

## **Agudas Achim Congregation**

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241 Phone: 319-337-3813 www.AgudasAchimIC.org

#### February 2022 / Shevat-Adar 5782

# FROM THE RABBI Esther Hugenholtz

'Mishenichnas Adar, marbim b'simcha' - 'when Adar enters [the calendar], we increase in joy.' This catchphrase from the Talmud (Bavli, Ta'anit 29) is popular in traditional communities to signal our excitement for the holiday of Purim. It seems strange that a relatively minor holiday like Purim would carry such significance and I must say, I have not always been convinced. There are far loftier Jewish holidays to enjoy—Pesach comes to mind; a festival so rich in both meaning and practice, it's positively bursting at the seams. But Purim? I've been reflecting what could be particularly joyous about yet another holiday that commemorates an averted genocide. Schnapps at the Megillah reading or fancy dress notwithstanding, there's a bleakness to Purim that belies its penchant for merriment.

This year, I decided to reflect on that curious phrase 'mishenichnas Adar, marbim b'simcha' - 'when Adar enters, we increase joy.' This year is an intercalated year, meaning there are two months of Adar so that the lunar and solar cycles in our calendar remain aligned. Yes, Adar Rishon (the first month of Adar) has just started, but we don't actually celebrate Purim until Adar Sheni (the second month of Adar).

Does Purim elevate a gallows humor where we cheer on the downfall of Haman the Agagite? Or is it rather a wryness in response to the harsh conditions of life that sharpens our joy, rather than diminishing it? Queen Esther rallies; 'for such a time as this' and leads her people to redemption.

This redemption doesn't come easy: it is born through conflict, bloodshed and trauma.

After two years of COVID, and two weeks post-Colleyville, many of us may feel raw. Like Queen Esther, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker realized that salvation would come from no quarter except his own and through acts of perceptive bravery, set himself and his congregants free. Like the Purim story, this story too has a happy ending, and also, like the Book of Esther, it comes with inevitable scars. We sit with the defiant joy of having survived yet another day. We show up to synagogue (on Zoom), resolve to hold our loved ones tighter; wear our masks and go about our day in this world that is 'hafuch', 'topsy turvy'. We are weary, our patience wears thin, we feel a little more fractious. Yet, we do what we always do, which is put one foot in front of another and remember the treasure of our Jewishness; our humor, our zest for life, our ability to argue, our capacity for love, our resilience and our yearning for justice. The storehouses of our Jewish souls are somehow never depleted.

Perhaps our ancestors loved Purim because they were clear-eyed about how intentional you have to be about a life we cannot take for granted. In the fulcrum of the story, when Esther pivots away from cowardice into resistance, she proclaims that she was made for such a time as this. Queen Esther was intentional, strategic and wise. She knew she could not do it all. She knew her capacity was

(Continued on page 2)

#### FROM THE RABBI

#### Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

limited. But she also knew how to be effective and keep her mission at the forefront of her mind. She knew how to seize the moment.

There are lessons for all of us in this wry, cleareyed, joyful hope. We all have to be intentional about our Jewish community. Intentional about keeping it safe and intentional about keeping it open. We have to be intentional about the relationships we build, rebuild, maintain or invite. Intentional about how we choose to assign our time and our resources.

It was heartwarming to see a robust turnout to our Shabbat services after Colleyville. We need to be together; to occupy a space that is unapologetically Jewish, to retain control over our sense of Jewish selves. And in the face of antisemitism; to reaffirm and recommit to our Jewish values.

The synagogue too seeks to be intentional, especially at a time of reduced collective bandwidth. For the winter and spring, we have a wonderful Adult Education program for you all. We are kicking off February with three amazing learning events: the Parents' Circle, a session on Ugandan Jewry and a session on the Obermann Jewish Working Group at the University of Iowa. The Introduction to Judaism program is relaunching on the 21st of February and our Sunday School is cleverly pivoting to heartwarming outdoor activities so that our families can stay intentionally connected during Omicron. For Purim, we are planning a fabulous intergenerational Purim Carnival with a bake sale, fancy dress, fun games and the piece de resistance: a petting zoo (yes, with actual, adorable animals!) So come join us and... bring a friend!

