

JHSSC Meets
in
Charleston, SC

Nov. 8-9, 2025

THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

*Jewish Identity and Camaraderie:
Looking Back at South Carolina's Jewish Youth Groups*





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JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
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Cover: BBYO Southern Region Convention held in Augusta, GA, 1967. From the scrapbook of Ellen Feldman Arnovitz, who was, at that time, at the end of her term as president of BBG Southern Region. The same year, Eastern Region was formed, taking North Carolina with it, so Ellen's North Carolina friends were not at the Southern Convention.

In this issue

A Century of Empowering Jewish Teens: The Legacy and Future of BBYO ~ Maxwell Hendrix ~ Just over 100 years ago this teen-led organization was founded in Omaha, Nebraska. Today it spans the globe. 4

Paul Schwartz Chapter, AZA, Columbia ~ Jerry Emanuel ~ Teenage boys in and around Columbia jumped on the AZA bandwagon in 1936. That first group and subsequent generations who joined BBYO benefited from the friendships they formed and the sense of community they felt at the all-Jewish gatherings. 6

A Teen Scene Timeline of BBYO Charleston ~ Robin Grossman Poliakoff and Billy Grossman ~ Follow this teen-inspired chronicle to get the scoop on Charleston's AZA and BBG chapters, plus a shout-out to Young Judaea. 9

Recognize Anyone? ~ A collage of photographs and images that capture generations of South Carolinian teens. 12

Jewish Identity and Camaraderie: Looking Back at South Carolina's Jewish Youth Groups ~ JHSSC meets in Charleston, SC ~ November 8-9, 2025 15

Celebrating BBYO Teens & Alumni ~ Gabbi Baker and Sean Lynch ~ A message from South Carolina natives and co-chairs of BBYO's Alumni Advisory Council. 16

Columbia Born and Bred—And Part of a Larger Tapestry: Discovering Our Legacy Through BBYO ~ Gabbi Baker ~ Through BBYO membership, teens from the small southern city of Columbia, South Carolina, developed a strong sense of Jewish identity, cultivated lasting friendships, and acquired useful work/life skills. 16

Bound by a Common Thread: A Sense of Community and So Much More ~ We wanted to hear your thoughts on what your youth group meant to you as a Jewish teen. Here are your submissions:

- Ellen Feldman Arnovitz** 20
- Steven Goldberg** 20
- Terri Wolff Kaufman** 21
- Lilly Stern Filler** 21
- Emily Levinson** 22
- Louis Drucker** 22
- Marisa Rosenberg Kornblut** 23
- Rachel Kronick Rothbart** 24
- Kayte Steinert-Threlked** 26
- Josh Lieb** 26
- Lisa Collis Cohen** 27
- Amy Bernstein** 28

JHSSC Wants You! ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett ~ In 30 years the Society has achieved so much toward preserving South Carolina's Jewish history. It may even have exceeded the dreams of the the founders who sought to record the stories of small-town Jewish residents and shopkeepers before they disappeared. The Society seeks to retain its relevance through the input and involvement of multiple generations as it moves into the future. 28

NEW! BBYO Digital Archive
<https://bbyo.historyit.com/public-sites/home/archive>

Letter from the President



offered us opportunities to connect with other Jewish teens by way of meetings, conclaves, and conventions.

In Columbia, AZA met at the old Jewish Community Center (JCC) where we had our own room. The walls were decorated with all sorts of memorabilia—awards and banners won at conventions, plaques with officers' names, plus anything else that made the room ours. We met regularly and planned activities, including the annual convention in Asheville, where we competed with other chapters in the region, particularly Charleston, in basketball and forensics (debate and public speaking). Membership was open to all Jewish boys, regardless of affiliation. The JCC's basketball court was in constant use by the entire Columbia community. One outstanding event each year was the dance with BBG.

TYG was also a fun and memorable part of our high school years. There were active chapters throughout the state, including Florence, Sumter, Camden, Charleston, and Greenville. We spent many weekends at conventions hosted by the cities as well as at Southeast Regional Conventions as far as Jacksonville, where I met more young Jews than I knew existed, some of whom I remain in touch with to this day.

As I prepare to conclude my term as president of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina at our fall meeting, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each of you. Serving in this role over the past two years has been an extraordinary honor, one marked by meaningful collaboration, powerful storytelling, and a shared commitment to preserving our rich heritage.

Together, we have celebrated milestones, uncovered forgotten narratives, and strengthened the bonds that unite our community across generations. I am proud of the progress we have made, including marking the 250th anniversary of

the American Revolution during our spring 2025 meeting at Clemson University, where we learned about Francis Salvador, the first Jewish American, a South Carolinian, to be elected to legislative office in America. This patriot also gave his life fighting for freedom from colonial rule.

At our fall 2024 meeting in Charleston, we joined Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim in commemorating the 275th anniversary of its founding. At the same time, we observed another significant milestone in the history of the Reform synagogue—the 200th anniversary of the birth of Reform Judaism in North America.

In the spring of 2024, JHSSC hosted a gathering of descendants of Jewish emigrants from Kaluszyn, Poland, many of whom still live in Charleston. The locals were joined by a number of relatives who came to Charleston from around the country to share family stories, honor Kaluszyners killed in the Holocaust, and learn how Americans and Polish citizens have collaborated to memorialize the destruction of the Jewish *shtetl* in Kaluszyn during World War II.

To our members, donors, partners, and passionate volunteers: thank you for your trust, your energy, and your unwavering support.

I am especially grateful to our executive director, Rachel Barnett, whose active, creative, and energetic engagement continues to invigorate our mission and brings fresh vitality to everything we do. Her leadership and vision has been inspiring.

I also want to express my sincere appreciation to Alyssa Neely, our gifted magazine editor and designer, and JHSSC

administrator, for her outstanding contributions, from managing countless behind-the-scenes details to producing the beautiful magazines that bring our history to life. Alyssa's attention to detail and love for storytelling have helped shape how we understand and document our past.

Serving in this role over the past two years has been a profound honor, marked by collaboration, community, and a shared dedication to preserving the rich tapestry of South Carolina's Jewish heritage. I am confident the Society is poised for even greater achievements in the years ahead with the incoming leadership. I look forward to remaining actively engaged with the Society and I plan to support its continued success.

Steve Savitz
Steve Savitz

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A Century of Empowering Jewish Teens: The Legacy and Future of BBYO

by Maxwell Hendrix, Senior Director, Philanthropic Engagement, BBYO

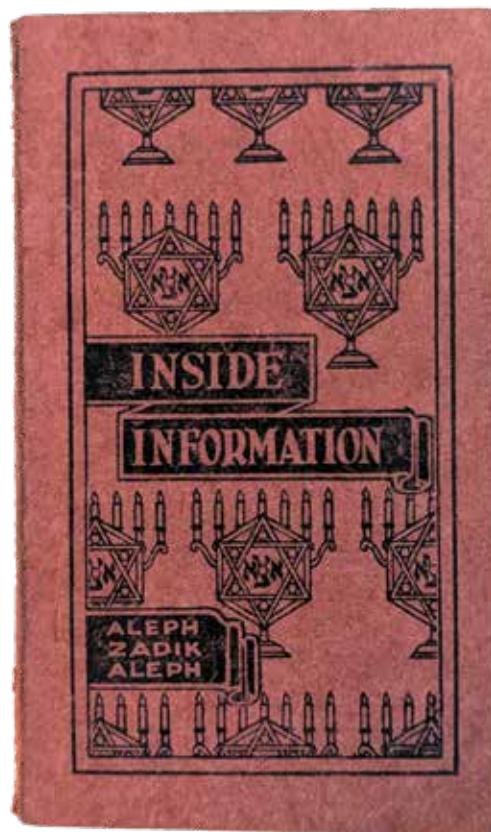
Editor's note: B'nai B'rith Youth Organization was the group's original name. In 2003, it changed to BBYO when it acquired 501c3 status.

