

## JEWISH LIFE



Among those who visited the Bialik-Rogozin School in Tel Aviv are, standing, back row, Richard Guarasci, the president of Wagner College, second from left; Karen De Moss, chairwoman of the Education Department, and Carin Guarasci, third from left. In the middle, wearing a green ball cap and glasses is Steve Greenwald, director of Film and Media Initiatives, and on the lower far right is Ruta Shah-Gordon, assistant vice president for Campus Life and Internationalization.

## Wagner faculty to discuss trip to Israel

Panel discussion set for Monday in Foundation Hall's Manzulli Boardroom on the Grymes Hill campus

By MAURA GRUNLUND  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Richard Guarasci, the president of Wagner College, will be part of a panel discussion on Monday at the screening of an Academy Award winning documentary film, "Strangers No More," about a school in Tel Aviv, Israel, where needy students are soaring academically against all odds.

Guarasci and his wife, Carin, an assistant professor in education, were part of a group from Wagner that visited the Bialik-Rogozin School in May. The school educates about 750 students in grades kindergarten through 12 who were born in about 48 countries.

"The movie is a fantastic 45 minute documentary about the school in Tel Aviv that takes in more marginal children," Guarasci said.

"The Bialik-Rogozin School is an absolute model of what it means to build an inclusive, nurturing, caring educational environment."

The Wagner president explained that many of the students were born into poverty and have been displaced from their native countries

with their parents who were survivors of genocide in countries such as the Sudan and Darfur or refugees from other impoverished nations such as Ethiopia. Many of the parents are migrant workers who toil long hours doing manual labor but still are unable to support their families. Some of the students had never been to school before and/or didn't know the official languages of Israel — Hebrew and Arabic — before entering Bialik-Rogozin.

"The test scores in this school should be 50 to 80 percent lower than the average Israeli school," Guarasci said.

But after two years, the children typically have higher standardized test scores than other Israeli students who come from middle-class or better backgrounds.

"This is such a fabulous school in terms of creating a bond among the students and with the faculty," Guarasci said.

"They use the arts such as singing and music as a kind of universal language, creating intimacy and trust."

The Wagner team met the principal, the teachers and the students and, Guarasci said, "It was just awe inspiring. The children were unbelievable."

Also traveling from Wagner to Israel were: Lily McNair, provost and vice

president for Academic Affairs; Karen DeMoss, chairwoman of the Education Department; Ruta Shah-Gordon, assistant vice president for Campus Life and Internationalization and Stephen Greenwald, director of Film and Media Initiatives.

The Wagner group also visited an academic partner, Kibbutzim College of Education.

The Guarascis and Greenwald will speak, and photos and a video of the Wagner visit to the school will be displayed at the 7:30 p.m. event in Foundation Hall's Manzulli Boardroom at Wagner. The first event in the Chai Society's Jewish Culture Series is co-sponsored by the JCC. To RSVP, email [chaisociety@wagner.edu](mailto:chaisociety@wagner.edu) or phone 718-390-3225.

### TORAH CYCLE

Congregation Toras Emes in Oakwood is celebrating Simchat Torah with services and meals this weekend.

"Yom Kippur, the holiest day of atonement, is also the day Moses came down air-brushing the second set of tablets from Mount Sinai," said Rabbi Yochanan Ivry.

"Due the solemn nature of the day, the celebration is reserved for Simchat Torah when the reading of the Torah is completed and read from the beginning. This joy has the intensity that the day of Yom Kippur has, but in a more revealed joyous ex-

pression."

This Friday evening the service is at 6:30 and on Saturday the service is at 10 a.m., followed by a lunch for which free-will donations will be accepted. For information, visit the web site [TorasEmesOnline.com](http://TorasEmesOnline.com).

### TEMPLE ISRAEL

Members of the Young Professional group and other congregants will attend the 8 p.m. Shabbat services this Friday at Temple Israel Reform Congregation in Randall Manor. The Adult Education committee is co-sponsoring a trip to Upstate New York on Oct. 20. For information, contact Lenore Miller at 718-761-3509 or email her at [lmiller296@aol.com](mailto:lmiller296@aol.com).

### TEMPLE EMANU-EL

"Journey to Adventure: Israel" will be the topic of a presentation by photographer Victor Goldmintz at Temple Emanu-El's Men's Club Breakfast this Sunday at 10 a.m. The cost is \$7 at the door. For information, call the temple at 718-442-5966.

### OHEL ABRAHAM

Congregation Ohel Abraham in Mariners Harbor has Sunday/Hebrew School on Sunday mornings led by Sabrina Saltz. Rabbi Andy Eichenholz will officiate at services this Friday at 7:30 p.m. For information, contact the temple at 718-698-7515.