We are also looking to be intentional with the friendships and support structures we create in the synagogue community. We are hoping to put in place ideas for Shabbat dinners and other ways for

us to come together again and enjoy the light of each other's company. We need to tighten the cords that bind us in a common destiny as a Jewish people, both locally here in Iowa and across the globe. And we endeavor to open spaces for spiritual renewal and connection. Moreover, we have the University of Iowa's Anne Frank Sapling project to look forward to; a poignant counterpoint of remembrance and love in the face of hatred.

This week, I had the honor to serve on a conversion Beit Din. It was after Colleyville. Like so many people who choose Judaism intentionally, this gentleman did not shy away from doubling down on his sense of Jewishness in the wake of violent antisemitism. It did not shake his resolve one bit; on the contrary, it only strengthen it. It was powerful to witness. Rabbis around the country report that conversion programs are full—during these hard times, these existential times, people are looking for community. Not only that, they are looking for a value system that can help them face those hard times with honesty, integrity, courage and solidarity. The luster of our treasure will not be diminished by those who seek to diminish it.

'La'Yehudim haitah orah v'simcha v'saison vikar' 'The Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness
and honor' (Esther 8:16), the Megillah tells us. For
sure, they had each other, and into each other, they
poured their intention and love. May our lives be
transformed by a true, generous, unfettered
rejoicing. May we find our turning point and find
deep meaning in a time such as this. May we show
up for each other and our beautiful Agudas Achim
community. You are welcome here. There's no
more purposeful time to be Jewish.

Wishing you a freilichen (happy) Purim full of resilience and compassion and a commitment to repair our world piece by piece—together.

# **Agudas Achim Congregation February Adult Education Events**



Eager to engage in Jewish learning and broaden your horizons at Agudas Achim? You can expect the following programming to be rolled out during the winter and spring of 2022. All are via Zoom. Zoom links will be available in the weekly email.

### **Emerging Judaism: Frank Salomon on the Abayudaya** SUNDAY FEBRUARY 13 AT 10:30 AM

Congregant Frank Salomon is an emeritus professor of Anthropology and has recently completed a trip to Uganda where he visited the Abayudaya and connected with their spiritual leader, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu. Frank will share his experiences with the congregation in this Adult Education presentation.



#### **Parents Circle**

#### Sunday, Feburary 20 at 10:30 a.m.

Parents Circle is made up of bereaved families, both Israeli and Palestinian, who have lost someone to the conflict. Their conversation brings to life their commitment to seeing each others' humanity, that the tears are the same color, and by speaking to each other heart-to-heart, we can begin to open our own hearts to their stories and see a path away from revenge, toward peace and reconciliation. This event will feature Israeli and Palestinian speakers sharing their experiences in a webinar format on Zoom. A Q and A will be available for attendees of the event.



The Parents' Circle will be moderated by Anita Silvert of the Parents' Circle organization and she welcomes your questions and comments. You can contact her at <a href="mailto:anita@parentscirclefriends.org">anita@parentscirclefriends.org</a>.



The opinions and views of the speakers and other participants in this event are not necessarily representative of opinions and views of Agudas Achim synagogue.

# Ari Ariel and Lisa Heineman of the Obermann Center (Jewish Studies working group) SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27 AT 10:30 AM.

Ari Ariel and Lisa Heineman are spearheading an effort to expand Jewish Studies at the University of Iowa. Ari teaches courses on Global Jewish History and the Israel-Palestine Conflict. Lisa teaches courses on the Holocaust and on Jews, Judaism, and Social Justice. They co-direct the Jewish Studies Working Group at the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies and the Jewish Studies Network at International Programs.