Over 100 years ago, a group of fourteen young Jewish men in Omaha, Nebraska, came together to form something simple but profound: a brotherhood rooted in shared values, leadership, and Jewish pride. They called it the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA), and on May 3, 1924, the International Order of AZA was formally established. Nearly 20 years later, in 1944, a complementary organization for young Jewish women, with equal leadership opportunities, which was extraordinary at the time—B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG)—was founded, bringing to life what we now know as BBYO. Their vision sparked a global Movement that has shaped the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jewish teens for a century—and continues to do so today.

From that small group of teens to a global network spanning over 60 countries, BBYO's story is one of grassroots leadership, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to the Jewish future. Through world wars, social upheavals, and technological revolutions, BBYO has stood as a place where Jewish teens come to lead, belong, and grow.

From Omaha to the World

BBYO's founding came at a pivotal moment for American Jewry. As Jewish immigrants built new lives across the United States, there was a growing need for institutions that could help the next generation maintain strong Jewish identities. AZA provided that opportunity for Jewish boys to gather, lead programs, and build a strong Jewish brotherhood. The formation of BBG gave Jewish girls a similar opportunity, creating space for young women to connect, lead, and grow in confidence and purpose. In the years that followed, the two organizations—AZA and BBG—operated in tandem, cultivating generations of Jewish teen leaders across North America.



Pocket manual that contains information on the history and development of AZA, rituals, songs, new members, 1951. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

By mid-century, BBYO's influence had spread far beyond the United States. As Jewish communities grew in Canada, Latin America, Europe, South Africa, and the Middle East, so too did BBYO's reach. Today, the organization has more than 725 chapters across 63 countries, reaching over 70,000 Jewish teens annually through meaningful experiences in their local communities, regional conventions, summer leadership experiences, and international Movement gatherings that connect them with their peers around the world.

Leadership at the Core

At its heart, BBYO is powered by teens. Its unique model of teen-led, adult-supported leadership ensures that young people take ownership of their experiences and the Movement itself. In BBYO, teens plan and execute programs, run their own chapter and regional boards, organize conventions and service projects, and represent the organization on an international level.

These leadership opportunities are a hallmark of the BBYO experience—and one that has left a lasting impression on its alumni. Many of today's Jewish communal professionals, nonprofit executives, business leaders, educators, and civic changemakers credit BBYO with giving them their first opportunity to lead, to speak up, and to make a difference.

BBYO's core values remain rooted in Jewish identity, service, community, and leadership development. Whether planning a local Shabbat dinner or coordinating a global service campaign, teens are consistently encouraged to live their values, deepen their Jewish knowledge, and make a meaningful impact.

A Home for Every Teen

One of BBYO's defining features has always been its commitment to inclusivity. From its earliest days, the Movement welcomed Jewish teens regardless of synagogue affiliation or level of observance, with inspiring environments

and experiences that allow them to take ownership of their own identities, explore diverse practices and rituals, and build their own connection to Judaism.

BBYO is proud to be a home for Jewish teens of all backgrounds, denominations, racial identities, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities. The organization is intentional about creating a mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically safe environment for every teen who walks through its doors.

Milestone Moments and Annual Traditions

Throughout its century-long history, BBYO has developed traditions that serve as milestones in the lives of Jewish teens. One of the most significant of these is International Convention (IC), held each February. What began as a modest gathering has evolved into the world's largest annual gathering of Jewish teen leaders, with more than 5,000 teens and adults in attendance each year.

A five-day festival of Jewish life, IC offers teens the opportunity to learn from global speakers, participate in Jewish learning, engage in service projects, and connect with peers from around the world. It has become a launching pad for ideas, friendships, and future leaders.

In addition to IC, BBYO offers regional conventions, local programming, and an expansive summer portfolio, including domestic leadership camps and international travel experiences. These programs are designed to foster identity development, civic engagement, social action, and peer-to-peer learning.

BBYO also celebrates annual rituals, such as Global Shabbat, J-Serve (the International Day of Jewish Youth Service), and chapter induction ceremonies, which bring teens into the Movement with pride and purpose. These traditions create strong, shared memories that endure well into adulthood.

Anchored in Jewish Values, Guided by Youth

While BBYO has evolved with the times—adapting to digital platforms, new educational approaches, and the changing needs of teens—its foundation has remained steadfast. The organization is guided by Jewish values such as *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *kehilla* (community),

hoda'ah (gratitude), and *achrayut* (responsibility).

What sets BBYO apart is that these values are not just taught—they are lived. Teens lead service initiatives, raise funds for local and international causes, advocate for justice, and build inclusive communities. They learn to grapple with questions of identity, faith, and belonging in ways that prepare them to be thoughtful and compassionate Jewish adults.

The teen-led nature of BBYO ensures that each generation leaves its own mark on the Movement, contributing to its evolution while maintaining a connection to the values and traditions established by its founders in 1924.

Local Roots, Global Impact

BBYO's success is rooted in its ability to be both hyper-local and globally connected. Chapters are embedded in communities around the world, led by teens who know their peers best and guided by alumni and advisors who provide mentorship and support. Whether hosting a Friday night Shabbat dinner, organizing a social action project, or attending a global conference, Jewish teens experience a sense of belonging and purpose that extends far beyond their hometown.

And that impact doesn't end at graduation. BBYO's alumni—now numbering more than 400,000—remain deeply connected to the Movement and often return as advisors, donors, mentors, and Jewish communal leaders. Their continued engagement helps sustain BBYO's impact across generations.

Looking Ahead

BBYO's history is Jewish history—woven into the fabric of community life, shaped by the challenges and triumphs of each generation, and propelled by the voices of young people determined to make a difference. One chapter became 725. One country became 63. Fourteen boys became a global network of over 70,000 teens annually.

And while the world has changed dramatically since 1924, BBYO's core purpose remains unchanged: to be the place where every Jewish teen can belong, lead, and thrive.

As the Movement begins its second century, it does so with a renewed commitment to its founding vision—and with the knowledge that the future of Jewish life is bright, because it is being built by the leaders of today.



Physical fitness patch earned by Sam Appel in the AZA Summer Tournament, 1945. Jackie Karesh AZA membership card, 1952. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

Paul Schwartz Chapter, AZA, Columbia

by Jerry Emanuel, Columbia AZA advisor, 1975–2015

Growing up Jewish in the 1920s had its challenges. Jews were subject to discrimination, name calling, exclusion and sometimes violence. Jews were unable to find housing in certain neighborhoods, they were excluded from various clubs and societies and were targets of individuals and groups who resorted to violence because of misconceptions or antisemitism.

