Over the past few months here at the Workmen’s Circle, we’ve experienced significant growth across all our departments. It is truly rewarding for our leaders and staff to see our plans and priorities come together; to see how each part of this renewed Circle weaves together to enrich the whole—and we’re thrilled to share those recent successes with you, our members and supporters.

Just last year at our Annual Meeting, our President, Peter Pepper, recalled his experience as a founding member of our Midtown Manhattan School. His story inspired the founding of our brand-new school in Chicago. While we organized the Chicago community, we prepared to open the doors to our new Brooklyn School, and to re-affiliate with the I.L. Peretz School in Somerset, NJ. Within a year, our total number of schools jumped from four to seven.

At those seven schools, we are educating a new generation of activists in the time-honored tradition of the Workmen’s Circle. In 2015, that activism takes the form of reconnecting with our longtime union partners. Together, we’re taking on the 21st century fight for workplace fairness, most recently by joining Fight for $15, the national campaign to raise the minimum wage.

We made that campaign public by taking to the streets in solidarity with low-wage workers, both at protests and at our annual Taste of Jewish Culture Street Fair in New York. Now one of our signature events, this year’s Street Fair featured the city’s top food vendors and the world’s top performers. We attracted more than 10,000 visitors who noshed along Sixth Avenue as sounds of klezmer music filled the air, prompting dancing in the street.

To better serve aficionados of Yiddish culture, we’re actively expanding our language programs. In last year’s Fall newsletter, we shared with you that we enrolled our first 22 online Yiddish students. This year, that number has more than quadrupled, while enrollment continues to increase at our in-person classes, bringing our total number of students to over 200. That expansion is a prime example of the global demand for the high-quality Yiddish language instruction that we provide.

We’re seeing again and again that, taken together, each aspect of the Workmen’s Circle creates a whole that is much greater than simply the sum of its parts. The concentric circles of education, Yiddish language, social justice and Jewish culture, as represented in our new logo, come together for one purpose: to make the world a better and more beautiful place for all.

I hope you will join us as we continue that journey.
Back to School in Brooklyn and Beyond

This back to school season, your kids weren’t the only ones growing!

In addition to the four established Workmen’s Circle schools—Boston, Long Island, Midtown Manhattan and Westchester—we are delighted to announce the creation of two new schools in Brooklyn and Chicago. And please join us in a hearty “Welcome back!” to the I.L. Peretz Community Jewish School (ILPCJS) in Somerset, NJ, which re-affiliated with the Workmen’s Circle family this year.

Across the country, our students and families are experiencing the joy and justice of a Workmen’s Circle education. With their backgrounds in social justice, theater, Jewish education, music, art, and photography, our instructors are teaching kids ages 5-13 about Jewish holidays, music, culture, and values. Making holiday rituals and art, being introduced to Yiddish, singing songs, and learning about secular and Jewish heroes are just a few of our classroom highlights.

Each school also commits to social justice projects that meet the needs of their community. In Midtown, our students have rallied for Fight for $15, while our Long Island students are teaming up with groups such as Heifer International to help relieve hunger abroad. In order to enhance our schools’ social justice work, our search for new community partners is ongoing.

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To learn more about a school near you, contact our Education Director Kate O’Brien: KOBrien@circle.org 646.291.8371.

Teacher Spotlight | Sydney Lewis, Brooklyn

We’re thrilled to welcome Sydney Lewis, our Brooklyn School’s Education Coordinator and Co-Lead Teacher, to the Workmen’s Circle community.

“As an educator, activist, and brand-new New Yorker, I feel lucky to have found this position with the Workmen’s Circle. The school is an amazing place for families to learn and celebrate together,” Sydney shared.

After graduating from Wesleyan University with High Honors in Sociology and Psychology, Sydney spent a year as Assistant Dean of Admission at her alma mater. As an undergraduate, she served as an AmeriCorps volunteer and founded a summer preschool program serving low-income families in Middletown, CT. Sydney is a graduate student at Teachers College of Columbia University, combining her passions for social justice, critical pedagogy, and policy.

