



The Jewish *Gaily Forward*

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Adar 1 5779 - Iyar 5779 / March 2019 - May 2019

Sustaining Our Connected Community

By NANCY LEVIN, President

There is a new and exciting conversation happening at Sha’ar Zahav, as we rethink our approach to sustaining and strengthening our amazing community. For years, we have walked down two fairly separate paths. We would devote much of the year to building the kind of welcoming and vibrant community that we all aspire to, and then once a year (or maybe more often) we would switch gears to talk about the “dues obligation” required of members. Building community and raising money were two different activities, often done by different groups of volunteers and staff.

Our new approach, which we’re piloting now, is based on the understanding that both building a vibrant community and sustaining it financially will work better when they are integrated, and when our financial support is not seen as an “obligation” but as a gift that stems from our belief in, and commitment to, our shared values and the sense of belonging and connection that we experience here.

By now, many of you have probably had at least one conversation with one of our community shlichim, or ambassadors. This is a new volunteer role, and each shaliach (ambassador) is committed to working with a small group of members to ensure that each member feels connected and understands the breadth of opportunities that are available to engage with here at Sha’ar Zahav. Whether it’s prayer, education, hiking, social action, caring for those in need, reading or theater, there are countless ways to be an engaged and active part of our community, and many ways in which your volunteer energies are needed. The shaliach will also talk with you about how your individual commitment to community expresses itself as a “Gift from the Heart,” your own personal financial commitment to sustaining our collective well-being.

Our goal is to connect with every member over the next year or so, and if you’d like to be in the pilot group, let me know! This is a new direction for us that the Va’ad adopted after much deliberation and many community conversations. The role of shaliach is perhaps the most challenging (and hopefully the most rewarding) volunteer role we have ever created. As with any new approach, I know that we will learn a lot as we walk down this path together during this first year. I trust and ask that we all work together to ensure that this new approach moves us from strength to strength.

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Carrying Each Other

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



As I fly back and forth to Southern California to visit my ailing mother in the hospital, a story keeps retelling itself to me. A father bird is carrying his three fledglings across a windy sea, one by one. He asks them, while precariously flying to safety, if they will return the favor someday and provide for him in his old age. The first two dutifully answer that they will care for him as he has cared for them. Strangely, the father rejects their answers. The last fledgling responds, ““My dear father, it is true you are struggling mightily and risking your life on my behalf, and I shall be wrong not to repay you when you are old, but I cannot bind myself. This though, I can promise: when I am grown and have children of my own, I shall do as much for them as you have done for me.” Whereupon the father bird said, “Well spoken, my child, and wisely.”

The Decalogue teaches us to “honor your father and mother,” which we interpret as providing them food, drink and clothing when they grow old. How far do our responsibilities reach be-

yond these offerings? Ethicist Rabbi Elliot Dorff writes, “Achieving a proper balance between honoring one’s aging parents and living one’s own life is central to being a middle-aged adult in our time.” Whether or not we have fledglings of our own, we are often pulled in multiple directions. We agonize over the extent of our responsibilities, and are forced to make heart wrenching decisions that often conjure up past choices and priorities.

In an age in which most adult American Jews have some major responsibility caring for an elderly parent, or are themselves making major decisions about independence, health and housing, it is no surprise that this is a major topic in our SZ community. The Jewish community is highly mobile, so many of us live far from family members, and in LGBTQI communities, we are less likely to have children or be connected to family. SZ is striving to be a community that provides support and counters isolation. New initiatives are addressing these needs, from the Connected Community initiative to our revived Bikkur Cholim/Caring Community, and Adult Orphans Chavurah, a group of congregants exploring ways to support one another as they age in the Bay Area.

As we struggle to balance caring for ourselves and others, we are envisioning ways we can help carry each other across the sea.

The Mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



At Sha’ar Zahav, we recite a mi shebeirach at every service, praying for the healing of all those who are ill. There is a bit of magic in it: a belief that the people for whom we are praying reap the benefits even when they don’t know that they are being prayed for. It’s good for those of us doing the praying as well-

an action that we can take to benefit those for whom we care deeply. It exemplifies how much of a core part of our practice it is to consider the needs of those who are ill.

Another important part of this practice is the mitzvah of bikkur cholim -- visiting the ill. It’s an elemental part of Jewish life and community, providing a degree of connection and care that can be instrumental in both physical and spiritual healing.

Per the rabbis of the Talmud, bikkur cholim is a way of emulating God, a form of chesed (kindness) for which one is rewarded both in this world and in the world to come. Maimonides said that the commandment

to visit the sick is also an aspect of the mitzvah of “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But it’s often easier said than done, perhaps, in part, because we think that it’s beyond us, that we don’t have enough time or we won’t know what to say or do.

But the good news is that, while there are all kinds of traditional guidelines about who to visit, and when, and how, it’s mostly a matter of recognizing that, in the same way that we’re each created in the image of God, we each have our own way of emulating God in the world.

For some people, bikkur cholim is going to be about visiting people in the hospital or dropping off some food. For others, it might be a phone call or a card. And there are those who might be able to give someone a ride or help with some paperwork. There is no minimum amount of bikkur cholim; the goal is to do what we can.

It takes a village, not just in numbers, but in the diverse gifts that we each bring. There is a rabbinic adage that the visitor relieves the ill person of one sixtieth of their suffering – the love and support of bikkur cholim makes all the difference.

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We Are Our Stories

By SUE BOJDAK / Director of Education



How many times have you encountered a Jewish adult who apologizes for their Jewish identity? Maybe it's just because of the role I play in the community, but this happens to me ALL of the time. I talk with people who feel bad about Shabbats they don't keep, holidays they don't celebrate, prayers and practices they don't know and kids they haven't gotten around to educating yet. They feel disconnected from their Jewish selves.

At Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, our job is to co-create empowered, thoughtful, connected Jews with families and community members. To do that, we focus on teaching kids how to DO being Jewish rather than just learning ABOUT being Jewish. This action-oriented approach is why we use project-based learning as our pedagogy and why we've created a makerspace this year. We want kids to be co-creating their learning experience with us so that right from the start they are inside their own Jewish experiences.

What that looks like is that when we do a learning unit on Jewish ritual, we don't just learn about Jewish ritual, we create Jewish ritual. Here's what we're doing: For four weeks students were exposed to the breadth and depth of Jewish ritual using ritual objects as a starting point. They looked for (and brought in) Jewish ritual objects from home. They crafted a wide array of Jewish ritual objects in the Makerspace (from Kiddush cups to Blessings for the Home). They deconstructed a few Jewish rituals using a rubric for Jewish ritual offered by Jewish scholar Vanessa Ochs, who identifies the four key elements of Jewish ritual as being text, object, action and a big idea that the ritual is about. With their families, students looked for these

elements in rituals happening in their homes and communities. Once students had observed, studied and played with Jewish rituals and ritual objects, it was their turn to create Jewish ritual. Each grade group identified an experience in their own lives around for which a ritual could be created- things like starting a new school, or making a new friend. The students brought material from their lives to the table.

“When we do a learning unit on Jewish ritual, we don't just learn about Jewish ritual, we create Jewish ritual.”
- Sue Bojdak

Then, they used the ritual rubric we had studied and models from existing Jewish rituals to craft their own texts, objects, and actions around the idea their ritual was designed to express or wrestle with. After four weeks of crafting, they shared those rituals by practicing them with our Beit Sefer community.

What this work is about is not just creating an active, engaged learning experience that includes hands-on work, authentic content, and student collaboration. What it's about is messaging to students when they are 5,8, and 12 that this Judaism is theirs. Yes, it's important for them to know about traditional Jewish practices, cultural norms, and history. But it's equally or more important for them to create Jewish practices, define evolving norms, and write themselves into Jewish history. Because if they own their Judaism, if they craft it from the inside, it will always be theirs to continue shaping as they grow.