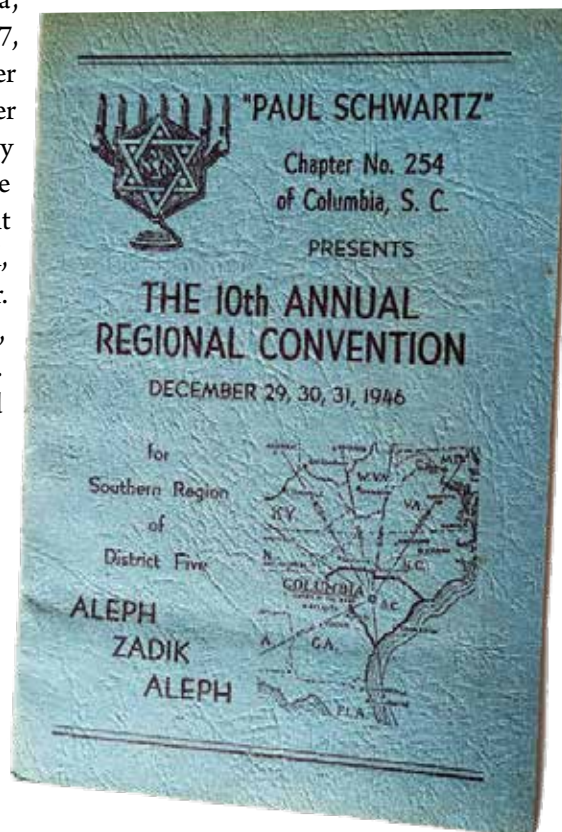
Early in 1923, a group of 14 Jewish boys in Omaha, Nebraska, seeing discrimination on college campuses and fraternities, formed their own fraternity naming it Aleph Zadik Aleph. They used Hebrew names in place of the Greek names used at most fraternities. AZA was adopted by B'nai B'rith International in 1925 as the order grew from Omaha to become a world-wide youth organization. In 2005 its membership totaled 15,000 boys worldwide.

The Columbia, South Carolina, chapter was chartered December 27, 1936, 13 years after the Omaha chapter was organized. It was the 254th chapter to be granted a charter, signed by Sam Beber, the second advisor to the Omaha chapter and, later, president of the Supreme Advisory Council, the policy-making body of the order. It was also signed by Julius Bisno, executive secretary of the Council. The original members included Dave Baker, Lee Baker, Abram Berry, Edwin Caplan, Raymond Finkelstein, Stanley Fisher, George Gottlieb, Henry Levkoff, Melvin Levkoff, Sylvan Meyer, Fred Ravdin, Erving Stebbins, Henry Stern, Joseph Winter, and Lewis Winter.

In 1927, the first district tournament was held featuring contests in oratory, debate and basketball. Lee Baker, at the



Above: Paul Schwartz, for whom the Columbia, SC, AZA chapter is named. Below: Program cover, AZA regional convention, Columbia, SC, 1946. From Columbia's BBYO scrapbook collection. All images pages 6–8 courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.



time president of the Columbia AZA chapter, placed third in oratory at the 1946 international convention in Port Jervis, New York, and he represented the southern district in the finals. Baker was the youngest to compete and was “acclaimed by the judges as an orator of unusual ability, possessing a powerful voice and splendid diction,” according to a news article. He reached the finals by winning the southern district contest in Charleston, South Carolina. Also competing were representatives from all over the United States and Canada. The oratory subject was “Next Year in Jerusalem,” which dealt with the Jewish-Arab problem in Palestine.

In 1942, AZA International inaugurated a “Help Win the War Campaign” with scrap drives, bond sales, and hospitality for servicemen. Friday night, January 5, 1945, the Columbia chapter held services at House of Peace Synagogue (today the congregation goes by its Hebrew name Beth Shalom), highlighted by the presentation of certificates by Mayor Fred D. Marshall to the parents of the fighting men and women from Columbia.

According to the House of Peace bulletin, AZA had been participating in or conducting services for some time. The members who participated in the 1945 service were Herbert Waldorf, who introduced the Mayor and Melton Kligman, who delivered a sermon on the topic of “The World I want to Live In.” Harvey Rosen gave the invocation and Nat Russ the closing prayer. The AZA member responsible for the Hebrew that night was Eric Oppenheimer.

Columbia AZA members who were in the military included Sylvan Meyers, Julius Morris, David Baker, Lee Baker, Henry Stern, David Weiner,

Milton Safran, Jack Gottlieb, Henry Levkoff, Joseph Winter, advisors Sam Bloom and Saul Kahn, Herbert Waldorf, Eric Oppenheimer, Avram Berry, Freddie Ravdin, Michael Weiner, Ralph Friedman, Bernard Kahn, Isadore Bernstein, Melvin Gergel, Alan Sindler, Irving Chaplin, Bert Epstein, George Gottlieb, Daniel Roth, Paul Schwartz, Manuel (Manny) Lifchez, and Paul Anderson.

In 1946, chapter members voted to rename the AZA chapter after Paul Schwartz, a Columbia member who died in the service of his country. On May 15, 1946, Paul's mother, Mollie, wrote a letter to the chapter thanking them for renaming the chapter. In it, she gave a brief history of his life. He was born January 19, 1923, in New York City. At the age of 11 his family moved to Columbia, South Carolina. He graduated from Columbia High School in 1940 and the National Farm School in Pennsylvania in 1943. Soon after he was “called to colors” and inducted into the U.S. Army Air Force at Fort Jackson on April 10, 1943. He served with the Eighth Air Force and was a technical sergeant, flight engineer on a B-17 bomber.

On his 20th mission over Germany his plane and crew of 10 failed to return to base. According to the last words received by the crew, two engines were hit and damaged by flak. They were headed towards Holland and decided to ditch into the sea. He was reported missing in action. November 4, 1944, after a year and a day, he was officially declared dead and was awarded the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters and the Purple Heart.

Through the 1940s the chapter continued to grow and participate in regional and international competition. Columbia member Melvin Gergel placed second in the sermon competition in 1940. Dave and Lee Baker won debates the same year. Manny Lifchez participated in the regional oratory contest in 1946 and was elected president of Southern Region. At the 11th district convention held in Charleston in 1947, Melton Kligman and Harvey Golden were winners in the debate competition. They won again the following year.

Chapter members continued to compete, and do well, in contests at the international, district and regional levels while also participating in chapter programs and community service

projects. In 1961, the chapter was awarded the coveted Alexander-Treist Trophy for being voted the best chapter in Southern Region. The chapter won the award in 1957 and 1958, three wins, which entitled the chapter to keep the trophy. On the base of the silver cup are listed the names of the chapter members: Bernard Arnold, Evan Arnold, Alan Berry, Brian Berry, Steve Bluestein, Paul Bookner, Mark

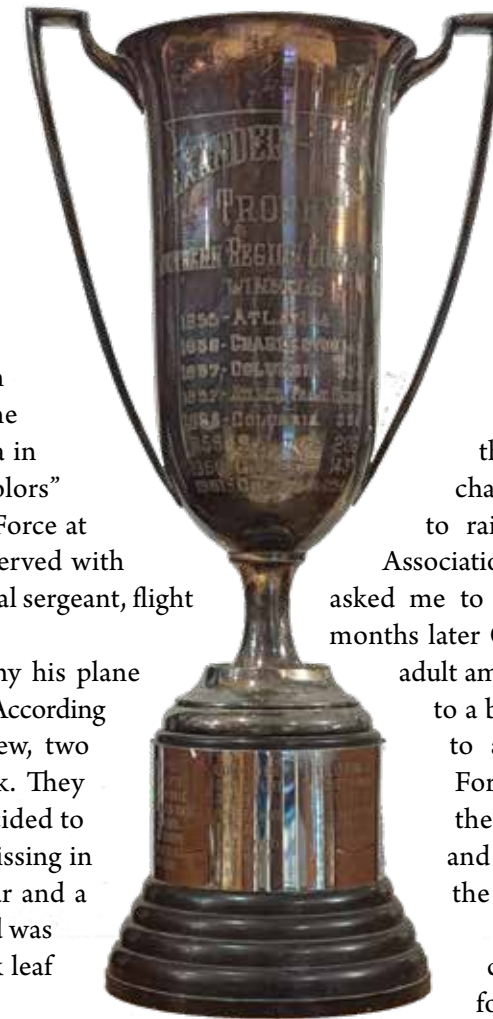
Coplan, Steve Cremer, Sandy Daniel, Alan Fechter, Paul Fischman, Nard Fleischman, Steve Gendil, Alvin Hammer, Howard Hammer, Bobby Kahn, George Levkoff, Jimmy Levkoff, Jeff Lewis, Frankie Lourie, Ira Miller, Charles Nadel, Jerry Neider, Alan Rivkin, Hyman Rubin, Jr., Emmett Sanborn, Steve Savitz, Gary Silverfield, Bobby Stein, Harry Sunshine, Steve Whiton, and Robert Young.