We look forward to seeing what Sydney and her co-teacher Tamar Matza have in store for our Brooklyn students in the months to come!
Parent Spotlight  |  Jill Morowitz, Chicago

Growing up in Chicago, Jill Morowitz attended a traditional Hebrew School. It’s where she met her husband Michael and, years later, when the couple began thinking about a Jewish education for their twin boys, they knew they wanted something different—something more secular, more engaging, and when it came down to it, more fun. They researched local programs and soon realized that in order to find exactly what they wanted, they’d need to organize it themselves.

They didn’t have to look far for a model. Both Jill and Michael have a strong family connection to the Workmen’s Circle— their grandparents were active members—and they saw a natural fit between their vision and the existing Workmen’s Circle Schools.

Over the past few months, Jill has helped build a brand-new Chicago Workmen’s Circle School from the ground up. This fall, the school opened its doors to families who are drawn to how inclusive, flexible and affordable it is. Our signature experiential learning programs, rooted in our cultural heritage and social justice values, resonated with the parents. Class is held every other Sunday morning, making it easy to attend in the midst of today’s busy schedules—between music lessons, sports, and homework. With a small student–teacher ratio, every child gets the attention they need, and every family is encouraged to provide input, acting as co-creators of their learning experience.

Jill describes, “We’re proving that you can learn about Jewish culture and history with a great sense of joy. The feeling at the Chicago School is that we’re having a good time as opposed to just putting in the time.” Jill’s seven-year-old twins David and Isaac, and all the new Chicago students, are certainly having a good time. And we’re so glad parents like Jill and Michael dedicated their time to make that possible.

Celebrating 25 Years at the Midtown School – and its Founder

The year 2016 marks our Midtown Manhattan Shule’s 25th anniversary, and we’re already planning a Spring event to celebrate the school and its visionary founder, Naomi Kadar z”l.

We recently visited Maya Kadar Kovalsky and Renee Goller, Naomi’s daughter and sister, respectively, at the New York headquarters for BrainPOP, the family’s online education company. They reflected on all Naomi accomplished in her too-short lifetime, and the rich legacy she left behind.

As Maya and Renee shared, when Naomi spearheaded the shule in the early 90’s, Yiddish language instruction and secular Jewish cultural programs were an anomaly; traditional Hebrew Schools were most parents’ only option. A love of Yiddish was in Naomi’s blood—as a young girl growing up in the Bronx and a student at the Shalom Aleichem Folkshul, it was all her family and friends spoke—and she saw a void for Yiddish-centered education that she quickly set out to fill.

Naomi was committed to teaching yiddishkeit through a Jewish cultural lens and she worked tirelessly to provideWorkmen’s Circle educators in Midtown and throughout the whole school network with the resources they needed. Over at the BrainPOP office, Maya shared volumes of her mom’s original work—lesson plans, handbooks and more. They form the roadmap that, 25 years later, we’re still following as we build new Workmen’s Circle schools across the country.

The Kadar family continues to pay tribute to Naomi with YiddishPOP, an interactive, animated program that teaches Yiddish to kids and adults alike. Naomi inspired the character of Nomi, the on-screen teacher who reinforces vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, reading, and writing. We use YiddishPOP in all our schools and at our Camp Kinder Ring, and it is one of the many ways that, to this day, Naomi is instilling a love of Yiddish in the next generation.

We hope to see you, and all the generations that have learned from Naomi, at the Midtown Shule’s 25th Anniversary celebration. For more information on that event, or on the school, contact our Midtown Director Beth Zasloff: bethzasloff@gmail.com.
Learning the mama loshn has never been more fun or easy. This semester, we offered more in-person and online classes than ever before—and welcomed a record number of students. We have over 200 seats in our online and in-person classrooms, and every one of them is filled.

As our signature online program continues to grow, we’re expanding our reach around the globe. Our online students and teachers log in to class from their homes in Argentina, Australia, China, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Ukraine, plus 18 US states. With a brand-new online platform, we’re making virtual learning as fast as possible for students at every level.

