

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

If you would have asked 10-year-old me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I probably would have provided one of three answers: veterinarian, astronaut, or pop star. You may have noticed that “rabbi” was not listed among my aspirations. However, it would have appeared on my list of what I definitely did *not* want to be when I grew up. Why? Because that was the year I quit Hebrew school.



Rabbi Wohlner

So how does a Hebrew school dropout become a rabbi? It's simple: Jewish summer camp. Somehow, instead of deciding I was lost to the Jewish people after leaving Hebrew school, my childhood rabbi approached my mother and suggested she send me to our Union for Reform Judaism regional camp, Goldman Union Camp Institute (G.U.C.I.) in Zionsville, Indiana. Thank God she said yes.

Over the many summers I spent there, as both a camper and a staff member, I gained so much more than I ever could have imagined. I learned what it meant to live in community. From screaming cheers at the top of my lungs to cheering on my cabinmates as they climbed the alpine tower, from painting our nails on the porch during *menucha* (rest hour) to painting the set for the camp musical, from writing our cabin service to writing notes to each other, every aspect of our lives was infused with living Judaism and community. I was hooked.

I returned from camp with a newfound enthusiasm for Judaism and immediately dove back into life at my synagogue. I joined our high school youth group and NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth); I was confirmed; I went on to be a Jewish studies major in college, and then worked as a full-time Youth Director at a Reform congregation outside of Washington, DC. Each of these experiences led to the next, but without that first summer at camp, I never would have become the Assistant Rabbi at Temple Israel.



This past summer, I had the privilege of spending a few days at the URJ's Henry S. Jacobs Camp. From the moment I arrived I could feel the magic of camp in the air. I was welcomed, in proper Southern style, with open arms. It reminded me of the gift of camp. For those families already enrolled at Jacobs Camp for the summer of 2016, I'll see you there! For those parents on the fence about it, I hope you will give your child the gift of a lifetime and send them to camp! Don't worry, I promise they won't *all* become rabbis.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Bess Wohlner

INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Tuesday, November 24, 7 pm

Church of the Holy Spirit, 2300 Hickory Crest Drive

The faith community that prays together, stays together!
Be a part of this annual tradition as we take time to be together with our friends in the Memphis faith community.