In April 1975, Billy Goldstein, then the AZA advisor, asked me to help the chapter with a project, a dance marathon to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. They raised about \$1,000 and Goldstein asked me to become co-advisor, which I did. A few months later Goldstein left and I found myself the sole adult among 18 teenage boys. I was now an advisor to a bunch of guys I didn't know who belonged to an organization I knew nothing about. Fortunately, I had a good group of leaders in the chapter who did know what was going on and I learned along with the newest member of the chapter.

As 1986 neared, and with the help of chapter members, I started making plans for a 50th anniversary celebration of the AZA chapter. We asked the community to send us photos of past events and publicized

the upcoming gala through every Jewish media. The keynote speaker was Dr. Leon Ginsberg, professor of social work at the University of South Carolina and a former grand *aleph godol*, international AZA president, in 1956. Kevin Marks, chapter *godol* (president) created a 50th anniversary banner and was the master of ceremonies at the banquet. More than 65 members, former *aleph godolim*, advisors, sweethearts and guests attended. It was a wonderful evening.

Hundreds of youngsters were members of the Paul Schwartz Chapter, AZA. They all joined for different reasons while forging friendships that continue to this day.



The Alexander-Treist Trophy.

Steve Savitz (1962–1965): “Our advisor was (Revera) Vee Wayburn and she was fantastic. She went to all the conferences in Asheville and she was just active in everything.”

Steve remembers there were all kinds of

everybody joined. That was almost like a rite of passage.” David remembers some of the programs he especially enjoyed. “We went canoeing down the Congaree River and did some wall climbing at one of the local gyms. The socials with the other Dixie Council chapters were always a lot of fun.”

Jeffrey Corvi (2008–2012): “I joined to be involved with the Jewish community and be with other kids my age. There are people I still look out for and try to connect with, and anytime I’m in one of those cities and I pass some monument or landmark, it just sends me back every time to those days. I always loved the Columbia things we did, the brotherhood things, like going to a hockey game together. There are just a ton of memories.”

Today the chapter continues with Adam Thur as *godol*. “I heard about AZA through BBG’s *N’siah* (President) Amy Gendil.” Adam recruited members primarily at Beth Shalom Synagogue, which hadn’t had a chapter of United Synagogue Youth in years. “We’ve got eight members in the chapter today, and we’re planning local programs and going to conventions and dances throughout what is now Eastern Region.”

For 89 years the Paul Schwartz Chapter, AZA, has been developing responsible young people who are aware of worldwide events, who take an active part in making their community a better place, and who, as adults, have become leaders in their state and local communities.



competitions at the Asheville convention, including athletics, speech, and debate. “Our biggest competition at many of these contests was the Charleston chapter but we had people from all over the region. They were really active.” Steve recalls a room on the second floor of the JCC that was the AZA room. “The JCC was a great place for all the Jewish young people to be with other Jewish kids. We just congregated there.”

Harvey Helman (1963–1966): “I joined because I like being in organizations. I went to all the conventions and I was eventually president of the chapter. During a Charleston convention there was a meeting of chapter presidents because Robert Rosen from Charleston was thinking about running for international *godol*. We were convinced if he ran, he would win. He would have to take a year off from school. He eventually decided not to run.”

Steven Langer (1967–1969): “I joined because it was a great way to connect with the community of young people and being active in the Jewish community. On my first trip to an AZA meeting, I was riding with George Levkoff—he was the *godol* at the time—and I told him one day I want to be *godol*, and I was.” Some of Steven’s AZA contemporaries included David Glass, Burton Harris, Karl Goldberg, Andrew “Lucky” Levinson, Neal Drucker, Jeff Gould, and Joe Rosen.

David Goldberg (1997–2000): “I joined the chapter because it was the thing to do,



Top: AZA decal, circa 1952. Above: Columbia BBYO members present Jerry Emanuel (in light blue suit) with a plaque, circa 1997, recognizing his 22 years as AZA advisor.

A Teen Scene Timeline of BBYO in Charleston

by Robin Grossman Poliakoff and Billy Grossman

“When I was a teenager, Young Judaea and AZA were the center of my life. I mean, really the center.”

That’s not a TikTok confession from a class-of-2025 teen. It’s Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum (in photo at right), AZA Sweetheart of 1952, serving up a throwback to when Jewish youth groups were the after-school obsession in Charleston, South Carolina.



Throwback to the Original Group Chat

Long before DMs and Instagram, Jewish teens in Charleston were forming one of the earliest Jewish youth group traditions in the country. In 1931, Charleston snagged its own chapter of Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA), the all-boys division of what would become BBYO (B’nai B’rith Youth Organization). That made Charleston Chapter #143 one of the first in the Southeast, joining the ranks of Omaha, Kansas City, and Calgary.

According to Charleston historian Sol Breibart, it was a very dramatic launch: “It was a dark and stormy night . . .” when Judge Joseph Fromberg rallied a gang of teens to start CHAZA. Local insurance executive Maier Triest stepped in as advisor, while Karl Karesh became the first *aleph godol* (president). And just like that, Charleston was on the BBYO map.

OG Influencers: Sol & Max

The real backbone of Charleston’s AZA wasn’t just teenage energy, it was the adult advisors who served as life coaches before that was a thing. Sol Breibart and Max Kirshstein together guided Jewish teens for over 50 years. Max, a CHAZA alum himself, once chaperoned a trip to Cleveland for an oratorical champ (shout-out to Irving “Itchy” Sonenshine!) and ended up getting hired at the national BBYO office. That two-and-a-half-year detour, he said, “changed the whole course of my life.”

After serving in the navy, Max returned to Charleston and continued to shape teen lives with the kind of gentle, dad-joke energy that made teens simultaneously roll their eyes and feel deeply seen. “Sometimes I’d say no to something, and the teens would just hang up on me,” he shrugged in his oral history.

So many others served as advisors—the original influencers: Jeffrey Sabel, Chuck Jacobson, Steven Goldberg, Ellen Mintz, Janet Friedman—we are terrified to name just a few because we know we have missed others (please write in to tell us). Charlestonians have served as the Southern (now Eastern) Region directors including Bobby Ehrlich, Mindy Odle, and Tamar Sternfeld.

Court Kings & Crowned Sweethearts

If AZA had a “home court,” it was literally on the basketball court. In the early ’50s, Charleston’s AZA team slam-dunked their way to three straight regional championships. And they were back at it again in the early ’70s. Rumor has it 1973 was the year (or was it ’74?). But these teens didn’t just bring the heat on the hardwood; they were also masters of the mic. In 1950, Charleston AZA took first place in the National Debate Championship.



AZA National Basketball Champs, 1973 or 74. Back row (l to r): Harris Livingstain, Jeff Eisenberg, Morris Ellison, Randy Karesh. Middle row: Coach/Advisor Saul Berry, Fred Bielsky, Ellis Sloane, Stuart Feldman, Charlie Karesh, Fred Rosenblum, Coach/Advisor Sherwin Robin. Front row: Jeffrey Berry, Sweetheart Carol Karesh, Richard Weintraub.

Speech and debate competitions continued into the 1990s. Today, there are chapter dance and song competitions.

Up to and through the 1950s, girls didn't have their own BBYO chapter, but they played a central role in AZA's social events, especially as sweethearts, elected each year to represent the chapter at dances and conventions. The Sweetheart Dance, held every Labor Day weekend, was *the* teen social ticket in the Southeast.