Becoming Part of a New Community

By TIMOTHY GRANT

Timothy Grant was born in Walnut Creek, California, but until very recently was unable to consider himself a Californian, having moved so many times in his youth. After spending time in Virginia, England and Texas, his family finally settled in Florida. In his early twenties, Timothy volunteered as a member of the Peace Corps and went to live in Ukraine, where he worked as a director of an NGO, providing work and education assistance programs to the Roma minority living in western Ukraine.

After three years in Eastern Europe, Timothy moved to Boston, where he met his wife Kelly and earned two master's degrees at Tufts University. Post-graduation, Timothy worked for the World Bank in Washington, DC, where he operated as a consultant in the Water Practice evaluating environmental policies in international water infrastructure projects.

After the 2016 election, he and Kelly reevaluated their lives and moved to San Francisco. A very challenging family crisis made Timothy consider his relationship with religion, and after settling in the Mission, he began attending Sha'ar Zahav's Saturday morning Shabbat services. A profound love for both Judaism and the community at SZ encouraged Timothy to begin his conversion journey.



In his free time (of which he has very little) Timothy enjoys rock climbing, writing, playing mandolin and guitar, and indulging in craft beer and wine. His favorite hobby is learning languages. This year, he hopes to learn Hebrew, his fifth language, during the course of his conversion. You can find Timothy attending Saturday mornings at Sha'ar Zahav or at the newsletter team editing meetings!

Welcome Our New and Returning Members!

November
Raymond Cutino
Joseph Feiner
Amy Kaufman & Victoria Estevez
Daniel Loftus & Christopher Nguyen
Thomas Miller
Ezra Perlman
(daughter: Maelis Perlman)
Debra Solomon & Gil Carmel
(children: Adam and Noah)

Yvan Willard
David Zebker
December
Shahpour (Shawn) Matloob
Roseann Gould
February
Liz Jarslow & Marc Lipsett (children: Morey, Jacob, Allen, Fredrica)
David-Elijah Nahmod

Anshel Bernard Mamet

Anshel Bernard Mamet, child of Julie Mamet, will be called to the Torah as a b'nei mitzvah on May 18.

A 7th grader at San Francisco Friends School, Anshel's favorite subjects are art, music and humanities. Anshel is an accomplished pianist and enjoys playing both classical and jazz. Anshel spends non-school hours playing piano in the Middle School Jazz Band and creating inspired art pieces. Anshel also enjoys writing and is currently working on a piece of historical fiction set during the Chicago Fire of 1871. Anshel spent five years studying and performing Mexican folkloric dance but is taking a break this year to focus on b'nei mitzvah prep.

A true dog whisperer, this year Anshel started volunteering at Muttville Senior Dog rescue. Anshel helps at adoption events, walks and cares for dogs, and photographs and videos the dogs, so they can show off their awesome selves to their adoring fans and potential adopters. Anshel loves learning Hebrew, chanting prayers, and talking torah with mentor Tiela Chalmers. Thank you, Tiela, for so enriching Anshel's life!



Purim

BY PAUL COHEN

The fun holiday of Purim begins this year on Wednesday night, March 20th with the reading of the Megillah (Book) of Esther. The reading is accompanied by costumed children and adults making lots of noise each time the name of the villain Haman's name is mentioned. One of the gastronomic highlights of the holiday is the baking and eating of the tri cornered pastry, hamantaschen. Whether it is made with a yeast or cookie crust, the filling is the important ingredient.