Students who aren’t behind a computer or a desk are taking center stage thanks to an exciting new partnership with the New Yiddish Rep. The critically-acclaimed theater group is leading a special workshop at our Midtown Manhattan office, teaching Yiddish through performing.

Lev Herskovitz, one of the stars of the New Yiddish Rep’s latest production, “Death of a Salesman,” is enrolled in the workshop and also participated in this summer’s Trip to Yiddishland. Here’s what he had to say about participating in the Workmen’s Circle Yiddish programs.

“My name is Lev, but I was named after my great grandfather, Layb, who emigrated from Poland in the early 1900s. During Trip to Yiddishland, everyone called me Layb, which gave me my own special connection to my roots. The Workmen’s Circle, and its dedicated teachers, is introducing me to yiddishkeit in ways I never could have imagined.”

The Good Fight: Advocating with Fight for $15

Practice makes perfect: with over 100 years of experience fighting for fair labor practices, this year we joined forces with fellow social justice and labor organizations to ensure the success of Fight for $15, the national campaign to raise the minimum wage to $15/hour.

Within the Jewish community, we’re circulating a letter of support for Fight for $15, which over 40 leaders and organizations representing over two million members have signed to date.

And, this summer, our Executive Director Ann Toback was among the hundreds of activists and fast food workers who testified before the New York State Wage Board in support of Fight for $15.

Our collective efforts paid off in September, when the New York Wage Board announced it would raise the minimum wage for all fast-food workers to $15/hour.

In the wake of this victory, we’re organizing Jewish allies, members and friends to demand a $15 minimum wage for low-wage workers across all industries – and we’re showing that rising poverty is more prevalent in the Jewish community than any of us would have guessed.

Did you know that 45% of Jewish children in New York City live in poor or near-poor households? In response to this and other disturbing statistics, we’re organizing a series of public forums on Jewish Poverty throughout New York City. Dozens gathered for our first two forums at our
The Workmen’s Circle is hosting a very special event the evening of Thursday, December 10th at the Helen Mills Event Space and Theater in New York City. We are honoring Keith Mestrich, President and CEO of Amalgamated Bank, and we hope you can join us.

Keith, a leader in the movement for labor unions and nonprofit organizations to build wealth for purpose, has spent his career advocating for the rights of working people. This is truly a synergistic match of organization and honoree, both because of Keith’s own work in the labor movement, and for the long history of support and commitment to workers’ rights and social justice that Amalgamated Bank and the Workmen’s Circle share.

Keith has a history of involvement in many causes so important to the Workmen’s Circle. He served as CFO of SEIU, a major backer of the Fight for $15 movement, the wage equality national campaign we joined this year. Additionally, he is an Advisory Board member of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, which we commemorate every March. Amalgamated Bank was founded in 1923 by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and was New York City’s first labor bank.

From its inception, the bank has been committed to the needs of working people. Financed in 1927, the Amalgamated Housing Cooperative housed Workmen’s Circle branches and even today a Workmen’s Circle Building stands among the Amalgamated Housing Cooperative Buildings on Hillman Avenue in the Bronx. It is fitting and right that we recognize Keith Mestrich and Amalgamated Bank for all they have done and all they will do for our community.

Midtown office and at the YM & YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood to participate in discussions with Fight for $15 activists, City Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez and Mark Levine, and our very own Board Member Steven M. Cohen, who co-authored a 2011 UJA report on Jewish Poverty in New York City.

Interested in having the next Jewish Poverty forum in your neighborhood? Contact our Social Justice Director Larry Moskowitz to learn more: L.Moskowitz@circle.org 212.889.6800 ext. 808

Join us December 10th for this festive evening!