Young Judaea

While the boys were dunking and debating, Charleston's Jewish girls were organizing and idealizing through Young Judaea, a Zionist youth movement. Advisors like Lilla Levine and Joyce Prystowsky built a vibrant program. "We were really into it," Sandra Rosenblum recalled. "We even had a carnival at the JCC every year." So when a B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG) chapter was proposed? The Young Judaea girls were not having it. They saw it as the beginning of the end for their beloved club. Spoiler alert: they were right.



Enter BBG #1134: A Chapter is Born

In 1960, inspired by a visiting friend, Roslyn Lancer Barkowitz and her mom Betty kicked off Charleston's BBG chapter: #1134. The ten founding girls included names like Dianne Barbanel, Linda Schwartz, and Sandra Wright. Betty Lancer, Claire Goldberg, and Madolyn Gelbart served as advisors. Dianne and Roslyn became

president and first vice president, respectively, and the first beau was Howard Goldberg. The scrapbook they created that year won 3rd place regionally!



Too Many Teens, Not Enough Titles

By 1969, Charleston's BBYO scene was booming. So booming, in fact, that the OG AZA chapter (the original chapter) had to split into AZA #143 and AZA #1969 (yes, Max Kirshstein literally scored them a chapter number matching the year—legend move). Soon after, a second BBG chapter was born: Iris Baker BBG #1541, named for a beloved local member and advisor.

Charleston also helped launch the Dixie 6 Council in 1962, a dream team of cities across South Carolina and Georgia: Charleston, Columbia, Spartanburg, Greenville, Augusta, and Savannah. The first two council *godols* were from Charleston, of course: Frankie Goldberg and Billy Grossman.

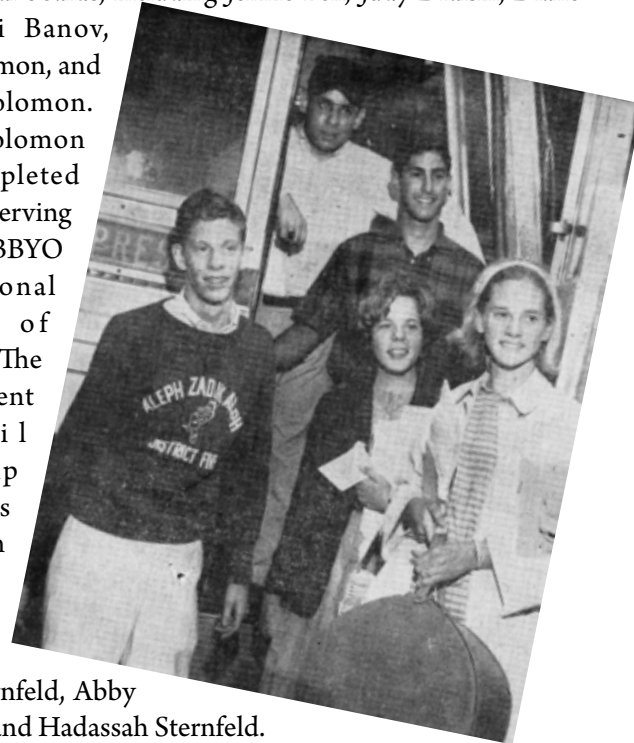
Over the years, Charleston teens continued their BBYO glow-ups, rising through the ranks to serve on regional and international boards, including Jennie Fox, Judy Draisin, Diane

Fox, Lori Banov, Gary Solomon, and Walter Solomon. Walter Solomon just completed 11 years serving on the BBYO International Board of Directors. The most recent council leadership includes Charleston BBYOers Daniel Kagan, David Sternfeld, Abby Bluestein and Hadassah Sternfeld.

BBYO: Where Teen Spirit Turned into Grown-Up Strength

In the early 1980s, as the Baby Boomers moved on, the chapters consolidated: CHAZA became the joint banner for AZA #143 and #1969, and Iris Baker *Ahava* BBG #1134 merged the girls' chapters. These unified chapters stayed strong into the 2010s. We believe the last two sweethearts were Sophie Brams in 2015 and Niki Berlinsky in 2016. There was a decline in involvement

Clockwise from top: banner from the 1946–47 Young Judaea, Charleston, SC, scrapbook. Charleston BBG and AZA members, from left, Marvin Cohen, Samuel Solomon, Billy Grossman, Blanche Weintraub, Ann Addlestone, return from the District 5 Convention in Hendersonville, NC, 1962 or '63. Diane Barbanel (l to r), Edward Raskin, Sweetheart Roslyn Lancer, Barry Baker, AZA dance, Charleston, SC, 1961. Images pages 9–10 are courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.



due to several factors: BBYO no longer had a paid staffer in Charleston; Jewish families were more spread out across the city; synagogue-centric groups became more popular, Elohim's NFTY chapter (North American Community Center) closed in 2015. For a moment, it seemed the era had ended.



Rebooted & Recharged

But never count Jewish teens out. Charleston's population has grown immensely, and so has its Jewish population. In 2019, Charleston's BBYO chapter was relaunched as #5018, now with a unified Aleph & BBG squad. Southeast Council (the name Dixie was laid to rest) joined with North Carolina and Virginia Councils to make up Eastern Region. The Atlanta Council had become so big that the smaller cities didn't align with them anymore. Charleston teens jumped back into BBYO with style, attending CLTC, ILTC, *Kallah*, international travel trips, and leadership programs. This past year, Charleston had the largest city delegation *ever* from Eastern Region attending the BBYO International Convention. A new generation has taken the reins. One shining example: Abby Bluestein, daughter of Ryan and Sharyn Bluestein, served on the International BBG Board as *aym ha chaverot* (VP of membership)—bringing Charleston pride to a global stage.



Lasting Rizz

Youth group years are more than just socializing—they're formative. They build leaders. They build communities. Research shows strong Jewish connections during adolescence often lead to lifelong Jewish engagement. Still today, reflections from 1952 Sweetheart Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum—"AZA and BBG taught kids how to take responsibility, how to run things, how to do things"—are just as relevant as those of 2015 Sweetheart Sophie Brams: "BBYO helped prepare me well for the future, gave me a lot of leadership experience: how to navigate others' feelings and perspectives. I made lifelong friends, connections all across the country and across the world. I believe it set me up for a lot of success."



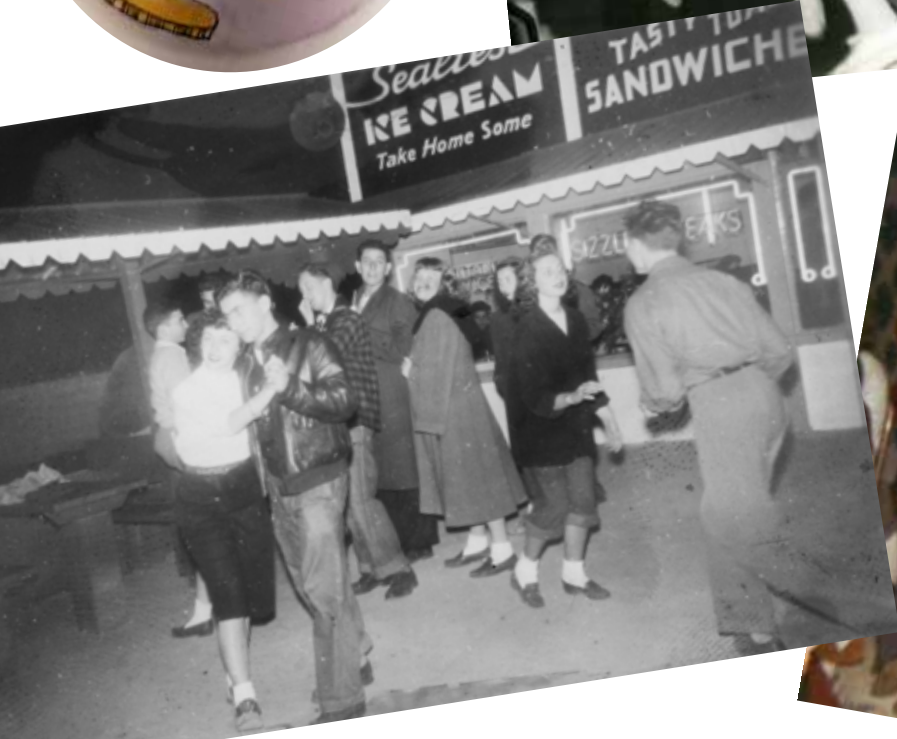
Dear Diary, Pass the Scrapbook

Got a dusty scrapbook? Photos, too? How about a story or two worthy of recording for the oral history archives? The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina wants to hear from you. In partnership with the Jewish Heritage Collection at Addlestone Library, the JHSSC is collecting the memories, mishaps, and magic that made Jewish teen life, not just in Charleston, but all of South Carolina, unforgettable. Send us your stories. We're ready to add them to the Teen Scene Timeline. 💕