Recipes may be found in "Out of Our Kitchen Closets", the Sha'ar Zahav cookbook or online by food writers Joan Nathan or Tina Wasserman. Some favorite choices for fillings include the traditional prune and poppyseed (which can be purchased in cans in most supermarkets) as well as the fruit choices of apricot and raspberry. Creative bakers have also developed chocolate chip for those who are young or forever young. Check the weekly email for both children and adult celebrations of Purim

Va'ad Notes

BY DEBORAH LEVY / Recorder

We were excited to approve and support fundraising for a re-printing of our Sha'ar Zahav Sid-dur (prayerbook). Rabbis, educators, and others around the city and far beyond continue to request the book, and our first printing of 3000 won't last much longer.

A CSZ Security Task Force has been meeting and updating the Va'ad on steps being taken to keep us safe. We received a \$75,000 grant from the State of California, and members have met with security experts and elected officials to learn and coordinate best practices.

We had an interesting discussion about collaborating with other groups, including those with whom we may not share all goals. We wrestled with pros and cons and came up with some guidelines we feel will serve our community well.

Our discussion of Gifts from the Heart, our new structure for member contributions, included conversations about building a "culture of belonging" that led to an initiative we are calling

"Connected Community." A dedicated committee is working tirelessly to weave together our community's vital financial needs with the desire of so many of our members to feel more connected, to Judaism and each other.

An important part of this is to increase our transparency, keeping the community informed of our budgetary needs and how the synagogue makes ends meet. We're working on continued communication, so remember: all members are welcome to join us at any Va'ad meeting, 3rd Wednesday of each month, 7:00-9:00 PM, or come at 6:30 and enjoy dinner with us!

Our Annual Membership Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22 @ 7:00pm at 290 Dolores.

Cemetery Expansion

BY JAMES CARLSON

In the early 80s, Hills of Eternity Memorial Park in Colma designated 72 graves for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav members. Over time, our designated section has expanded to its current size of 144 graves. Fewer than 50 of those spaces remain unsold.

For a growing congregation that has its share of senior citizens, we do not have a significant inventory of graves to accommodate us. Or perhaps I should say DID NOT, instead of DO NOT. Recently, Hills of Eternity has been engaged in a computerized mapping project for its entire cem-

etry. In the process, a row of 41 graves that no one knew existed was discovered. The newly discovered graves are immediately across the pathway from our existing section of graves.

When the Hills of Eternity board was informed of the discovery and its proximity to CSZ's section, they approved a motion to designate this row of graves for the exclusive use of our members. Thanks to this action, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's grave inventory has practically doubled.

What Sha’ar Zahav Means To Me: Musings From Our Volunteers

Sha’ar Zahav’s amazing volunteers make this community what it is – one where all of us take responsibility for creating a welcoming, vibrant and passionate chosen family and Jewish home. Many of our volunteers perform their magic largely behind the scenes – preparing tasty treats for our onegs, mentoring b’nei mitzvah students, organizing special events and social justice actions, raising the funds to keep us strong, and inspiring us to do more.

During a special Volunteer Appreciation Shabbat service on November 2, the Keshet/Connections Committee, working with Rabbi Copeland, asked a few of these volunteers to tell us why they give their time, energy and heart to our community. Here are their comments (slightly abbreviated).

This long-planned Volunteer Appreciation service took place less than a week after eleven Jewish worshippers were murdered at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and after other recent hate-driven attacks on minorities.

In the midst of our grief and fear, these volunteers’ comments (along with our Mennonite friends holding vigil and singing hymns outside our doors) reminded us how much we are embraced – and strengthened – by the love and support of our wonderful community.

– Ami Zusman, for the Keshet Committee

Terry Fletcher

My mother, whose yahrzeit we commemorate tonight, was an immigrant, a refugee and a volunteer. From the time I was young, my mother volunteered, especially in Palo Alto civic affairs, in support of bicycling and public transportation. I learned to be a volunteer from her.

To me volunteering is a decision to make our community, our society, our world a better place; in doing so, our own lives become better, richer and more interesting.

Tonight, we light a third candle in honor and memory of our dead and wounded sibling Jews from the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh who were targeted because of their synagogue’s volunteer efforts for refugees. May their memories be a blessing that encourages us to know ourselves as a people who struggle for justice for all.