#### **MEETING WITH RABBI HUGENHOLTZ**

We've set up a Calendly link here for setting up meetings automatically with Rabbi Hugenholtz. We are reserving Wednesday and Thursday from 4-6 for B-Mitzvah meetings specifically, but feel free to schedule a meeting with her if you'd like.

#### **UPCOMING ADULT ED EVENTS**

# Agudas Achim Congregation Adult Education Events: March and Beyond

Studying the Megillah (book of Esther) with the rabbi

Wednesday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m.

Nina Weinstein (pen name: Nina Barragan) and her new book

SUNDAY, MARCH 20 AT 10:30 A.M.

Lyz Lenz on the Charlottesville Trial SUNDAY, APRIL 3 AT 10:30 A.M.

Linda Wertz and Judy Liskin-Gasparro on the Yiddish study group

DATE TO BE DETERMINED

#### WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, February 23 at 1:00 p.m.

Please contact the office for more information.

#### **YIDDISH STUDY GROUP**

The Yiddish Study Group meets Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Contact the office for more information.

#### BEREAVEMENT GROUP

The Bereavement support group has had few to no participants in the last few months. We have decided to cancel the regularly scheduled sessions. We will resume when there is a need.

Please contact Martha Lubaroff at <a href="mlubaroff@gmail.com">mlubaroff@gmail.com</a> with any concerns.

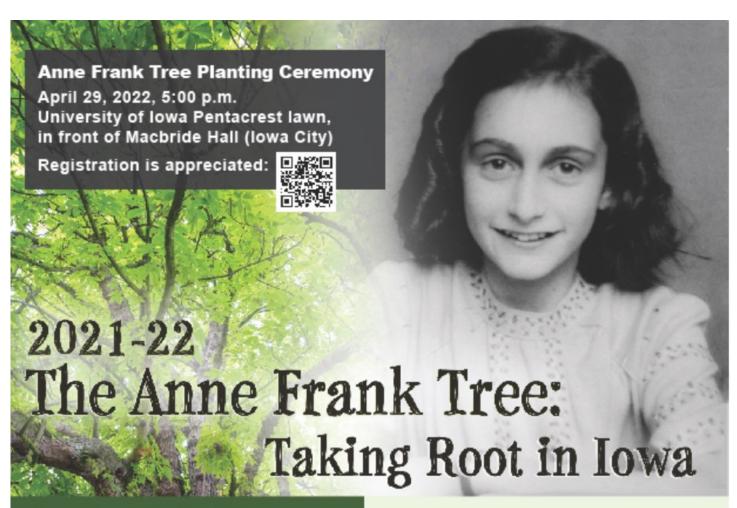
#### WARM UP AMERICA

The cold weather continues, as does the need for warmth. Our afghans help those needing a bit more of this warmth. Warm Up America will be zooming on February 6 & 20, from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Contact eabrons@earthlink.net.

We'll meet again in person or on zoom Mar 6 & 20 and Apr 3, depending on synagogue policy then. Please consider joining us, in person later or on zoom this month. No skills are required, just an interest in being part of the Warm Up team. Contact <a href="mailto:thereseguedon@gmail.com">thereseguedon@gmail.com</a> for details.





#### Anne Frank Sapling Prize: A Writing Contest for Junior High & High School Students

The lowa Youth Writing Project is hosting a world-wide writing contest for junior high and high school students inspired by Anne Frank and her legacy. Writers are asked to respond to the following prompt in essay or poem form: Write about a time when you felt isolated or trapped. How did you work through that time, and what did you learn from the experience?

Guidelines and submission information: iywp.org/writing-contest.



Contest winners and honorable mentions will be published in a professionally designed anthology. Some winners will be selected to read at the planting of the sapling on April 29, 2022.

Deadline: February 27, 2022, 11:59 p.m.

On April 29, 2022, a sapling will be planted on the University of Iowa's main campus. This isn't any tree—it's a horse chestnut propagated from the immense tree that grew behind the annex where Anne Frank hid during World War II. Frank made several mentions of the tree in her famous diary. All Iowans are invited to join the celebration of this living memorial. In an event featuring live music, spoken-word performance, blessings, and talks, we will honor Anne's spirit and humanitarian message.

