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Business

ShalomBoston.com Clicks for Jewish Boston

By Susie Davidson
Advocate Correspondent

NEWTON - The ultimate online Judaic resource in the Boston area is, mouses down, ShalomBoston.com. With a consistently updated and highly detailed Calendar of ongoing events, searchable directories for synagogues and congregations, agencies and organizations, life cycle and ritual needs, food, products and services, even a special food section with recipes and menus, and content geared to all denominations, ages, gender or marital status, it's the comprehensive local guide extraordinaire to all things Jewish. The site also maintains a weekly email list of almost 1300 subscribers who receive info on the coming week, important community events, and new features.



Folks are clicking in to the tune of 150 per day (with numbers significantly higher before, during and just after major holidays), but what about the behind-the-links scene? Who does the work, and why?

"My brother Ross Silverstein and myself started ShalomBoston.com, Inc. on August 28, 2000," says President Jamie Stolper of Newton, where the site is based. "Julie Weisman (also of Newton) joined us shortly thereafter. The site was originally designed by Network Technology Corp. in Newton, but our current webmaster, Jonathan Abbett, grew up in Randolph and is a graduate student in computer science at Brandeis." Stolper, an economic consultant with a bachelors from M.I.T. and a master's from its Sloan School of Management, also has a Bachelor's of Hebrew Literature degree from Hebrew College, where she was the valedictorian. She studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem for a year, has taught at Temple Israel in Boston and at the Prozdor Program at Hebrew College. She has been active in myriad Jewish and Newton community groups and is a member of Temple Emanuel in Newton and Temple Israel in Boston. She and her husband have three sons: Harold, a college grad and current D.C. resident, Samuel, due to attend Brown in September, and Aaron, who is ten.

Silverstein, with a B.S. in Management from B.C., an S.M. in Management from M.I.T.'s Sloan School and a J.D. from the B.U. School of Law, is the Founder, President and CEO of Natick-based iPROMOTEu, was Executive Vice President and General Counsel for RE/MAX and a corporate attorney at Goodwin, Proctor & Hoar. He is an active member of Wayland's Congregation Or Atid and lives in Weston with his wife of twelve years and their four young children.

Stolper credits her brother with the original vision. "I joined in," she recalls, "because I believed that the site would be a useful resource to the community, and that working on it would combine all of my interests and skills. Since then we have experienced increasing traffic, growing name recognition, and overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors to ShalomBoston.com." Over the

past year, sessions have increased by 48 percent, while hits (to any part of the site) have increased by 57 percent. The personnel love it, and aim to keep up the individual touch as they celebrate the victories. "We constantly receive emails from people who have found jobs, synagogues, answers to religious questions, ways to meet people, etc. on our site. Individuals and families moving to the Boston area use our site to identify resources, get information, and learn about our local Jewish community." SB's advisory board includes Kolbo's Lev Friedman, CJP Computer Group Chair Daniel Caine, JCC President Mark Sokoll, JFCS president Stephen Lebovitz, Young Israel of Brookline Rabbi Gershon C. Gewirtz, KI Rabbi William Hamilton, Harvard Hillel Rabbi Sally Finestone, Hebrew College President David Gordis, Brandeis Professor Shulamit Reinharz, [former] Rashi School head Jennifer Miller and many more noted rabbis and leaders.

Advertisers have also caught on. "Local and national organizations and businesses," says Stolper, "have come to see that we are a good way to reach the Massachusetts Jewish community."

The Jewish Agency for Israel recognized ShalomBoston.com last fall as one of the best Jewish web sites worldwide and as a model of a community web site. Not content to rest on laurels, though, new features include an education page, an expanded classified ad section (with job wanted ads provided free of charge), a travel section, and Celebrations, for individuals planning a wedding, bar or bat mitzvah, or other function. Abbett is also working on a new, contemporary site design.

For more information, visit www.shalomboston.com.