Top: Sweetheart Robin Grossman with CHAZA members gathered for the Labor Day dance, 1994. Courtesy of Robin Grossman Poliakoff. Above: Will Schechter of Gainesville, FL, and Abby Bluestein of Charleston, SC, speak at the 2025 BBYO International Conference in Denver, CO. Will was the 34th grand aleph moreh and Abby was the 33rd international aym ha chaverot, or international vice presidents of membership and recruitment for BBYO. Courtesy of Abby Bluestein.

Recognize Anyone?



All images pages 12-14 courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.





REGISTRATION

Questions:

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OR

Rachel Barnett
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OR

Call and leave a message
and we'll get back to you
843.953.8880

Fees (per person):

\$250 Saturday & Sunday, all events,
including Sweetheart Dance
\$150 Saturday & Sunday, daytime events only
\$100 Saturday daytime events only
\$125 Saturday evening event (Sweetheart Dance) only
\$50 Sunday daytime events only

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Francis Marion Hotel
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Charleston, SC 29403
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toll-free 877.756.2121

Group rate of \$259
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WED., OCTOBER 8, 2025

Link to hotel booking at
special rate: [jhssc.org/
events/upcoming](http://jhssc.org/events/upcoming)

Jewish Identity and Camaraderie: Looking Back at South Carolina's Jewish Youth Groups

November 8–9, 2025 ~ Charleston, SC

Saturday, November 8 ~ Gold Ballroom, Francis Marion Hotel, 387 King Street

11:00 A.M. Registration and brunch

11:30 Opening remarks ~ Steve Savitz, President, JHSSC

11:45 Topic: TYG ~ Rabbi Gary Phillip Zola, Executive Director Emeritus of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

12:45 P.M. Topic: BBYO ~ Ian Kandel, Senior Vice President, Movement Building, BBYO

1:30 Break

1:45 Life Hack, BBG: Young Women Leading the Way in BBYO and the World ~ Panel Discussion moderated by Ashley Walters. Panelists: TBA.

2:45 Break

3:00–4:00 Rebounds and Rebuttals: AZA Fundamentals on the Court and at the Podium ~ Panel Discussion moderated by Max Daniel. Panelists: TBA.

7:00–10:00 Sweetheart Dance ~ The Francis Marion Hotel was the location for many Sweetheart Dances in the 1950s and '60s. Old and new friends will gather again at this historic site for an evening of music, food, and libations.

Dr. Zola's presentation sponsored by

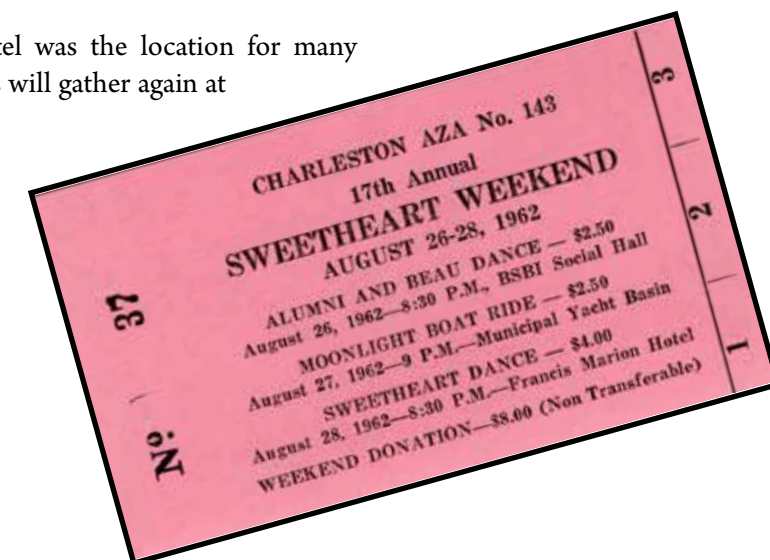


Sunday, November 9 ~ Special Collections
3rd floor, Addlestone Library,
205 Calhoun Street

9:00 A.M. Brunch

9:30 Jewish Heritage Collection ~ Max Daniel ~ Join us for a special presentation by Jewish Heritage Collection Coordinator Max Daniel as he presents scrapbooks, photos, and memorabilia from South Carolina's Jewish youth groups. Bring your own photos and memorabilia to share!

10:30–12:00 P.M. JHSSC Board Meeting. All are welcome.



Celebrating BBYO Teens & Alumni

Gabbi Baker (Lena Karesh BBG #277) & Sean Lynch (Chaza AZA #143)

Out of more than 400,000 BBYO alumni around the world, it's no small thing that both co-chairs of BBYO's Alumni Advisory Council happen to hail from South Carolina.

Growing up in Columbia and Charleston, we were often among the only Jewish kids in our schools and social circles. While Jewish summer camp (shoutout to Camp Blue Star in Hendersonville, NC) was part of our upbringing, it was BBYO that gave us structure, connection, and leadership opportunities that truly shaped who we are. That's what kept us involved in Jewish life well beyond high school: Gabbi interning at BBYO during college, Sean joining the organization professionally after graduation, and both of us staying close to the people and values we first discovered as teens, even as we now live in New York City and Chicago.

But it all started locally—in our chapter programs, at council conventions, and in the meeting rooms of our JCCs. From color wars during AIT/MIT (Alephs in Training/Members in Training) at Camp Bob Cooper in Summerton to AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph) basketball and BBG (B'nai B'rith Girls) pool parties, our BBYO memories are rooted in the strength and warmth of a regional network of small Jewish communities coming together to create something lasting.

To learn more and get involved in the BBYO Alumni Association, visit alumni.bbyo.org.

Columbia Born and Bred—and Part of a Larger Tapestry: Discovering Our Legacy through BBYO

by Gabbi Baker

I don't remember exactly how I got invited to my first BBG (B'nai B'rith Girls) chapter program. I have a vague recollection of running into Alex Friedman Peahl—who was the cool, put-together older Dixie Council incoming *n'siah* (president)—out to dinner with my family one night when I was in eighth grade and thinking, "If she's involved, it must be worth checking out." In some ways, it felt like a given in Columbia that if you were Jewish, when you hit high school, BBYO was what you did.

In 2005, at fifteen years old, I showed up to Rachael

Seeing firsthand the impact BBYO had on our lives and communities in South Carolina, we stepped into leadership roles wanting to give that same experience to others. As teen leaders in the mid-2000s, we were fortunate to help drive BBYO's transformation—from a domestic program under B'nai B'rith to an independent, global movement powered by Jewish teens. That pivotal shift gave us not only meaningful leadership experience, but also a global network of friends and now fellow alumni across more than 60 countries. And yet, what made that network so powerful was how it never felt distant—it made our small southern communities feel connected to something much bigger, helping us see that even as a handful of Jewish teens in South Carolina, we were part of a vibrant, worldwide movement rooted in shared values and traditions.

