

TVCJ Happenings [View this email in your browser](#)

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

TriValleyCulturalJews.org
info@tri-valleyculturaljews.org
[\(925\) 399-8029](tel:(925)399-8029)

Our mission statement: A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion.



**TRI-VALLEY
CULTURAL JEWS**
secular + humanist

Like and Share on Facebook

TVCJ is an accepting, welcoming, diverse community of Cultural Jews and their families. Call or email us at [\(925\) 399-8029](tel:(925)399-8029) or culturaljews@gmail.com for an Evite or for more information about our community. You can find us at trivalleyculturaljews.org. Free to members, suggested \$15 donation per non-member adult if you are able.

You can make donations to TVCJ through PayPal or Venmo. Our handle is Tri-Valley Cultural Jews.

May 31, 2025

Community News

Congratulations, Ella!



Mazel tov to Ella King, who graduated summa cum laude from Cal State University Monterey Bay, with a bachelor's degree in Humanities and Communication.

We Need A Home Update

We're halfway there! Members and friends have pledged and donated \$10,000, marking halfway to our goal of \$20,000 to meet a matching pledge. When we reach the goal, we'll be able to start looking for a permanent rental so we can have a place

to meet and to keep our supplies and library. Donations to the matching fund can be made by Venmo, PayPal, or check. Please mark your donation "matching fund."

Thanks!

Ruth Gasten Celebration of Life

June 14th 2025



Ruth Gasten

1933-2025

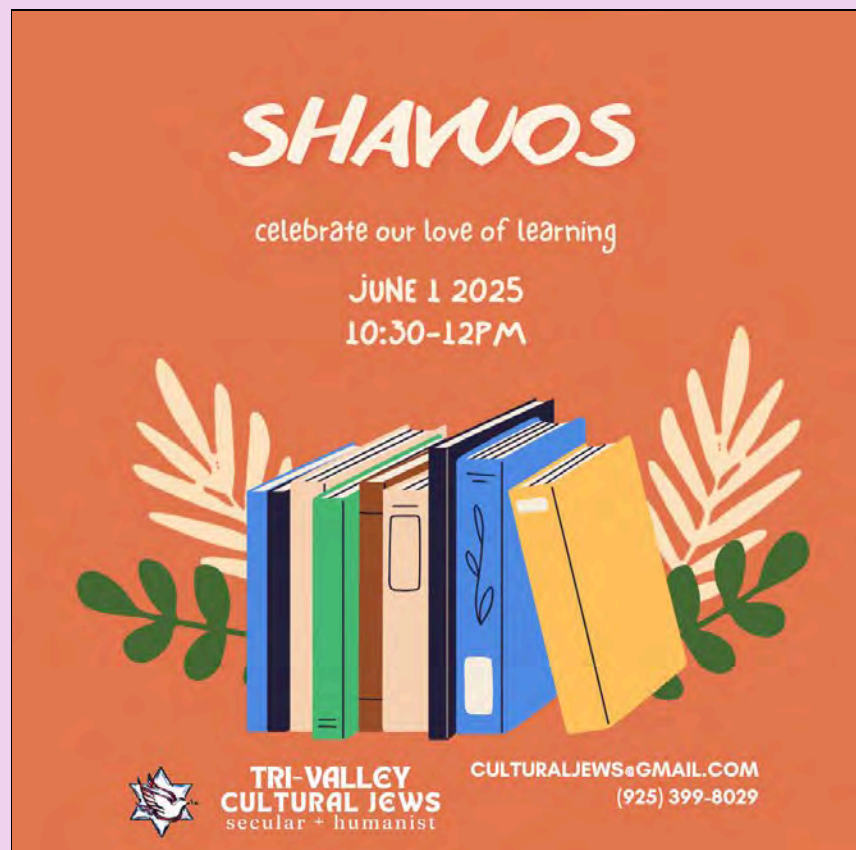
Please join us for Ruth's

Celebration of Life

June 14th 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Shavuos Bookfest Is Back — Let's Milk It For All It's Worth! - 6/01/25



June 1st, 10:30a.m. to Noon - Pleasanton

It's time once again for our annual Shavuos Bookfest, where we celebrate the holiday the best way we know how: with books, brains, and blintz-adjacent desserts.

