

PRESS RELEASE

AWARD WINNING JUDAIC STUDIES TEACHERS AT GRAY ACADEMY OF JEWISH EDUCATION RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS JESNA AWARD

October 1, 2007 - Rory Paul, Head of School and CEO for Gray Academy of Jewish Education and Anita Wortzman, President, Winnipeg Board of Jewish Education are pleased to announce that Anat Ekhoiz and Carol Leszcz are the recipients of the prestigious Jewish Education Service of North America Inc.'s (JESNA) eighth annual national **Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education**. Carol Leszcz teaches Junior Kindergarten and Anat Ekhoiz is a high school Hebrew and Judaic Studies teacher.

The Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education are designed to recognize teachers in communities across North America that make a commitment and demonstrate exceptional achievement in the field of Jewish education. The awards honour outstanding classroom-based teachers in formal Jewish educational settings (early childhood through grade 12).

Gray Academy has a storied history of winning this award for the last six years with Vice-Principal Lori Binder receiving it in 2001, along with teachers Rochelle Gamliel and Joyce Kerr who were the honoured recipients in 2006. In acknowledging this recent recognition, Ms. Binder says "we are very proud of Anat and Carol and our Judaic Studies curriculum is strengthened because of their dedication, commitment and passion for what they do at Gray Academy." Lori Binder also observed that along with over sixty colleagues across North America for this year's award, two other educators, Roslyn Hirschhorn (St. Louis) and Rabbi Yamin Benarroch (Montreal) are graduates of the Winnipeg Jewish day school system.

In nominating Anat Ekhoiz, Lori Binder believes that she embodies teaching excellence as someone who "has risen to the forefront of Hebrew language teaching and most recently she has been recognized for this through her position as an adjunct school consultant for the NETA Hebrew program. We are so proud to have one of our teachers mentoring educators from other North American day schools. Anat has an amazing rapport with the students she teaches in high school. She instills a love of learning in students through the respect she gives them and through the effort she puts forth every day in making learning relevant and interesting. Anat has gone beyond her duties in the classroom by getting involved in many aspects of school life." Ms. Ekhoiz has become a key coordinator for one of the most successful programs at Gray Academy, the *Jewish Awareness Retreat* for senior students in Grades 10-12.

On personal reflection, Anat says that "Judaism speaks of the power of one. One individual can make a difference. Being a teacher, I have the privilege of touching so many lives: the children, the parents, my colleagues. The list continues. This is my role in *Tikun Olam*, in bringing a change and making a difference in this world. The beauty of

being a teacher is that it allows you to witness process and growth. It is hard to describe the feeling at a graduation ceremony or when you run into a former student in the street.”

In nominating Carol Leszcz, Ms. Binder says that “she has brought the Junior Kindergarten program to the forefront of educational excellence through the many programs she has initiated, and more importantly through her love of children she has made the program one that is well thought of and sought after in Winnipeg's Jewish community. Carol is not only loved by the children in her classroom, she is well respected by parents.” Carol has successfully built a full program which integrates both General and Judaic studies in a theme-based program which centers around the Jewish calendar. Within this program there is an emphasis on learning the Jewish cycle of the year, with Hebrew language and general studies integrated throughout.

When asked to describe her unique contributions to the field of Jewish education, Ms. Leszcz responds: “I am passionate about art and utilize all that I have learned throughout my career directly in my classroom as an effective learning tool. Throughout the last several years I have attended workshops and conferences on art, music, and reading for young children. More recently I have been involved in assimilating special needs children into the classroom, particularly for those children who have recently been diagnosed with autism. I am a strong, vocal proponent that every Jewish child has a right to a Jewish education.”

The Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education were first established by the Grinspoon Foundation in 2000, and joined by Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation in 2002.

Gray Academy of Jewish Education is a JK-Grade 12 university preparatory school that places equal value on Jewish and General academic programs, and provides opportunities to nurture the emotional well-being and spiritual development of all students.

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