

Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism

Religious School Report 2021-2022

Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism welcomed a new Religious School Director, Betti Buck, in September 2021. Betti relocated from Israel and worked with 20 HCRJ teachers to welcome students back in person on September 26, 2021. Ninety-nine students joined us from 59 families. As a COVID precaution, students and teachers were required to wear masks during religious school. While the 2020-2021 HCRJ Religious School year was free to HCRJ members due to limitations caused by COVID, full religious school tuition was reinstated for this 2021-2022 school year.

Betti brought some new programming to HCRJ this year. In addition to our standard Consecration service, Betti added Mesibat Siddur or Siddur Party, which took place on April 10, to celebrate the 3rd-grade students mastering the Hebrew alphabet. Each student received their own siddur during a special ceremony. Following the ceremony, the 3rd-grade class and their families were able to commemorate this milestone together with a special breakfast celebration. Betti also introduced the concept of Shorashim, which will take place following the annual HCRJ Board meeting on May 15. Shorashim means roots, and this presentation by the 7th graders will demonstrate what they have learned about their family through a study of genealogy.

In addition to new programming, Betti also introduced the concept of an emailed “Motto of the Month” to religious school families, which introduces a concept that the students learn about in class, and then provides examples of how they can practice this motto at home. A “Religious School Scoop” newsletter was also emailed to families a few times throughout the school year to provide updates on what students were learning during religious school.

HCRJ Religious School parents, Adriana & David Bain, started a Parents Schmooze Group which gathered while the students were in religious school. The group met for breakfast a couple of times at local establishments close to HCRJ and had a challah baking class in the temple one morning presented by Hilary Kamin. Adriana and David are also coordinating a Steak & Whiskey Schmooze on Saturday evening, May 14 for religious school parents only.

On May 6, HCRJ hosted a Teacher Appreciation Shabbat, as well as a Senior Send-off for our high school seniors. A photo of the “Covid Confirmation” class was also taken for display on the photo wall in the HCRJ school. Due to Covid, these students missed the opportunity to have a Confirmation ceremony and photo taken during 2020 and 2021.

Religious school will wrap up on May 15, and the Religious School Committee, consisting of Adriana Bain and Michelle Leben, will help Betti organize a Teacher Appreciation Luncheon following the completion of classes. The teachers will receive a small gift from Betti at this time.

On June 3, we will celebrate the confirmation of our 9th graders. Each student will receive a Bible during this special occasion.

With gratitude for the dedication of the HCRJ teachers and staff,

Michelle B. Leben
HCRJ Religious School Committee Chairperson