For details and sponsorship opportunities, contact:
Ellen Goldstein, Director of Development: egoldstein@circle.org 646.291.8367

From left to right: Jeanne Stellman, WC Board member; Ann Toback, WC Executive Director; Ydanis Rodriguez, New York City Council Member; Robert Kaplan, WC Board member; and Larry Moskowitz, WC Social Justice Director at the Inwood Jewish Poverty Forum.
Jewish never tasted so good! This year’s Taste of Jewish Culture Series continues to delight the most discerning palates.

Our wildly successful annual Taste of Jewish Culture Street Fair, held in June in collaboration with Folksbiene’s KulturfestNYC, attracted 10,000 hungry New Yorkers along Sixth Avenue.

Guests sampled delicacies from the city’s top vendors including Baz Bagel, Black Seed Bagels, Breads Bakery, Brooklyn Seltzer Boys, Brooklyn Sesame, Court Street Grocers, Dassara Brooklyn Ramen, Judy’s Knishes, Kossar’s Bialys, La NewYorkina, Marani, Mile End Deli, OddFellows Ice Cream, Sage Kitchen, Scharf & Zoyer, Shelsky’s of Brooklyn, and Taim.

Food wasn’t the only thing on the menu: we enjoyed an international smorgasbord of Jewish music from Frank London’s Klezmer Brass All Stars featuring Eleanor Reissa, Paul Shapiro’s Ribs and Brisket Revue, Holland’s Nikitov and Mexico’s Klezmerson, plus Yiddish dancing in the street with Steve Weintraub.

Next year’s Street Fair will be May 22, 2016—be sure to mark your calendars now!

Mmmm—what’s that delectable aroma? If you were one of the baker’s dozen of people who attended our Taste of Jewish Culture challah baking class with Uri Scheft of Breads Bakery in Union Square you already know! Our participants learned the ins and outs of fabulous challah, focaccia and babka recipes and took home a treasure trove of goodies to enjoy for days to come.

After such indulgence, a bisl exercise was in order, and our Taste of Jewish Culture Lower East Side Walking Tour fit the bill! With Jordan Schaps and Aaron Rezny, co-authors of “Eating Delancey: A Celebration of Jewish Food,” we led a group of intrepid and hungry explorers to re-discover our gastronomic roots. We stopped at celebrated Lower East Side food venues including Economy Candy, Katz’s Delicatessen, Russ & Daughters, Sammy’s Roumanian, The Pickle Guys, and Yonah Schimmel Knish Bakery. An enlightening, satisfying, belly-filling time was had by all.

What Jewish food-related events would you like to experience next? Email events@circle.org and let us know!

What do you get when you combine a Yiddish comedy duo with a street fair? A video that will make you laugh out loud and leave you very hungry. YidLife Crisis comedians Jamie Elman and Eli Batalion were on the ground at our Street Fair, filming a hilarious new video. Find it on our Facebook page!
A Celebration Almost a Century in the Making
Camp Kinder Ring’s 90th Anniversary
Summer 2015 on Sylvan Lake was as memorable as ever, and now we’re counting down the days until Camp Kinder Ring’s 90th Anniversary party. Mark your calendars—this event will be held on September 10, 2016. Camp alumni from every era will be there, catching up and sharing their favorite memories from their home away from home.

As we get ready to celebrate, we’re dusting off our old camp scrapbooks—and we’re asking everyone in our camp family to look through theirs, too (we know you have them!). Send over a camp picture you love to Office@campkr.com, and tell us the story behind it. We’ll feature the photos we receive online and at the anniversary party.

Yiddishkeit Flourishes Throughout Our Communities
From coast to coast, Workmen’s Circle communities are speaking, singing and learning Yiddish in new and exciting ways. Here’s what they’ve been up to.

Northern California
In Northern California, Branch 1054 ushered in the New Year with Yiddish songs and English readings and are following up with a series of talks on literature and social issues, in addition to free bi-weekly Yiddish classes. A special highlight for the San Francisco Bay Area is the Klez California music festival co-sponsored by the Northern California Workmen’s Circle and held in November. For more info, email Diana Scott: dmscott01@yahoo.com.