Instead of staying up all night studying ancient texts (no judgment if that's your thing), we're doing Shavuos our way—by gathering to share things we've read, learned, or just can't stop talking about. And yes, kids and adults are all welcome to get up and speak—for up to five glorious minutes—on:

- A book they couldn't put down

- Something new and fascinating they learned
- Or that one topic they could talk about forever (we all have one)

Lunch is provided, and in proper Shavuot spirit, we're going dairy! Please bring a dairy (or dairy -esque) dish to share—cheesecake, cookies, or that one thing you make that's always a hit at potlucks.

RSVP on Evite

Come for the conversation, stay for the dessert. Or come for the dessert and accidentally learn something along the way. Either way, we'll be glad to see you!

Philosophers' Cafe - 6/05/25

We've been tackling some serious questions at our monthly friendly discussion group we call Philosophers' Cafe recently, so at our June meeting we'll discuss lighter topics about our earlier lives. Join us on zoom from 7-8 p.m. on Thursday June 5, take a breather from everything weighting us down and get to know something new about our members. Look for the evite!

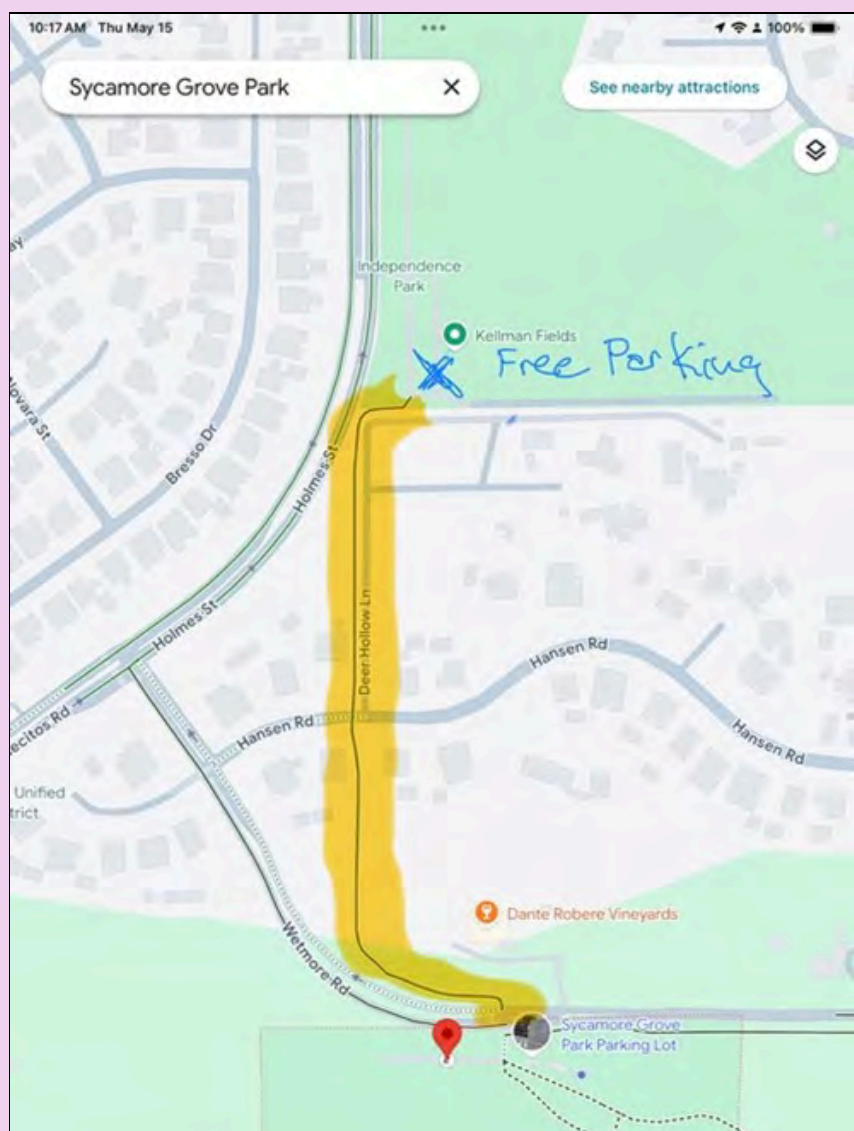
TVCJ Hike Saturday - 6/08/25 9:30a.m.



