

This article appeared in
THE JEWISH ADVOCATE
Focus on Newton
May 19, 2006

A third generation Newtonite creates online community

By Susie Davidson

In the 20th century, it was the shtetl. In the 21st, it's ShalomBoston.com. The value of community can never be understated in Jewish culture, and the Newton-based Web site carries tradition into a new age.

“People have exchanged thoughts on Jews for Jesus, Holocaust education, Palestinian politics and more,” said founder and president Jamie Stolper, speaking of the Web site. “People moving to the area have asked about different neighborhoods’ religious and secular characteristics,” she said.



Stolper and her brother, co-founder Ross Silverstein, are third generation Newtonites. Their mother, Vivienne Kalman, was in the first graduating class of what is now the Hornstein Program at Brandeis, and their father was a clinical child psychologist who worked in Newton schools.

How's this for Stolper's resume? She holds a bachelor's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a master's degree from MIT's Sloan School of Management. For 10 years, she was a senior economics consultant for Data Resources, Inc. Other clients included McGraw Hill, Inc. and Ernst & Young.

While people would firmly rest upon laurels at this point, not Newton's Stolper.

Stolper lives in Auburndale with her husband, David, who is a third generation Newtonite, just a few streets from both of their childhood homes. They have three sons.

Also a third-generation Newtonite, Stolper received a bachelor's degree in Hebrew literature from Hebrew College, where she was the Hebrew valedictorian as well as recipient of the Benjamin Trustman Prize for General Excellence. A trustee of the college for more than 20 years, she has served as its treasurer and budget committee chair, and is a member of its Board of Directors and Strategic Planning Committee. She has taught at Prozdor, Temple Israel, Temple Beth Elohim and Congregation Or Atid.

The site, launched in August 2000, is accessed by 400 daily visitors (who are responsible for thousands of daily hits). It was cited as a Top Site by the Jewish Agency for Israel in 2001 and contains local information as well as food/recipe and community forums. “In this service, we are combining our love of Judaism with our business backgrounds,” said Stolper.

On a recent visit to the site, a moving timeline rolls Ha'Aretz updates as a photo of a boy draped in

an Israeli flag tops a section celebrating Yom Ha' Atzmaut.

At the bottom is a "Did You Know?" section on Yom HaShoah. On the left, a vertical box hold links to the site's informational bounty: demographics, local points of interest, calendars, a synagogue and minyan list, eruv information, Torah commentary and Jewish life cycle needs as well as resources for singles, volunteers, housing and job-hunters.

Recent food posts include recipes, views on area kosher spots, and event planning tips. Message boards also pose questions on finding a seniors group, a good Jewish man, genealogy help and a business partner.

A virtual "Chaimslit" right in our midst!

ShalomBoston.com has also produced resource booklets on the Boston area for groups planning local conventions and events. Clients have included such [sic] the Maccabi Games, Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, the Bureau of Jewish Education Special Education Department, and the Association of Jewish Libraries.

Chat rooms and a Jewish personals section are also in the works. "There will be something for all components of our local Jewish community, including teenagers, singles, families, seniors, and individuals with special needs," she said. Guest columnists and original feature articles will add information, commentary and humor.

"We chose to settle in Newton and raise our family here because of our deep personal roots in the community and the excellent services provided by the city," said Stolper, who cited diversity, the varied characters of Newton's villages, a first-class public library and school system, numerous playgrounds and parks, a farmers' market, recreational activities, the involvement of residents in city life, and the responsiveness of the city's elected officials and city departments."

*Susie Davidson is a local journalist who writes for The Jewish Advocate and other publications. She is also the author of **I Refused to Die: Stories of Boston-Area Holocaust Survivors and Soldiers who Liberated the Concentration Camps of World War II**. For more information or to contact Susie, go to www.IrefusedToDie.com or www.SusieD.com.*