Rose Katz

I came to CSZ thirty years ago for the Jewish education I didn’t have growing up and stayed for the community. The volunteer work I’ve been engaged in for the last ten years is as a conversion mentor and co-facilitator with Ora Prochovnick of the Journey to Judaism discussion group. Welcoming the stranger is one of the mitzvot that speaks most strongly to me. As a community, we’ve been immeasurably strengthened by those who’ve chosen to join us. It’s why I do what I do at Sha’ar Zahav.

Gabriel Lampert

Recently I saw Virginia Donohue, whose daughter Johanna I had mentored in her bat mitzvah studies. The hardest part of Johanna’s “job” was the drash, because her Torah portion, Tazria/Metzora, dealing with leprosy, is universally regarded as the most difficult, so Johanna and I sidestepped the Torah portion, and looked instead at the Haftarah portion.

The Haftarah also dealt with leprosy, but it was at least a story. I suggested that Johanna pick a character from the story and re-write it from that character’s eyes. Johanna did a fantastic job, writing from the viewpoint of a leper who had been exiled outside the city’s gates.

Although at the time she hadn’t seemed that interested in her creative side, last Monday I learned that Johanna, now in college, was pursuing a degree in writing! So here’s the lesson about volunteering: When you light someone else’s candle from your candle, you don’t lose any light!

Rob Mabe

I volunteer because it calls to my heart. My grandmother taught me to give where you can. I love volunteering because I love bringing people together, and I love doing it with pizzaz!

Andy Schwartz

Why I volunteer:

- 1) To extend my friendships - friendships that began with my marriage and really grew with congregational trips, the aging-parents support group, va’ad service, Rainbow Campaign service, and the meditation chavurah.
- 2) I want CSZ to exist for my needs in the future. If the synagogue is going to be here whenever I need it, I need to contribute in between my own lifecycle events.
- 3) Because someone I like asked me to, and I said yes.

Paisha Rochlin-Lehrman & Marvin Lehrman

When we first joined Sha’ar Zahav, we experienced such a warm and welcoming reception that accepting Paul Cohen’s invitation to volunteer for the oneg was easy. Now we can say that baking and cooking up goodies turned out to be so right for us. What better way to express gratitude for how we ourselves feel nourished as part of this community.

We love that Sha’ar Zahav provides opportunities to create new chavurot. With the rabbi’s blessing, Marjorie Hilsenrad, Marvin and I have created the new Adult Orphan Chavurah to support adult members who have little or no family in the Bay Area. Being here among you is truly being among family.

The Keshet Committee thanks all the wonderful volunteers who spoke at the Volunteer Appreciation Shabbat service and everyone who helps make CSZ the fabulous congregation it is through all of your volunteering, above and beyond financial contributions.



HHD Donations 5779

Elliot Block
Patty Caplan and Jonathan Simonoff
Sheila Giannini
Alex Ingersoll and Martin Tannenbaum
Tom Lakritz
Mark Pressler
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in memory of Walter Leiss,
Tracy Pomrantz and Marvin Zinn
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in honor of Paul Cohen and Steve Shotland
and with deep thanks for the wonderful oneg
celebrating Ruby Cymrot-Wu
and Mollie Webster Joplin's aufruf
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in loving memory of Kevin Johnson
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and Isa Leah Cymrot-Wu

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in memory of my parents
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in appreciation of the Hanukkah service
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“because I love the inclusiveness
and spirit of Sha’ar Zahav...”
Steve Weiner and Norm Dito
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Charles Spiegel

Rainbow 2018
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Mark Pressler and Robert Tannenbaum
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and Irving and Lillian Fox

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in honor of Randall Weiss

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Jeffrey Levin
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in memory of my parents,
Aaron Martin Lipschutz and Renee S. Lipschutz
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SHA'AR ZAHAV SPONSORSHIPS