View the schedule and learn about how Dr. Kirsten Kumpf Baele brought the tree to lowa at uiannefranktree.com.

Co-sponsored by the Anne Frank Center USA, lowa Youth Writing Project, lowa Hillel, Agudas Achim Synagogue, Blank & McCune, lowa City UNESCO City of Literature, MidwestOne Bank, Shive Hattery, Inc., and multiple UI offices





#### ANNE FRANK SAPLING PROJECT EVENTS

This is the spring schedule of events for the Anne Frank Sapling project. This project carries enormous symbolic weight for the Iowa City/Coralville Jewish community.

For more information, including Zoom links, timings and descriptions of each event, see:

https://uiannefranktree.com/spring-2022/

Let Me Be Myself exhibit

at the UI Old Capitol Museum and around the state

February 9, 2022 Exhibition Spotlight:

The Hawkeye State & Anne Frank

12:00-1:00 CST

Virtual event; register for Zoom link

February 28-March 2, 2022

**Provost's Global Forum: Teaching Anne Frank** 

March 1, 2022

Women's History Month Lecture by Jeannette

Gabriel: "Welcoming the Immigrants: Refugee Resettlement in Jewish Iowa"

4:30-6:30 p.m.

Iowa City Public Library, Meeting Room A

Also March 1, 2022

In Line for Anne Frank Film Screening

7:00 p.m.

FilmScene at the Chauncey

March 9, 2022

Exhibition Spotlight: Part 2

The Diary within the Context of Children's Literature

12:00-1:00 p.m. CST

Virtual event; register for Zoom link

April 29, 2022

Tree Planting Ceremony

5:00 p.m. CST

University of Iowa Pentacrest

#### LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

Congratulations to Meadow and Daniel Amster on the birth of their first child, Olive Mushka.

Lauren Kanner and Aaron Adler along with big brother, Noah, are ecstatic to welcome Eli Herbert into their family, born January 12! They feel so fortunate to have welcomed him into the Jewish people at his bris and receive his Hebrew name of Eliyahu Shalom with Rabbi Hugenholtz and Dr Barcey Levy as his mohel.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT Janice Weiner

The Talmud teachers that Adar brings an increase in joy. And we get two bites of the apple this year – if Adar I doesn't work out, there's always Adar II.

How do we increase our joy? Spring will help. COVID numbers going down will help. Not feeling like we're all on some kind of relentless pandemic treadmill will help.

Way back when, when I took the entrance exam to the Foreign Service, it contained something called an "in box" test – they gave us a sheaf of papers with tasks and a set time to prioritize and decide what to do in what order and why. Life seems like a gigantic in-box test these days. It can also feel like the aforementioned treadmill (like in those old cartoons where it keeps speeding up). I'm trying to figure out both how to slow down the treadmill and

eliminate half the papers in the in-box test.

While my metaphors may be stretched a bit thin, as I look at the congregation and communal life, I find myself asking the same questions: How can we pare down our "to do" list and accomplish something

worthwhile? My approach: Let's figure out a few things on which to focus (understanding that many of us have diminished energy), commit to them and do them well. That in turn can uplift and re-energize us for the next challenges.

I suggest we take a hard look at what we need right now to nurture ourselves as a community. What will bring us the greatest benefit and, frankly, the greatest joy? It seems to me that we need the basics - to take care of people, bring people together and lighten and brighten lives.

A very Jewish way to engage is to educate and enlighten. The upcoming set of adult education programs can do just that – as well as stretch and exercise our minds. They are accessible because

they will be on Zoom – and love Zoom or hate it, it is easy for many to attend and engage. Whether it's Israel, Ugandan Jews or the Charlottesville antisemitism trial, I urge you to log on.

