

## Defense Tools

Israel on Campus Coalition provides ways for students to counter anti-Israel action.

**Don Cohen**

Special to the Jewish News

**S**tephen Kuperberg, executive director of the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC), says that when he flies into Detroit Metro Airport, he usually heads west toward Ann Arbor where he got his undergraduate and law degrees at University of Michigan, and toward Kalamazoo, where he grew up.



**Stephen Kuperberg**

But this time, he headed north and east to keynote the 79th Intercongregational Men's Club Dinner held Feb. 16 at Young Israel of Oak Park.

The ICC is a national organization based in Washington, D.C., born nine years

ago from a partnership between the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. Originally a membership organization, it is now "a coalition of the willing" that can coordinate different initiatives and approaches while not requiring buy-in on everything it does from each of its 33 affiliated organizations, Kuperberg says.

And when you have affiliates from all three major Jewish streams as well as a political spectrum that stretches from Americans for Peace Now to the Zionist Organization of America, that flexibility is important.

"Israel supporters on campus know their communities far better than someone from the outside does," Kuperberg said. "We ask how we can be helpful, and then work to meet those needs. We don't assume we know the answer. Each individual campus answer will be different and distinct, and we should appreciate those differences."

"We want to connect the campus communities to the organizations that want to support them, and foster discussion and provide needed resources," Kuperberg said.

One way is through ICC Interactives, a new interactive web-based learning and discussion forum for Hillel and partner agency professionals. The

forum, along with conferences and other physical gatherings, are designed to share new resources and educate staff in best practices for proactively building relationships, developing programming and maintaining a strong pro-Israel atmosphere on campus — and for dealing with difficult issues when they inevitably arise.

"We focus on a 365-day program of promoting Israel on campus and seizing the agenda," Kuperberg said. "We work to show what Israel actually offers, not just what people say about it. We stress Israel's historic quest for peace, the energy, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the country, and that Israel has a diverse society and shares concerns about many of the issues important on campuses: the environment, human rights and gay rights."

A current focus is countering efforts to delegitimize Israel, particularly through the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement. One resource that provides tools to understand and respond is the "BDS Cookbook" at [www.stopbds.com](http://www.stopbds.com).

ICC also provides resources for informed, respectful and substantive discussion on the Arab-Israeli conflict in all of its aspects.

"Interestingly, those in [Israel and the Palestinian areas] are able to talk constructively about a peaceful horizon," Kuperberg said. "On college campuses, we are about 40 years behind the times."

Mark Berkman, president of Young Israel of Oak Park, was pleased with Kuperberg's talk.

"It was a very important topic, and very timely with all that is going on in the world," Berkman said. "The ICC is really the linchpin in providing information so they can rebut the anti-Israel bias on campuses."

Kuperberg also met with Hillel and community relations professionals during his visit, and took time to thank the Detroit Jewish community for its support of young Jews statewide.

"Growing up in Kalamazoo, I would have fallen off the map," he says. "I'm a product of the Detroit Jewish community's fostering of a Jewish youth connection with Israel." □

## TribeFest

Young Jews aim to connect to Jewish roots amid glitz of Vegas.

**T**he first time Moses mentioned to the Jewish people that he wanted them to wander off into the desert; we can only imagine what the reaction might have been. Looking back, however, we can agree that they all made a pretty good choice to do it.

Here in 2011, with the creation of TribeFest: Las Vegas, March 6-8, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) is giving young Jews a new opportunity to wander into the desert. This time, though, they get to sleep on 900-thread count sheets at the hotel at Mandalay Bay and party at some of the hottest venues in this playground to the stars.

This leap forward back to our roots, however, is not simply a chance to pound some Slivovitz and flirt with well over 1,000 other young Jews from across North America. It is a serious and focused effort by JFNA to change its approach about how to engage young people into Jewish communal life.

TribeFest is a way for young people to connect, explore and celebrate the richness of Jewish life, including music, food, arts and culture. The goal is to help people find their own connection to their Jewish identity, then recognize how much of an impact they can have on the world around them.

The Detroit connection for TribeFest includes Robb Lippitt of Bloomfield Hills, the national co-chair along with Robin Zappin of Philadelphia. David Kramer of Birmingham serves on the national TribeFest team as co-chair of pre- and post-programming. Local chairs Rachel Wright of Birmingham and Matthew Ran of Bloomfield Hills will lead more than 40 local young adults to the event.

There will be programming and speakers in all aspects of the Jewish experience. Speakers include Ben Mezrich (author of *The Accidental Billionaires*, the book the film *The Social Network* is based on), Jonathan Kraft (president of the New England Patriots), Miri Ben-Ari (Grammy-winning hip-hop violinist) and Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman. Event participants will be able to "Choose Their Own Adventure" not just at the event, but also in how their Judaism resonates.

J-Dub Records, Jew or Not Jew, Presentense, MASA, Birthright Next, Punk Jews, Idealist and Jewish Art Now are just a few of the partners who will help drive the chaotic energy of the event. The event's success will be measured by connecting people to the Jewish community in any way, not just through Federation.

For more information about the event, visit [www.tribefest.org](http://www.tribefest.org). □

### Networking, Lunch Study At Downtown Synagogue

More than 100 networkers are registered to participate in a meeting coordinated by Jewish B2B Networking at 5:30-7:30 p.m. Monday, March 7, at the Isaac Agree Downtown Synagogue, 1457 Griswold, Detroit. Signup is still open; call (313) 962-4047.

The event will feature speed networking. People can meet and exchange business cards in a structured setting with many like-minded entrepreneurs and business owners.

At noon that day, Robert Sklar, Contributing Editor of the *Detroit Jewish News*, will discuss in a lunch-and-learn setting the role of the *JN* in Jewish Detroit. Call for reservations.

### Boutique, Women's Dept. Team To Aid Federation

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit Women's Department and the local women's clothing boutique, SHE, will present a personal appearance and stock show by Heike Jarick on March 3-4 to support Federation. Ten percent of all sales those two days will be donated to Federation's Carolyn and Jim Bellinson Challenge Fund.

Sharon Eisenshtadt is owner of SHE and a Women's Department board member. Event co-chairs are Michele Bleznak and Molly Chernow. SHE is at 4076 W. Maple, Bloomfield Hills.

Call the Women's Department at (248) 642-4260, ext. 202.