November 2-3 Flowers and Oneg by Jacob Robinson in memory of his sister, Susan Goltsman	December 14-15 Flowers by Jill and Britta Pomrantz in memory of Tracy Pomrantz
November 9-10 Flowers by Kara Romanko in honor of Zoey Romanko's bat mitzvah	Oneg by Jill and Britta Pomrantz in celebration of Sam's first Shabbat with the Sha'ar Zahav community
Oneg by Yvette Adida in memory of her mother, Marguerite Klein	December 21-22 Oneg by Gary Winter in memory of his mother, Min Raven Winter
November 16-17 Flowers by Ruby Cymrot-Wu and Mollie Joplin in celebration of their aufruf	December 28-29 Oneg by Wayne Bender in memory of his father, Herman (Hy) Bender
Oneg by Barbara Cymrot and Dafna Wu in celebration of the aufruf of Ruby Cymrot-Wu and Mollie Joplin	
November 23-24 Flowers by Karen Schiller in memory of her father, Jay Schiller	January 4-5 Oneg by Pierre and Yvette Adida in memory of Marcelle Adida
Oneg by Mark Mackler and Wendell Choo in memory of Mark's mother, Phyllis Mackler	January 11-12 Flowers by Rachel Nancollas in memory of her grandfather, George Nancollas
November 30-December 1 Flowers by Pierre and Yvette Adida in memory of Salomon Adida	Oneg by Miriam Menzel and Jim Musselman in memory of Miriam's parents, Roslyn Ludwig Menzel and Herbert Menzel
December 7-8 Flowers by Arthur Friedman	January 25 Flowers by Yvette Adida in memory of her father, Adolf Klein
Kiddush by Irene & Brad Friedman in honor of Noah Friedman's bar mitzvah	Oneg by Don Fischer in honor of Jason Simonoff

SHA'AR ZAHAV FROM THE VA'AD

Resolution on Manny's

We, the Va'ad (Board) of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, support and welcome the establishment in our CSZ neighborhood of Manny's, a community space for civil discourse, and its owner, Manny Yekutiel. We appreciate the steps Yekutiel has taken to contribute to the neighborhood (hiring low-income locals, keeping prices low, and more) and his cooperation with United to Save the Mission.

Yekutiel is being unfairly targeted because he is Jewish. For this reason we object to Manny's being boycotted. We support and encourage sending a message to our members and to the community, urging patronization.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

November Fox Frohlich, mother of Raena Frohlich and long-time member of Sha'ar Zahav Howard Hirschfield, father of Ira Hirschfield Walter Leiss, long-time member of Sha'ar Zahav Marvin Zinn, father of David Zinn	January Larry Cohen, brother of Deena Cohen Barbara Danilos, friend of Nancy Meyer Cathy Kelly, stepdaughter of Avraham Giannini
	February Mary Isham, friend of Susan Schwartz

SHA'AR ZAHAV YAHRZEITS

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Your contributions help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living community for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. A donation can be a meaningful way to honor friends or family, engagements, anniversaries, graduations, for special thanks, or to memorialize a loved one. Collectively, with your financial support, we continue to prosper, grow, and celebrate our future.



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Please note: Advertising deadline for our next issue is April 15th!



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Celebrate Passover in Community!

First Night, Friday, April 19:

Can you welcome one or two Sha'ar Zahavniks to your first night seder? Do you need a place to go on first night?

Contact Sue Bojdak (education@shaarzahav.org) by April 1 if you can host and by April 12 if you need a place to go.

Second Night, Saturday, April 20, 5:30 pm:

CSZ's Homemade Seder

led by Cantor Sharon Bernstein and Mike Shriver

Our building is filled with storytelling, singing, laughter and lots of spirit as our community gets together to recount the Passover tale. We each bring a dish to share, and there's always good food and good company. Bring your friends and family!

Advance registration is required, so watch your email for registration information.