Another traditional way is through food. Here I'm thinking of several options: First, we have families in our community with new babies and we'd like to help them out via a Meal Train to make their lives just a bit easier. When you are dealing with a newborn, it is a mitzvah to have someone drop off a meal (link). Second, we will soon be launching a new version of Share Shabbat – creating community through small, shared dinners at home. And third, Hillel can help by catering kosher Shabbat meals for those of you not inclined to cook or who just want a week off.

How do we increase our joy? Spring will help. COVID numbers going down will help. Not feeling like we're all on some kind of relentless pandemic treadmill will help. I'll leave the worship part to the Rabbi and move on to external community engagement, a way to expand the reach of our community and feed our own souls. The upcoming Anne Frank series (including an exhibit currently on display at the Old Capitol

Museum) provides such an opportunity. It is a chance to connect, explain and broaden others' horizons. This rich programming begins on February 9<sup>th</sup>, is the topic of the Provost's Forum, which starts on February 28<sup>th</sup> and includes programming both virtual and in person. It should create many teachable moments about where we find ourselves currently in this country and this state, post-Colleyville, with antisemitic incidents still on the rise. You can find a link to the various programming here: Teaching Anne Frank | International Programs (uiowa.edu)

Please take care of yourselves, never hesitate to reach out and here's hoping we all find some joy in Adar.

#### FEBRUARY EVENTS FOR KIDS

Hot Cocoa and Play in the Snow at the Rabbi's House (contact the office for information)

February 6th, 12:00 to 1:00

Bring winter gear and your own sled, if you have one. We have 4.

Optional: **Bring** *tzedakah* – a jar of nut butter (peanut butter, sunflower butter etc.) or a cash donation for the CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank.

**Animal-themed Games at Sonja's House** (contact the office for information)

February 20th, 12:00 to 1:00

Play animal-themed games at Sonja's house

Animal-themed hats, furry hats, and funny hats encouraged!

Optional: **Bring** *tzedakah* – a donation to raise money for the animal shelter.

**B-Mitzvah Students:** You did a great job with the Jewish Pirates Games. Plus, we know you are better than adults at getting the littler kids excited! Come and show us how it's done!

#### **SHABBAT SERVICE SCHEDULE**

Streaming link for all Shabbat services on Zoom; click here to sign up for in person attendance

Terumah	Friday, February 4	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
(Exodus 25:1-27:19)	Saturday, February 5	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
Tetzaveh	Friday, February 11	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 27:20-30:10)	Saturday, February 12	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Ki Tissa	Friday, February 18	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 30:11-34:35)	Saturday, February 19	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Vayakhel	Friday, February 25	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 35:1-38:20; Exodus 30:11-16	Saturday, February 26	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem

#### **NACHAS**

George Weiner stepped down after 24 years as director of the University of Iowa Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center. You can read more here.



SUNDAY MARCH 6TH 2022 AT AGUDAS ACHIM SYNAGOGUE

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Join the fun and bring a friend!

For info: principal@agudasachimic.org

#### **DONATIONS**

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of Isaac Strauss and Meyer Markovitz

**Stephen Strauss**: In memory of Isaac Strauss

and Meyer Markovitz

**TIKUN OLAM FUND** 

**Jerry Naylor**: In memory of Mary S. Naylor

#### **ZOOM GAME NIGHT**

The Membership Committee is hosting a Zoom Game Night for the Agudas Achim Young Member Family Group on Wednesday, Feb. 16 at 7:30 p.m. This is a member-only event. Enjoy your favorite snack and beverage and be prepared to defend your choice. Details will be sent to member families very soon.

# SCHOOL NEWS Sonja Spear

February is a difficult month. Winter has lost its charm, but spring is still far away. We seem to be in the "February" phase of the pandemic right now. All of our accommodations, from Zoom to masks, have lost the charm of novelty, but we are still far from the revitalizing return to normal life. So it was hard to know what to do when the latest COVID surged forced us to close the synagogue to in-person meetings. Try to persuade parents to make their kids attend on Zoom? Hope for an early thaw so that we can return to meeting in a tent? What could bring a little lightness to this bleak February?

