

# THE JEWISH JOURNAL

Your Connection to the Jewish Community

VOL 36, NO 25

JULY 12, 2012 – 22 TAMMUZ, 5772

JEWISHJOURNAL.COM

## We Are All Connected

*Editor's Note: In the June 28 issue of the Journal, we ran a story about a meeting at Arthur Epstein's home where officials from the Jewish Federation of the North Shore and Combined Jewish Philanthropies addressed issues and answered questions around a potential merger. Alanna Cooper, JFNS director of Jewish adult education, attended the event. Below are her reflections.*



ALANNA E. COOPER

Communities across the United States are preoccupied with questions about the future of American Judaism. The North Shore is no different. On June 26, Barry Shrage, president of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies, turned his attention to these very issues in an inspirational speech addressed to a gathering of the North Shore's leading Jewish philanthropists.

Shrage's remarks proposed a dynamic relationship between our particular Jewish interests and concerns and those that are broader and far-reaching. On the one hand, strong local Jewish institutions are vital to transmitting Judaism to the next generation. Identity, after all, is shaped in the synagogues where we celebrate our children's bar and bat mitzvahs, on the grounds of the Jewish camps where our children spend their

summers, in the classrooms of the Jewish schools that our youth attend, and in the halls of Jewish community centers where we socialize.

But how does the notion that Jewish identity is nurtured and strengthened within the confines of local spaces square with the trans-local, virtually-connected world in which we currently live? Cheap travel, the Internet, texting, Facebook, Twitter and Skype all mean that our family ties, social networks and business connections are now stretched across distant locales. This is true of Jewish life, too. Our local institutions will always be critical for maintaining Jewish life. But today more than ever, we must be mindful of the fact that our Jewish fate here on the North Shore is tightly linked to the fate of the global Jewish village of which we are all a part.

Along these lines, Shrage charged the North Shore's leaders to continue to devote themselves to our local Jewish institutions which are so vital to the community. At the same time, he urged his audience to remember that we are all connected; that we are all part of a much greater Jewish whole. A trip to Israel, for example, may inspire parents to send their children to a Jewish day school; through this school these children, in turn, may take part in a national Jewish teen initiative; which might eventually inspire them to take leadership positions within their synagogues. What this means is that our ultimate goal cannot be the success of one agency or another. Nor can we focus solely on our local North Shore community. We cannot afford to wear myopic lenses. We must keep our vision broad and expansive, for success of the Jewish whole is what is at stake.