

Anshai Torah Connects  
Lots o' Family Shalom for Shabbat

by Deb Silverthorn

Shabbat services for the younger set at Anshai Torah add a guaranteed spice and spirit for our shul and in the homes of those participating. Tot Shabbat, Shabbat Kulanu, and Shabbat with Sarah services provide three opportunities for families with babies through sixth grade to enjoy the best of prayer, community, and connecting.

"One of the most important pieces of being Jewish is putting into practice that which we learn. We have created exciting and engaging age-appropriate services so our children, from their earliest years, begin to recognize and incorporate the importance of Shabbat in their lives," said Rabbi Michael Kushnick, who with Director of Education Jason Cathcart, Early Childhood Director Rachel Nicholas, Sarah Rosen, Preschool Staffer Heather Rey and Anshai Torah's Artist-in-Residence Josh Warshawsky create magical memories in the shul. "Each of these programs provides for an incredible Shabbat experience and we are excited to welcome all in our community to share this special time with us."

*Tot Shabbat* services, led by Rabbi Kushnick, Jason, Rachel and Heather, are geared for families with infants thru second grade and are held one Friday evening per month—the first one September 1. Starting at 5:30pm, participants begin with a craft and dinner and then join in the Kabbalat Shabbat service. After prayers, *Tot Shabbat* resumes in the social hall for storytime, songs and dessert. CAT's preschool students are also featured in three services during the year and their annual Art Fest is a highlight at the last service of the year.

*Shabbat with Sarah*, again for infants thru second grade and their parents, grandparents, and friends, is held one

Shabbat morning a month from 11am—noon during the school year. Our first fun and spirited celebration of Shabbat will be September 16. The group will join the main service in the sanctuary for *Adon Olam* and then Kiddush lunch. From learning the 10 commandments to creating their own list of "kid-friendly" commandments and more, the connection is all about the kids.

"The kids get excited when they become 'shul regulars' and are able to recognize the prayers and songs; as they get older, they are able to help lead. It's the start of a lifetime of loving synagogue; and when that starts from the beginning, there is a forever left to be connected," said Anshai member Sarah, who brings the joy of Judaism and love of Jewish life to the little ones. "We adapt the programs to our audience each time we meet and the goal is to share a good morning filled with meaning. When they are all singing *I Got That Shabbat Feeling* or *Shemoneh Esrei*, there is nothing like it!"

*Shabbat Kulanu*, for families with infants through Pre-K and Kn through 6th Grade, is an additional monthly Shabbat service from 11am—noon and begins September 9. Rabbi Kushnick, Jason, and Artist in Residence Josh will share songs, games, learning about holidays, Torah portions and more. They will then join the Kiddush lunch.

"I started attending Tot Shabbat when my daughter Lilly (now three years old) was in a toddler carrier and now Chloe, one month old, will be a regular too," said Corey Todres, who has made all three versions of CAT's children's services a priority on her calendar. "These are great opportunities for my children to feel Anshai Torah is an extension of their home and that

the rabbis are important to them. The comfort we feel as a part of the shul community helps instill the closeness and beauty of our own Jewish home, and it's a great opportunity for us to socialize too. I enjoy visiting with other parents at dinner and during Shabbat Kiddush lunches, and my daughter has made her own circle of buddies."

"When we are in the car or at home and Lilly starts humming or singing a prayer or song that came from Anshai, it warms my heart," said Corey. "There is not enough I can share about the greatness of these introductions to Jewish life for my kids; and because it's beautiful for them, it reaches into my soul too."

Membership at Anshai Torah is not required to participate in these Shabbat services, and family members of every generation are invited. The children of our leaders are ever-present right along side their parents!

Jason says building community is key. "Building our community helps build each family's idea of what Shabbat is and what it can be. This is what it's all about, and with our amazing team, our staff, and the great families that join us, one can't go wrong sharing Shabbat with us."

If you would like more information about these services, please contact Jason Cathcart at [DirectorofEducation@anshaitorah.org](mailto:DirectorofEducation@anshaitorah.org), or visit our website at [www.anshaitorah.org](http://www.anshaitorah.org). To RSVP for Tot Shabbat dinners, please call 972.473.7718.

