

Looking for love? Tu B'Av may be your lucky day

By Elise Kigner
Advocate Staff

A full moon glows in the sky, illuminating the white suits and dresses of people dancing in the sticky July heat. It's Tu B'Av, and love is in the air.

"When the fullness of the moon takes place and is at its peak, the opportunity for souls to connect and become full via their soul mate is also at its peak," said Rabbi Mayshe Schwartz of the Chabad Chai Center of Brookline, one of several local organization hosting Tu B'Av parties this month.

"Some of the women who were seeking partners would dress in white. For the gentlemen who were looking for soul mates, that was the time to go out and try to connect," he said.

Tu B'Av takes place on the 15th of Av, July 26 in the secular calendar. To celebrate the day, the Chai Center is hosting its first Tu B'Av party, which it dubs "The Jewish Love Fest." Young adults, clad in white, can enjoy food, music and a cash bar at the Splash Ultra Lounge in downtown Boston. He expects to draw a crowd of 200-300 people.

The event is open to singles and those in relationships. Schwartz asked that partygoers bring their spouse if they have one.

The five-year-old Chai Center already has a track record for match-making: Schwartz credits his group with about 10 weddings a year – marriages between people who met or got to know each other better through the Chai Center.

The Chai Center also hosts Chanukah and Purim parties that draw hundreds of people. Schwartz said the Tu B'Av party is in response to a demand for more summer programming.

"It is probably the most unknown [Jewish holiday] of all, yet the Talmud says that Tu B'Av is the greatest holiday of the year, with Yom Kippur being the second," he said, explaining that both holidays represent a reunification between



Illustration from "The Song of Songs: The Honeybee in the Garden" by Debra Band, who will speak at the Temple Reyim singles brunch.

G-d and the Jewish people.

In the Mishna, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: "There were no better days for the people of Israel than the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, since on these days the daughters of Jerusalem go out dressed in white and dance in the vineyards. What they were saying: Young man, consider who you choose [to be your wife]."

In Israel, Tu B'Av celebrations have become more common in recent years. It has been compared to Valentine's Day, with the exchange of flowers, gifts and cards. It is also a popular day for marriage.

Schwartz said Tu B'Av parties are starting to catch on in the United States. "I definitely think that just as in Israel, the single young adult scene has widened and the community is much greater than it was. People are getting married later, so I think it is only natural that [Tu B'Av] is getting more popular," he said.

Temple Beth Shalom in Cambridge is hosting Tu B'Av mixers in two sessions: an early session for ages 35 and up, and a later one for ages 21-41. They will feature ice-breaker games, kosher wine and cheese, and music.

On Tu B'Av, "the daughters of Is-

rael would dance in the vineyard and find their mates," said organizer Erica Schultz. "It is an auspicious time to find a partner."

Schwartz said Temple Beth Shalom draws about 100 people to the mixers it has been hosting on Tu B'Av and Tu B'Shevat since 2006. On average, one marriage has come out of each of mixer, and many more first dates, she said.

At the mixer, participants are assigned numbers. Later they write down the numbers of people they're attracted to. Organizers then send contact information to people who have listed each other. Last Tu B'Av, there were 27 matches out of 89 people.

If shaking your hips and making small talk isn't your style, Temple Reyim in Newton is hosting a Jewish singles brunch, book discussion and concert July 25.

Julia Priest, Heather Zacker, and Chaya Bromberg will sing in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and English. Debra Band will speak on her book "The Song of Songs: the Honeybee in the Garden," and Abigail Gillman, a Boston University literature professor, will lead a discussion about Grace Paley's "Goodbye and Good Luck," a short story of romance. The event is open to singles in their 20s through 60s; they will be broken up by decade for the book discussion.

Event organizer Ken Bresler of Newton said he wanted to create a day centered on books because "that is how people get to interact without having to think of something to say."

The event is meant for his friends, and people like them, who were unsuccessful on JDate and not interested in speed dating or dances. "If you go to speed dating, and you don't meet anyone you like or vice versa, then was the evening successful? Maybe, but probably not," he said. "This is designed to be an evening in and of itself that is enjoyable."

For details see *Mixers*, page 13.

Jewish support hailed as Shaw's strike settled

By Penny Schwartz
Special to the Advocate

METHUEN – Warehouse workers at Shaw's Supermarket distribution center last week overwhelmingly approved a new four-year contract, ending a bitter four-month long strike against SuperValu, the corporate owners of the supermarket chain. The strike garnered the support of the New England Jewish Labor Committee.

Company spokeswoman Rebekah Fawcett in an email wrote that the settlement, reached through a federal mediator, includes increases in wages and company contributions to health care, and level funding of retirement benefits. She said she could not release details. The average wage is about \$19/hour, according to company and union sources.

Union members of United Food and Commercial Workers Union

Local 791 are expected to return in stages over the next several weeks, according to Fawcett. The company hired permanent replacement workers during the strike that began on March 7, when negotiations broke down.

Three weeks after the strike began the workers lost their health care benefits. A group of Boston area clergy including 25 rabbis, as well as state and national elected officials, urged the company to restore the insurance.

Joanne F. Goldstein, secretary for the commonwealth's executive office of labor and workforce development, told the *Advocate* that she and Gov. Deval L. Patrick were pleased with the outcome of the dispute.

A spokeswoman for the Jewish Labor Committee told the *Advocate* that she, too, is happy that the workers would be returning to their jobs with a new contract.

Marya Axner, JLC's New England executive director, said in an email that the committee would persist in advocating for workers rights.

Goldstein, a past board member of the labor committee, said, "It's an important component of our Jewish heritage that our leaders speak out when there are issues of social and economic justice."

The JLC and Jewish religious leaders were among the most active supporters of the workers, according to Russ Davis, executive director of Massachusetts Jobs with Justice, a pro-labor advocacy group. Davis called that support critical to ending the strike.

The Jewish Labor Committee is continuing its efforts on behalf of the 100 housekeepers fired last year in an outsourcing move by the Hyatt Hotel chain in Boston. As part of a nationwide protest, it will picket the Hyatt Regency Boston July 22 at 5 p.m.



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