
Anshai Torah Introduces New Director of Education Jason Cathcart School is Already in Session!

by Deb Silverthorn

While the summer season is filled with vacations and time off, Anshai Torah bids a *Bruchim Habaim* and welcome “home” - the Anshai Torah home - its new Director of Education Jason Cathcart and his family. For Jason, school is already in session as his desk is busy, his bookshelves filling, and his task-list grand with “to do” dreams to make happen.

The Cathcarts: Jason, wife Vicki, and their children Jordan, Daniella, and Samara have made their way west to join the Anshai Torah family – bringing with them a lifetime of love of Jewish learning, teaching, and sharing. His experiences of a decade as Youth Director at the congregation where he grew up, and most recently as Director of Congregational Learning at Bnai Zion Congregation in Chattanooga, TN is the perfect premise to serving in his new role with us.

“We are so excited to be here and ready to be rolling,” said Jason, a native of Charlotte, NC where he was raised at Temple Israel and later in Orlando, FL at Congregation Ohev Shalom. He is the son of Terri and David – of blessed memory – and the brother of Phil, also involved in religious school and youth group programming. “My Mom loved going to services and the temple is where I grew up. I want to enhance that love in the children of Anshai Torah and from all we’ve seen, and everyone we’ve met, there’s a lot of love in this congregation.”

“Jason brings to Anshai a ton of passion and excitement for Jewish education and a host of new ideas and innovative ways to connect with our youth,” said Congregation Anshai Torah’s Rabbi Michael Kushnick. “We look forward to incorporating the best models from his experiences in camp and technology, and I believe our students, our parents, and our teachers – and we the leadership – will have a lot to learn in a very spirited way.”

It was his participation in religious school and USY from Kadima through Senior USY conventions that spurred Jason's interest in a career in Jewish education. After a trip first down a career path of media studies, Jason redirected after working at Beth David Synagogue as a Kadima Adviser, Congregation Beth Shalom in Memphis, and then for Camp Ramah.

While working at a Camp Ramah pilot program, which grew into Camp Ramah Darom – the Georgian summer home to many Anshai children – Jason met his bride-to-be Vicki spending three years with the experience formulating what would become his future.

“Jewish camp is an experience for a child not to miss,” said Jason, excited that his son spent part of this summer as the first second-generation camper at Darom. “It doesn't matter what size or kind of community you come from, at camp everyone is totally immersed in the best of Jewish life. You wake up in the morning and your bunk-mates are Jewish, and the connection to our Peoplehood is huge. It's really where many of us find our 'Jewish voice.' For me, I also found my path.”

“Jason is incredibly respected throughout the Jewish community and anyone who has heard that he is joining our staff guarantees we will be more blessed than we can imagine,” said Rabbi Kushnick. “We are so excited to have Jason here, and while it's summer 'vacation,' we are headstrong in the mode of prepping for the coming school year.”

Reviewing and setting the curriculum for Anshai Torah's Religious School, which benefits children from kindergarten through high school – the only Conservative Jewish Hebrew High program in the area – Jason is impressed with what has been put in place. “We have an excellent program here, and it's long been a strong academic curriculum. We'll be looking throughout the year to see what changes we might make, not in a critical manner but a mindful review.”

A review from Alef to Tav, with the enthusiastic eye, and heart, of Jason Cathcart.