Our TVCJ next hike is a 5-mile loop with less than 100 ft elevation change. It should take about an hour and half. There is a wide paved/gravel path, so bring the kids. Dogs are welcome on leash. The trail is somewhat exposed, so bring plenty of water and sun protection.

Time: Sunday, June 8th at 9:30. (You should arrive a few minutes early so we can start hike at 9:30). **Call David @ 410.852-6079 for any other information.**

Directions: Take Holmes in Livermore to Wetmore, turn onto Wetmore Road (it's a T intersection, so you can only turn SE). Go about 0.2 miles to Sycamore Grove Park, 1051 Wetmore Rd. and park. It will be on the right. We'll gather in the parking lot. Note there is a \$5.00 Parking Fee. However, there is free parking if you want to walk an extra 0.3 miles. (see map below)



Tri-Valley Cultural Jews at Castro Valley Pride –

Volunteers Needed! 🏳️‍🌈 July 19, 2025



We're proud to announce that we've reserved a booth at Castro Valley Pride on **Saturday, July 19th**, and we'd love your help representing our community!

This is a great opportunity to show up in solidarity, share who we are as a Secular Humanistic Jewish group, and connect with others who value inclusion, identity, and community. Plus, it's always a fun, festive day full of music, color, and meaningful conversations.

We're looking for volunteers to help staff our table in shifts—greeting visitors, handing out info, and soaking up the joyful, welcoming vibes of the day.

If you can help out for an hour or more, let us know!

Email culturaljews@gmail.com to sign up or get more details.

Let's show our pride and make some new connections!

Jewish Cultural School



JCS is saying goodbye to aide extraordinaire Sophia Ireland, who will be studying nanoengineering at UC San Diego next year. Mazal tov and we'll miss you!

JCS Mottos or Proverbs

If you have a kid who attends or has attended JCS, you may have noticed we have some “shikhverter” - mottos or proverbs - written at the bottom of the white board. These were things our kids have said that really struck us as wise.

Here's what they say:

When we work together, it's easy! - Levi Coren

People are *supposed* to make a difference. - Ella King

Everybody is a scientist. - Colin Mogilefsky

This is kind of a family. - Evangeline Pepper

Pretty great, right?

Wrapping Up the Year at Jewish Culture School



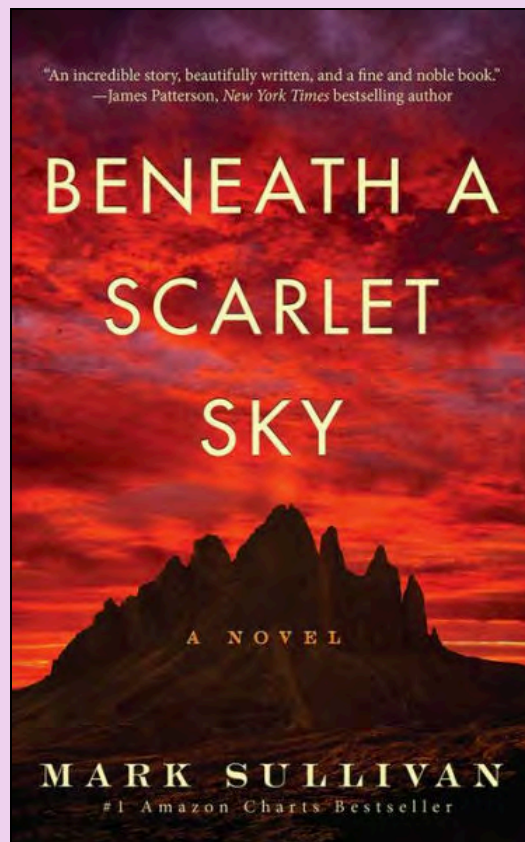
Our final Jewish Culture School class of the year was a sweet (and slightly sticky) success! Students celebrated the close of the season by making their own delicious fruit kabobs. We also took a musical stroll down memory lane, singing some of the kids' favorite songs from the year.

To round out the day, the class explored the life and work of Diane Arbus, a groundbreaking Jewish photographer known for capturing striking portraits of people who were often marginalized or overlooked by society. Inspired by her own feelings of otherness, Arbus used her art to reveal the humanity and dignity in every life—a value we hold deeply as a community.

