

**Diamonds & Dice to Honor Stuart Blaugrund
Anshai Torah Celebrates Casino Style**

by Deb Silverthorn

A night of games and gambling, honor and high praise will honor Stuart Blaugrund at the annual Diamonds and Dice event from 8 to 11:30pm on Saturday, December 2, at Congregation Anshai Torah.

"We're super excited for an evening to celebrate our congregation and Stuart's dedication. He's been instrumental in the growth and success of the shul since the very beginning and he's definitely one to bet on. We're grateful to have him in our corner," said Kim Velevis, co-chair of the event with Jenn Hersh.

Casino games, music, drinks, a raffle and nosh will make for a memorable evening. A silent auction features a week's accommodations in Breckenridge, CO, 2018 Pre-Season Cowboys and Stars packages, a year supply of Republic Tea, High Holiday parking, a Trader Joe's kosher bundle, a party at Urban Air Trampoline Park, and more.

"Anshai is an incredible place at which we've become immersed, and each project has led to another. Anything to support the synagogue, I want to be there," said Hersh, who with Velevis and their committee—Jennifer Abrahams, Debbie Arbesman, Beth Berk, Cynthia Brooks, Trudy Cohen, Debbie Cohn, Gretchen Edwards, Shawn Frank, Kim Gold, Amy Gross, Bethany Last, Jill Levy, Kimberly Mabel, Joelle Novick, Jay Post, Jeff Romick, Andrew Seigel, and Melissa Welcher—is prepping the night of celebration.

The son of Kate and Maurice, of blessed memory, Blaugrund is an El Paso, TX native. Always connected to Jewish life, he was raised at Congregation B'nai Zion and involved in BBYO's Zielonka AZA chapter and served as an executive officer of both chapter and regional USY.

Blaugrund, who graduated from El Paso High School, made his first trip to Israel on USY's 1976 Pilgrimage Tour. "I'll always remember the moving moment davening on July 4, when we heard about the IDF's daring overnight rescue to free hostages at Entebbe International Airport," he said. "That was the beginning of my deepest commitment to Israel."

An alumnus of the University of Texas with a BA in Political Science and JD from the University's Law School, he has had an illustrious career – first with the firms of Epstein, Becker & Green P.C., Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP, and now with Dentons US LLP. "The concept of justice

has appealed to me since I was a child and I always wanted to be an attorney," said Blaugrund.

In El Paso, about 10,000 Jews once made the city home, including border merchants and soldiers stationed at Ft. Bliss, which was a major training base during WWII, the Korean and Vietnam wars. With several El Pasoans moving to North Texas, at Anshai Torah Blaugrund doesn't need to look far to find old friends, Alice Sichel Goldberg – his former JCC Camp Shama-yim director and childhood friend Michael Kasner, among them.

"Stuart's Mom was the quintessential Jewish Momma and his father a wonderful man, both definitely a part of the Jewish connection that's always been a huge part of his life," said Kasner, who lived three doors away in El Paso. "His Mom was always proud and despite pleas she not brag, she'd always talk about her son who had done so well. He's always exemplified the meaning of *mensch*."

Now Vice President-Legislative Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, Stuart is a graduate of the Dallas Regional Chamber's Leadership Dallas program. He's been dedicated in service to Anshai Torah, the Dallas Holocaust Museum and Center for Education and Tolerance, Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas' Attorneys Division Campaign, and Levine Academy.

The greatest joy in Blaugrund's life is his daughter Bari, a senior associate at Mercury Public Relations and Communications. Bari has followed her father's dedication and devotion to Israel by working as an AIPAC Legislative Intern and also living and working in Israel for 18 months after college.



"One thing that bonds us is our love of politics and current events, which includes Israel and our mutual love for the country. My dad helped me realize this passion at a young age and he's always encouraged me to explore it as deeply as possible," said Bari, who expanded Blaugrund's family to include as his own, her brother, Michael Kerner, and step-father Irwin Kerner, of blessed memory. "I'm grateful he's somebody I can geek-out with on the latest hot-button issues but also that he makes a point to challenge my perceptions and beliefs. politically and in general."

"Stuart is one of Anshai's unsung heroes that we'll always be indebted to, a man who couples his wise legal counsel with his Jewish heart and soul. We're proud he represents the membership of our congregation," said Anshai Torah's Rabbi Stefan Weinberg. "Ever ready to answer our calls, Stuart has been accessible, wise, and thorough whenever we've had reason to pursue his counsel, and we know we'll always receive sound advice from him. He's a member of the impressive individuals in our community who offer insight and guidance; their calm in the face of challenging situations has proven to be an invaluable asset."

Blaugrund was among the founders of Congregation Shomray Torah which, in 1998, joined forces with Congregation Anshai Emet to create Congregation Anshai Torah.

Melanie Kuhr, who Blaugrund describes as "his better half, a true inspiration and woman of valor," and whose children Allie, Alex, and Andrew also light up his life, joins him in dedication, having served in many leadership roles.

"Beginning the shul was a little like being one of the pioneers, the Halutzim. We wanted to build a dynamic community to serve the burgeoning population moving north," said Blaugrund. "We established a family-centric, warm shul and now, at more than 550 families, we're just as warm and welcoming as when we began. This honor is for us all."

For more details or to purchase tickets call 972-473-7718 or email receptionist@anshaitorah.org

Pictured l-r: Bari Blaugrund, Michael Kerner, Stuart Blaugrund, Melanie Kuhr, Allie Kuhr, Alex Kuhr. Andrew Kuhr is standing behind.