Toronto
What’s nu in Toronto? Learning in Yiddish! The Toronto Workmen’s Circle recently presented two programs in Yiddish. Kalman Weiser, Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at York University, explored how Max Weinreich, co-founder of YIVO in 1925, set out to build Yiddish scholarship in America. Eugene Orenstein, retired Associate Professor of modern Jewish history at McGill University, presented a talk on I.L. Peretz, known as the Architect of Modern Yiddish Culture, in commemoration of the centenary of his death. Contact Mel Caderbaum to learn about upcoming events: wcarto@yahoo.com.

Southern California
Mazel Tov to six newly-certified secular Jewish vegvayzer/Leaders! SoCal Arbeter Ring/Workmen’s Circle, co-sponsors of the Secular Yeshiva along with the Sholem Community, is proud to congratulate its newest graduates (pictured right) who have completed more than three years of studies. Secular Yeshiva Leaders are empowered to officiate at weddings, baby namings, bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies, and memorials as well as create and lead innovative holiday observances, and they represent the future of organized secular Jewish communities. To become a vegvayzer, contact Hershl Hartman: hershl@earthlink.net
Annual Meeting Update & Election Results

In October, we held our annual membership meeting, where we elected our new Board Members. We are thrilled to welcome them into the Circle, and we asked each of them why they are excited to join. Their answers gave us a smile, and we think you’ll be happy to read them too.

Michael Kaminer
Independent Writer and Editor; Dining Critic, New York Daily News and Contributing Editor, The Forward; Communications Consultant

“The Workmen’s Circle is simply my identity. As the center of a five generation family, with activist parents and grandparents and even grandchildren who summer at Camp Kinder Ring, it is also a central element of my daily life. It provides the route to my progressive activism and it is essential to who I am.”

Robert Kaplan
Laser Physicist/Engineer/Executive; Workmen’s Circle Activist since 1974

“The Workmen’s Circle has always stood for those same progressive values and causes that the Workers United shares. I am joining the Workmen’s Circle to contribute to the work that continues to be done, on behalf of not only the Jewish community, but for everyone in the community.”

Edgar Romney
Secretary Treasurer, Workers United/SEIU; Manager, New York Metropolitan Area Joint Board; Labor Activist and Organizer

“Tikkun Olam. I welcome this opportunity to serve, to learn and to bring into our Circle my neighbors and friends from eastern Queens and the legal community.”

Bernice Siegal
Supreme Court Justice; President of the Network of Bar Leaders; Former Chair and President of the Brandeis Association & Queens County Women’s Bar Association

“‘I am thrilled to rejoin the Board for another term. The Workmen’s Circle and the Midtown Workmen’s Circle School have enabled me to engage joyfully in the world of Jewish culture and activism, and to renew my commitment to making the world a better place.”

Eva Zasloff
3rd, 4th and 5th grade Teacher, St. Ann’s School; Midtown Workmen’s Circle School Board Member since 2010

Our newly elected Directors will join forces with returning Directors, President Peter Pepper, Allen Breslow, Steven Cohen, Rich Rumelt, David Goldstein, Madelon Braun, Mirm Kriegel, Martin Krupnick, Ed Ott, Joshua Skolnick, Jeanne Stellman, and Gary Strauss as we look ahead to growth and renewal for many years to come.

A heartfelt thank you to outgoing Directors, Denise Bowyer, Mike Felsen, Franklin Moss and Barnett Zumoff, whose cooperative dedication and hard work shaped and sustained the Workmen’s Circle throughout their terms.

Leave a legacy gift. Be a beacon for future generations.

Your estate plan represents your beliefs, your activism, and your legacy. Including the Workmen’s Circle in your estate plan is a simple, yet powerful, way to invest in the next generation. If you are remembering the Workmen’s Circle in your will, trust, life insurance policy, and/or other planned gift, thank you!

Leave a legacy gift. Be a beacon for future generations.

For more information, contact Ellen Goldstein, Director of Development: EGoldstein@circle.org, 646.291.8367.