Thanks to all the students, parents, and teachers who made this year so meaningful. We can't wait to see everyone again in the fall!

Save the Date--A new year of Jewish Culture School starts August 24th!

Book Review
BENEATH A SCARLET SKY
A Novel By
Mark Sullivan



This historical novel takes place in Italy during World War II. The main Character is Pino Lella, a 17 year old Italian boy. During the years 1943 to 1945, Italy was in desperate need of man power to fight the war against the Nazis and the Fascists. But Pino was sent to a monastery school to keep him away from the bombing and destruction of their town. At this school Pino met Father Re, the head master. He put Pino through an extremely rigorous regimen of mountain climbing and physical fitness. Pino succeeded with this and developed into a very talented and powerful adult with skills in mechanics, driving, and mountain climbing. Unbeknown to Pino, Father Re had big plans for him.

One day a Nazi battalion rolled onto the school grounds, It was led by one of the highest ranking Nazi generals. Pino saw that the general's car broke down and asked if he could help repair it. Which he did. He was also told of Pino's excellent driving skills. So the general asked Pino if he would like to be his personal driver.

When he told his parents about this, they were horrified at first about it. But then they realized that with this job he would not be a fighter and would thus not be in danger.

When he told Father Re about it, he said that in this position he would be able to give the resistance invaluable information about Nazi troop movements so he would then be a spy for the resistance. Pino was excited for the chance to help the resistance so he accepted. However, the downside of this was that he had to wear a Nazi uniform. He was then accused of being a traitor by those who didn't know his true mission of spying. Also, while working for the general, he found out that Father Re was hiding Jews in the school's basement. If the general would have discovered this, he would have executed him. He would have suffered the fate of many Italians that hid Jews from their Nazi executioners.

This book tells about Pino's true story as best as he could remember it. It was filled with many close calls and dangerous adventures. I really enjoyed it and would recommend it. [If you would like to purchase this book at Barnes and Noble click here.](#)

Reviewed By Jerry Zwick

Our Lag B'Omer Picnic



This year's Lag B'Omer picnic was everything we hoped for—sunny skies, excellent company, and just the right amount of chaos. We gathered at the park for a morning of playing, potlucking, and politely pretending we weren't competing too hard in the annual melon toss.

As usual, the potluck table was a glorious mishmash of culinary creativity, and the melon toss stole the show again, with impressive throws, and a surprisingly resilient melon.

A huge thanks to everyone who brought food, good vibes, and their best underarm techniques. Same time next year!

TVCJ Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting Minutes

- **Budget Approval**

- The proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year was reviewed and unanimously approved by the board.

- **Fundraising Milestone**

- TVCJ received a generous donation, which enabled us to reach our matching fund goal dedicated to securing a physical location.

- **Board Member Election**

- Board elections were held. All previous board members will continue to serve. The board welcomes Diego Rother to the team!
- Judy and Noah will continue as check signers.

- **Program Discussion**

- An open discussion was held regarding current and potential future programs.
- Members expressed interest in developing a mentor matching program to connect participants with experienced mentors in relevant fields. This idea will be explored further in upcoming meetings.



Bluesky

TVCJ is on Bluesky now.
@tvcj2.bsky.social. Check it out.

TVCJ PayPal Giving Fund Page

We now have a PayPal page where you can quickly and easily donate to Tri-Valley Cultural Jews. Simply scan the QR code below.



or visit: <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/2326042>

Joke: A butcher is 5 feet 10 inches tall. What does he weigh? **Answer:** He weighs meat!



In May We Remember
Chaparral Ireland



May Birthdays
Peter Grabowski
Ember Ireland
Kai Mogilefsky
Dana Soltani
Rosita Gorel-Wong

Who We Are

Rabbi: Judith Seid 925-485-1049

Madrikha: Jamie Ireland

Board Members:

David Gates

Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

Jamie Ireland

Maggie Pino

Sophia Ireland

Rachel Rose

Diego Rother

Judith Seid

Newsletter: Joy Randel

Webmaster: Noah King

JCS Teachers: Jazz Salwen-Grabowski, Judith Seid

Holiday Coordinator: Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

Movie Coordinator: Bret Mogilefsky

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