While the organization has evolved, the foundation remains the same: teens still lead, traditions still thrive, and for young Jews growing up in the South, BBYO continues to be a vital source of identity, community, and connection.

We're especially looking forward to this November's JHSSC program highlighting the role of Jewish youth groups—and to continuing to celebrate the BBYO teens, past and present, who make this movement so meaningful.

Bergmann Maitland's house for the program, probably a little nervous, certainly not sure what to expect. By the end of the meeting, I'd raised my hand to run for a chapter board position. It was one of the small ones (*shomeret habit*) that in retrospect feels like it was kind of made up, but that was BBYO for you—an immediate sense of belonging that meets you where you are and invites you into something bigger.

In my four years of being involved, I went on to serve as chapter *n'siah*, then as council *s'ganit* (vice president,



Sean Lynch and Gabbi Baker at Dixie Council Spring Convention in Columbia, SC, April 2010. Courtesy of Gabbi Baker.

programming) and council *n'siah* of the former Dixie Council (recently renamed Southeast Council), and eventually as BBYO's 64th International *S'ganit*.

BBYO became a central part of my teenage years, but more than that, it shaped the way I see the world. It helped me understand what it means to lead, to organize, and to be part of the Jewish community.

In writing this, I wanted to reflect on my own time in BBYO but also to talk to people who were involved decades before and those who came after me to get a fuller picture of what BBYO has meant to Jewish teens in Columbia. (And as it goes, being Jewish in the South, many of them are my cousins.)

Community in Columbia

Growing up, it felt like the Jewish community in Columbia was limited. Our Hebrew school classes at Beth Shalom were small, filled with kids we'd known most of our lives. The number of people in each grade ebbed and flowed; some years there were a handful, others had a slightly bigger group. I was lucky to come up in a medium-sized class, with around eight to ten kids.

That variability came up in nearly every conversation I had with more recent BBYO alumni. Matt Baker (2004–2008) recalled, "The year before us, there was one person in AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph), and then our year, there were . . . what, maybe 22 kids in BBYO?"

For Caroline Sanders (2018–2021), her grade had only three people, and she was the only girl. "I hadn't heard of BBYO," she said. She and Hallie Matzner (2018–2021) shared that the Columbia chapter didn't really exist at the time. "It wasn't really a thing for a while," Hallie explained. "Columbia didn't have a chapter for a bit . . . I never really knew that that was an option."

With those small numbers came a certain pressure to show up. It wasn't just about participating; it was about sustaining something. Hayden Kornblut (2004–2008) described it as having to "secure your Judaism" in the South. "We had to take part. We all had to play a role to make sure the community was thriving, not just on autopilot. You kind of grew up always thinking you've got to fight for the community, otherwise it might disappear."

Matt echoed that sense of responsibility: "If not you, it might not happen. In Atlanta or Los Angeles or Chicago or Miami, you don't have to worry. There are plenty of people to [be active]. But in small communities, the stakes are really high. You don't really have many choices."

But beyond the pressure, there was also a pull, a desire to be part of something bigger. Hallie reflected on that feeling: "The Jewish community was all people I'd grown up with in Sunday school. I just felt like there was something more I was missing."



Pages from Columbia, SC, BBYO scrapbooks: Southern Region Convention, 2005 (top) and Dixie Council, 2005–06 (bottom). Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

Finding Belonging

What made it feel like something bigger, something we wanted to keep showing up for, was the travel to other cities for council conventions. Suddenly, we weren't just part of one small chapter; we were part of a regional community with shared rituals, friendships, and a sense of collective history.

Matt captured it perfectly when he said, "I never thought of BBYO or AZA as Columbia. I viewed it as Columbia, Charleston, Savannah, and Augusta. You didn't go to these cities to sightsee. You went to experience their Jewish communities."

Hayden described BBYO as "like going to sleepaway camp four times a year. It broadened your horizons . . . you learned that not every Jewish community is the same." I believe he captured the sense of belonging that many of us experienced, helping expand the boundaries of what Jewish community could look like.

Lindsay Nadel Rabin (1994–1998) remembered how BBYO helped her bridge the gap between home and her time at Camp Barney Medintz. "BBYO became this outlet for me to see my camp friends throughout the school year. They became friends with my Columbia friends. It all blended."

That blending, that expansion, is what made BBYO feel powerful. We stayed in each other's homes during conventions, sang Friday night prayers with different melodies, and realized that while our cities and backgrounds varied, our Jewish values connected us. It was through these

gatherings that we came to see our chapters not as stand-alone, but as pieces of a growing community that stretched far beyond where we started.

Leadership

As BBYO connected us across cities, it also invited us to step up—and often, we did.

The thing most people credit BBYO with is the leadership training. We planned programs and conventions from scratch, wrote agendas, ran meetings (with *Robert's Rules of Order*, no less), managed chapter growth, and even created phone trees to make sure people showed up. But we also

learned about the importance of the small gestures—saying hello to the new member at a program or inviting someone sitting alone to join your group.

What I didn't fully appreciate at the time was how rare that kind of experience was for a high school student.

Helena Stern Solodar (1965–1969) described it as a natural outlet for her energy and drive. "I was always one that wanted to get things done quickly and on time and properly. And I saw a lot of fun in that organizational aspect of being involved in a club or a community project . . . it's just something that I think [my siblings and I] really enjoyed and felt like it was our responsibility to pitch in and do."

Matt also spoke to that early sense of ownership: "You were taught to create [community] and build that. And I think high schoolers are probably a bit more sophisticated today than we were then,



Dixie Council BBG Board, Southern Region Convention, Atlanta, GA, 2007. L to r: Grace Faulkenberry Berger, Gabbi Baker, Gabby Rosansky, Rie McGwier, Elyse Kriegshaber Sneath. Courtesy of Gabbi Baker.



Lena Karesh BBG, mid-to-late 1990s. 1st row (l to r): Alex Filler, Matthew Shane. 2nd row: Shira Reisman, Sarah Charles, Lindsay Nadel, Emily Sonenshine, Beth Poliakoff. 3rd row: Sarah Rosensweig, Carina Gelman, Ashley Kornblut, Katie Drucker, Emily Sheftman. 4th row: Melissa Blank, Amanda Sheftman, Marcie Robinson, Rebecca Wengrow, Linda Blank. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

but even then it felt radical—the amount of responsibility, but also empowerment, we felt to just do things."

Reflecting on it today, I find something quietly revolutionary in the way BBYO treated boys and girls equally. For every leadership role in AZA, there was a counterpart in BBG. We held joint conventions, co-led events, and operated with an expectation of shared leadership. That structure—so embedded in the culture of BBYO—

meant I never once questioned whether I belonged at the table. It wasn't until I entered the "real world" that I realized how rare that dynamic was. With conversations around gender parity and equal treatment, I realized that my foundational experience in BBYO gave me confidence to lead without hesitation and to recognize when others weren't being given the same opportunity.

Hallie Matzner echoed that sense of preparation. Though she didn't end up joining a sorority in college, she said she didn't feel like she was missing anything. "I felt like I'd already had that experience earlier on."

For all of us, BBYO wasn't just where we learned to lead; it was where we practiced leading. It taught us how to build community, advocate for others, organize around a purpose, and take care of something more than ourselves.

Legacy and Looking Ahead

As an adult, I'm able to better appreciate that my involvement in BBYO feels like part of a longer legacy. My maternal grandfather, Henry Stern, and my paternal grandfather, David Baker, were founding members of the Columbia AZA chapter. There's even a photo of them sitting side-by-side on an AZA baseball team in 1938.