The answer, clearly, was cocoa. There was no way we could learn a lot of Hebrew or have deep ethical debates standing outside in an Iowa February. And all of our kids are thoroughly Zoomed-out, but we could get them together to play with their Jewish friends. So we have planned a few small, "pop-up" outdoor activities intended mostly to keep the kids connected to each other and, maybe just a little, to raise funds for the animal shelter and for CommUnity. The kids will play outside, have a little cocoa, and snatch a few moments of joy in this grim, icy season.

I hope that we will be back in-person in March, just in time for Purim. I've even started planning a Purim carnival with games and a petting zoo. Just in case COVID somehow manages to ruin my plans yet again, I have made one purchase we can definitely use: two giant piñatas shaped like the corona virus. Pandemic or no pandemic, the kids can bash that virus!

The Purim Carnival will take place mostly (or completely) outdoors on March 6. I hope everyone comes. February doesn't last forever. One day, spring will come, and we will celebrate our freedom yet again.

#### **FEBRUARY YAHRZEITS**

**Eleanor Blauner** Vera Gutierez **Dorothy Pliner** John Brady Rose Lee Pomerantz Schuyler Schenck Haskell Fannie Saltzman Braverman Patricia Hass Louis Rosenbaum Jacob Horowitz Mark Rosenthal Irene Brodsky Joan Clements Bryant Doris Johansen Sanford G. Rossen Elizabeth Buch Marcia Williams Roston Allen Kraft Corinne Chapman **Betty Krantz** Mary Saletta Donald Cohn Gertrude Sandler Donia Kuperman Morris Dicker Jean Leiberman Lenett Jay Sandler **Edith London** Mike Donner Jessica Schwartz Hyman Dubin Albert Lubaroff Harry Shulman **Edith Davidson Estin** Dinah Leah Markovitz Sam Skorton Louis Friedman Samuel Markovitz Gladys Paul Spiller Sadie Friedman **Andrew Marks** Pat Vunderink Samuel Goldman Patrick McEwen Nancy McGinnis Whitehead **Alan Widiss** Harley William Goodman Bess Millstein Bertha Graber Joann Sprinkman Picard Ralph Wingo

#### FEBRUARY 2022

Fri	4	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Sat	19	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sun	20	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
Sat	5	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
Sun	6	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM			Parents Circle	10:30 AM
		Warm-Up America	10:30 AM			Warm-Up America	10:30 AM
		Cocoa & Fun in the Snow at	12:00 PM			Sunday School Games at Sonja's	12:00 PM
		Rabbi Hugenholtz's		Mon	21	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
Mon	7	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Tues	8	The Hawkeye State & Anne Frank	12:00 PM	Wed	23	Free Lunch	11:30 AM
Thur	10	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM			Book Group	1:00 PM
Fri	11	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM	Fri	25	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM			Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sat	12	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	Sat	26	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sun	13	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	Sun	27	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
		Frank Salomon on Abayudaya	10:30 AM			Sunday School	9:15 AM
Mon	14	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM			Lisa Heineman & Ari Ariel	10:30 AM
Wed	16	Ritual Committee	7:30 PM	Mon	28	Tea Time Check-In	4:00 PM
Thur	17	Board Meeting	7:00 PM			Intro to Judaism	7:30 PM
Fri	18	Shabbat Schmooze	6:30 PM			SAVE THE DATE!	
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	Sun	3/6	PURIM CARNIVAL	9:15 AM



#### Rosalie Braverman, Rabbi Jeff Portman and Linda Wertz

"One Rosh Hashana Jeff and I went to Rosalie's house to do an abridged service for her. Her head stayed down and she seemed totally disconnected from it. On a hunch, I just started singing Yiddish songs. Immediately her head came up, her eyes started sparkling, she got a big grin on her face and she started singing along. Yiddish music is the heart of a people and I was so lucky to get to experience this with Rosalie." —Linda Wertz

STAFF								
Rabbi	Esther Hugenholtz	Office Secretary	John Wertz					
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Principal	Sonja Spear							
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