

Kagan would be first Reconstructionist on high court

In addition to becoming the third Jewish judge on the US Supreme Court, Elena Kagan would be the first who is a member of the Reconstructionist movement, according to the Forward.



Kagan, who was dean of Harvard Law School from 2003 to 2005, is currently the solicitor general of the United States.

President Barack Obama's nomination, if successful, would mean a third of the justices would be Jewish and the remainder Catholic. For the first time, the court would have no Protestant members.

Jews account for 13 percent of the US Senate, 7 percent of the House of Representatives and less than 3 percent of the overall population.

Scholars keep a grandma's spirit alive

Ruderman recipients honored for content of character

By Deborah Fineblum Raub
Special to the Advocate

There's nothing unusual about newly minted graduates receiving awards. It happens every spring. But a year ago when the first Ruderman Scholars stepped forward to accept their awards, there was something unusual about the proceedings. These youngsters did not win these scholarships by bringing home the highest grades, snagging perfect SATs or breaking records in track.

They won them, as Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, for the content of their characters.

After Rose Ruderman died in 1993, her family set up scholarships in her memory to benefit kids whose families needed extra help with tuition at the seven area Orthodox day schools. Each year, the Rose Ruderman Scholarship Fund gives up to \$80,000 to keep these students in the schools of their choice.

"It's really important to these families and these communities," said grandson Jay Ruderman. "But somehow it wasn't enough. We wanted a way to actually honor the amazing person my grandmother was and continue her qualities into the next generation."

So they came up with an innovative idea: Why not recognize a graduate of each of the schools who reflects the values of this modest Malden woman? A woman who well into her 80s could be found in her kitchen cooking a meal for a sick neighbor.

In partnership with Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the Rose Ruderman Scholarship Award program was born last spring. The winners are selected by their principals and the teachers who know them best.

Now, last year's honorees are reflecting on their first year in their new schools, education paid in part by the Ruderman scholarship.

Yosef Yehudah Marchett, who graduated from Mesivta High School in Brighton, is now finishing up his first year at Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago. "We learn a lot more hours a day here," Yosef said. "But I try to still make time to help out." Over the winter, for example, he got up early to shovel out the walkway for the widow of a one-time head of school.

Chaiel Schaffel left "the family feeling" of Striar Hebrew Academy in Sharon for the much larger Maimonides School in Brookline.

The seventh grader finds himself playing peacemaker. "When kids are in cliques or when they try to fit in and be popular, it seems kind of sad," Chaiel said. "They wouldn't try so hard if they realized that, after a few years, it's not going to matter anymore who everyone thought was popular."

Mindel Halper-Rosenthal, a graduate of New England Hebrew Academy in Brookline, is in ninth grade at Bais Yaakov in Newton. "Every time I look at the plaque, it reminds of how important it is to be kind," Mindel said.

Joshua Eibelman, who went from Shaloh House in Brighton to sixth grade at Mai-



Talya Wasserman (left) with friend in Israel.

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Jay Ruderman

monides, still recalls the moment he found out he received the Rose Ruderman honor. "I couldn't believe it," Joshua said. "She sounds like a very good and kind person. I think I try to be like her when I help other kids in my class with their assignments."

One of last year's winners, Noach Aaron Levine, a graduate of Torah Academy in Brookline, is now in ninth grade at Torah Temimah of Lakewood, N.J., a school he calls "challenging but a good fit."

His favorite Rose Ruderman trait to emulate? "I really believe that, however much you can do to make things easier for the next person, the more you will get out of it."

The two Ruderman Scholars who traveled the farthest this year were Maimo's Deborah Bellin and Bais Yaakov's Talya Wasserman. They both spent the year – and their \$1,000 grants – learning in Israel.

"I am so grateful I had the opportunity to live in Israel for an entire year," e-mailed Deborah, who had never been there before. "I have deepened my knowledge of Jewish texts, and here at the Tiferet Center [in Ramat Beit Shemesh] they put a special emphasis on chesed (kindness). Since Mrs. Ruderman embodied the quality of chesed, I feel like I am carrying on her love of kindness by doing chesed in Eretz Yisrael."

Talya reports that this woman she never met continues to inspire her as well. "Once a week, here in Jerusalem, as part of Michalal's chesed program, I volunteer to tutor Israeli girls in English language and often act as a mother's helper for a family with young children. Also, living in a dorm offers daily opportunities to do chesed for my fellow classmates, considering that we are all on



Ruderman Scholar Deborah Bellin (left) in Israel with fellow Maimonides grads Malka Langermann (center) and Tova Ramelson.

our own for the first time, away from our parents."

On Monday, eight more students were awarded Rose Ruderman Scholarships under the beaming smiles of their families and principals:

Mesivta High School's Dov Brecher, who leads Shabbos youth groups and delivers food to hospitalized patients and their families.

Maimonides', Bella Rumshiskaya, who makes up review sheets and posts them online to help classmates with their studies.

Striar Hebrew Academy's Noah Hoffman, who exemplifies warmth, caring and loyalty with friends and family alike.

Bais Yaakov's Esther Polter, who started a Big Sister-Little Sister program at the school.

Torah Academy's Amichai Polyak, who reaches out to peers struggling academically or socially.

New England Hebrew Academy's Mendel Alperowitz, who despite a grueling commute from Cape Cod always manages to offer encouragement to anyone who needs it. His goal: to teach Torah to the next generation.

Shaloh House's David and Jesse Gould, "caring, compassionate young men" who both received the award because, according to Rabbi Dan Rodkin, "we knew whichever one was chosen the winner could not enjoy it because his brother didn't get it too."

"These are the young people who will be the next generation of leaders of Torah Judaism," said grandson Jay Ruderman. "They will be the true lights of their communities. Our other hope is that this award will inspire other families to honor their late family members in similar ways."

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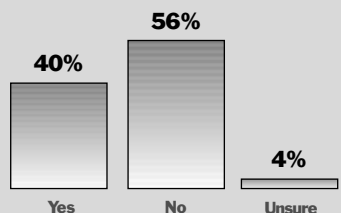
A Brandeis study found that only 10 percent of Jewish families send children to Jewish camps. What about your family?

- A. Personally have.
A. Children have or are enrolled.
B. Both myself and children.
C. No one in my family.

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April Poll Results

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The Jewish Advocate • 15 School Street, Boston, MA 02108
Advertising Fax: 617-367-2983 Editorial Fax: 617-367-9310
Tel: 617-367-9100

Editorial:

Steve Maas, Editor, Ext. 132
Cara Hogan, Sections Editor, Ext. 133
Elise Kigner, Community Editor, Ext. 147
E-mail: Editorial@TheJewishAdvocate.com
CommunityNews@TheJewishAdvocate.com

Production:

Mary Ann Maynard, Production Director, Ext. 142
Judy Gabriel, Production Coordinator, Ext. 129
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Subscriptions:

Ext. 120
E-mail: Subscriptions@TheJewishAdvocate.com

Advertising:

Dina Creiger, Advertising Director, Ext. 143
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Jeff Motta, Account Executive, Ext. 128
E-mail: Advertising@TheJewishAdvocate.com
Classifieds@TheJewishAdvocate.com

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