,” said Leket. “The *ShinShinim* not only educate Jewish students here from a peer perspective about Israel, but also help teens become more connected to their community here.”

Before moving to Detroit, Leket was an Israeli educator who taught both Jewish and Arab students. The concepts of these more modern Jewish holidays — which commemorate fallen members of the Israel Defense Forces and then the independence of the Jewish state — were tough for his Arab students.

“These Arab students are a part of our society and want to study and learn with Jews,” said Leket. “But they are never forced to take part in Yom HaZikaron ceremonies and may have challenges with the words of Israel’s national anthem.

“These are the very real and complex topics we have about being Israeli. As emissaries from Israel, I hope the *ShinShinim* and I can open discussions and conversations about the complexities of Israeli society and culture with teens and adults here in Detroit. Israel goes beyond eating falafel.” 📍