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Bay area teen to lead USY region

Isabelle Solomon of Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater has been elected the United Synagogue

in the region are Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi.

Youth (USY) president for the Southeastern Region.

Isabelle will succeed Jacob Ludin of Congregation B'nai Israel in St. Petersburg, who served as the Southeast "HaNegev" Region president the past year.

Isabelle was selected as president during the USY spring regional convention. More than 300 high school students were in attendance and were represented by delegates to select the next president.

As president, Isabelle will travel within the region to promote and further develop the USY organization as well as work toward HaNegev's goal to "provide a comfortable social and educational environment for Jewish teens in the Southeast." Along with Florida, the other states



Isabelle Solomon

Additionally, she will oversee programming for the region, which includes leadership, study sessions and social activities.

With the international USY convention in Orlando this year, as president of the HaNegev Region Isabelle will welcome the more than 1,000 other

members from all across North America.

The eight other officers are high school students from across the Southeast including Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Jacksonville, as well as in Nashville and Brentwood, TN and Sandy Springs, GA.

Isabelle is a student at Palm Harbor University High School and is the daughter of Mindy and Dr. Michael Solomon of Dunedin.

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Tikvah Suncoast launches new website

Tikvah Suncoast, Inc. has launched its own website to aid in the development of a residence for adults with special needs in the Tampa Bay area.

The goal is two-fold: One goal is to provide a facility that offers an enhanced residential lifestyle, ongoing learning and personal growth opportunities for adults with special needs, who could not otherwise lead fully independent lives. The second goal is to provide peace-of-mind for aging parents or grandfathers who worry there will be no one to take care of their special needs loved one when they are gone.

The website, www.TikvahSuncoast.org, affords opportunities to those who wish to receive help for loved ones with disabilities or donate to the planned facility.

Information available on the website includes personal stories submitted by families with special needs adult children. Residents of the proposed Tikvah facility may have "a spectrum of disorders" including autism, Down's syndrome and cerebral palsy.

Since its formation in 2008, the non-profit organization has bought property in St. Petersburg, thanks to a generous donation from local resident Beatrice Fishman Mehl, and had architectural renderings made of the proposed home.

Plans call for a three-story, 10,000 sq. ft. residence for some 20 adults, featuring a wide array of social, vocational, recreational and cultural opportunities for the residents.

Residents of the projected facility need not be Jewish, said group founder and chair, Ron Yogman, although the home will have a kosher kitchen and Jewish-oriented activities.

"We want it to be a home and not an institution," he said. "We're building an extended family that is integrated into the Jewish community."

Yogman said he and his wife, Claire, understand the need for such a facility on a personal level.



Their 31 year-old daughter Kandace has autism.

It is not just about her, Yogman said. "There are many other Kandaces out there and I want to do something for them."

The dream involves raising considerable funds.

"Our goal is to raise \$3 million for the bricks and mortar," he said. "We also intend to have an endowment fund to ensure the perpetuity of Tikvah."

Right now there is no time table for construction.

In these difficult economic times, it's been tough moving quickly to the next step, but some progress is being made, Yogman said.

The website is part of that progress. The group also has been able to link the new website to that of the Jewish Federation of Pinellas & Pasco Counties, which is expected to increase the visibility and allow more people to learn about the project.

In addition, Yogman said some organizational changes are going on as well.

"We've added new board members," he said, "to create a broader base with people from different walks of life."


Currently the non-profit has enough funds on hand to cover minimal operating expenses, and Yogman said they've been encouraged by money already donated through the website, and more dollars pledged.

Those wishing to donate or learn more can call (727) 321-4673, email info@TikvahSuncoast.org., or view the new website: www.TikvahSuncoast.org.

Tikvah Suncoast is separate from the Tikvah Special Needs Program offered by Tampa Jewish Family Services.

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