At the time, I'm not sure I fully understood how significant that was. I got involved because it was what you did if you were Jewish in Columbia. But knowing now that I was part of something passed down across generations makes it all feel even more meaningful.

BBYO didn't just shape my high school experience. It shaped where I went to college (George Washington University) in part because I'd attended conferences in D.C. through BBYO. One of my first college internships in marketing (my current field) was with BBYO (working for another Charleston alumna, Avery Budman Sudow). I lived with BBYO friends one summer, and to this day, some of my closest friendships—the ones that show up in weekly texts and at Shabbat dinners—were built in this space.

That's part of why I give back. Today, I serve as co-chair of BBYO's Alumni Advisory Council, a group dedicated to reconnecting alumni, supporting current teens, and helping ensure that BBYO continues to thrive.

I also believe in the importance of capturing these stories—not just for nostalgia, but for what they represent. These memories hold meaning. They remind us that leadership can start at a young age, that community is built one program at a time, and that in places where

Jewish life isn't always visible, teens have always found ways to make it vibrant.

BBYO was where I learned to be proud of being Jewish, where I found my voice, where I learned to organize and mobilize. It is where I learned that being from Columbia, South Carolina, didn't make my Jewish experience any less rich. In fact, in many ways, it made it richer.



Top: Gabbi Baker (l) and Erin Fisher Schorkopf. Lena Karesh BBG scrapbook, 2008–09. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries. Above: AZA baseball team, Columbia, SC, 1938. Front, seated: ballboy, name not known. Seated (l to r), Joe Ravdin, D. Groskind, Meyer Freed, Henry Stern, David Baker. Standing: Shimmy Bloom (coach), Freddie Ravdin, Joe Winter, Edwin Coplan, Abram Berry, Mitchell Weiner. Courtesy of Marcie Stern Baker.

Bound by a Common Thread: A Sense of Community and So Much More

Editor's note: we wanted to hear your thoughts on what your youth group meant to you as a Jewish teen. Here are your submissions. —Thank you!

Ellen Feldman Arnovitz

How can I even begin to describe what BBYO meant to me? When I look back on my teenage years in Charleston, BBG (B'nai B'rith Girls) was more than just an organization—it was a cornerstone of my life. Through every level of involvement, I developed invaluable leadership skills, a deep sense of Jewish pride and identity, and friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

Recently, I found myself flipping through old scrapbooks filled with speeches, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia from those special years (1964–1968). The memories are truly priceless.

My Jewish journey began at birth. I was fortunate to be born into a family that deeply valued our Jewish heritage and passed down cherished traditions. Yet it was during my time in BBYO that my connection to Judaism truly deepened. Those formative years shaped my values and broadened my appreciation for the role that Jewish community would continue to play throughout my life.

It all started with Charleston BBG #1134, a vibrant



Barbara Brickman and Ellen Feldman lead the blessing at the Dixie 6 Council Convention Banquet, Thanksgiving 1967. David Popowski (l) looks on. Courtesy of Ellen F. Arnovitz.

chapter within Dixie 6 Council. I was proud to serve as chapter president and to be honored as sweetheart of AZA #143. As my involvement grew—regionally in Southern Region (president), District 5 (editor), and nationally at ILTC (International Leadership Training Conference)—so did my passion for BBYO. I had the incredible opportunity to meet Jewish teens from across the country and even around the world. Conventions were a particular highlight, where we'd exchange ideas and bring fresh inspiration back to Charleston.

The gratitude I feel for my BBG experience is difficult to put into words. I still get emotional thinking about how profoundly it shaped me. It was during those years that I realized how essential Jewish community is to my sense of self. That realization has carried into adulthood; my engagement in Jewish life has always been a source of strength, meaning, and renewal.

Thank you, BBYO, for shaping who I am, for inspiring me, and for filling my life with unforgettable memories, lifelong friendships, and life lessons that continue to guide me.

Steven Goldberg

Being part of BBYO has been one of the most important parts of my life. Even though I'm 57 now, I still look back on my years in the organization with a lot of pride and gratitude. BBYO gave me more than just something to do after school; it gave me leadership experience, lifelong friendships, and a strong connection to my Jewish identity.

I was very active in my chapter, Charleston AZA #143, and eventually became *gadol* (president) of both my chapter and the Southern Region, just like my dad and my brother before



Steven Goldberg gives his convention speech, as his brother Michael Goldberg looks on. Courtesy of Steven Goldberg.

me. BBYO was truly a youth-led organization; we were the ones running meetings, planning conventions, and making real decisions. Being in those leadership roles helped me develop skills I still use today, from planning events to working with people and giving back to the community through philanthropy.

But the most lasting effects were the friendships. The people I met throughout the Southern Region are still some of my closest friends, even 40 years later. There's something about sharing those experiences—the late-night planning sessions, the chapter competitions at run-offs,

the dances and parties, the moments of fun and growth—that really brings people together.

As I got more involved on the international level, I met Jewish teens from all over the world. It was amazing to realize that even though we came from different places, we had a shared culture that made us feel instantly connected. That sense of belonging was something I didn't always feel in my

high school, but I always felt it in BBYO.

From going on my first date at Labor Day in Charleston to making the international finals in Storytelling, to running a convention, BBYO gave me confidence that stays with me today. BBYO helped shape who I am. It gave me the tools to lead, the support of an incredible community, and memories I'll always hold close.

Terri Wolff Kaufman

Temple Youth Group (TYG) came at just the right time for me. The circle of Jewish kids my age in Columbia was very small; at Tree of Life Reform Temple there were only about four, five kids in my religious school class in any given year, and none of them went to my public school. By junior high I was already firmly Jewish, a too-serious student younger than the other kids in my class, and a stubbornly independent oldest child who wasn't allowed any independence; I just didn't know who else I was—until I met Jewish kids who accepted me and opened up my world. TYG helped me grow both socially



SCTYG conference weekend, circa 1971. L to r: Peggy Rothbaum (Savannah), David Karesh (Camden), Robin Gold (Greenville), Terri Wolff (Columbia).

and intellectually in the fun we had and the ideas we tackled at conferences and at SEFTY (Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth) camp. My parents loosened up with my new-found Jewish involvement: in high school I got to travel on my own, stay with friends in South Carolina and Georgia, and try new experiences (well, it was the '60s). My family hosted four to six people at our home each Columbia conference, and I occasionally still hear from people on Facebook (as recently as this past year): "Hey. Remember me? My friend and I jammed with your little brother on guitar one TYG weekend." TYG opened me up to a sense of community that I absolutely thrived in.

Lilly Stern Filler

The highlight of my social scene was definitely the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization during my high school years. Since I felt waves of antisemitism in AC Flora high school during the early 1960s, I remember feeling a bit on the sidelines. Looking back, perhaps I isolated myself from my non-Jewish friends, fearing inappropriate jokes, unable to join them at their favorite club (Forest Lake Country Club—segregated) and/or rejection from school social clubs. As a daughter of Holocaust survivors, I imposed rigorous standards for myself. However, I found my footing once I joined BBYO. It was truly, the highlight of my life.

The Dixie 6 Council was a local affiliation of regional and international BBYO. It formed in the early 1960s and I became the first president and first female to hold this position. Travels to the magical six cities encompassed my world: Charleston, Savannah, Columbia, Greenville, Augusta, and Spartanburg. We attended conferences, dances, seminars, and stayed with "home hospitality" in each city. Likewise, my home in Columbia was always filled with members of the council on specified weekends.

It was through BBYO that I honed my leadership skills and learned the importance of being involved in something meaningful to me. I met and dated young men from AZA around the council and felt a part of something bigger than Columbia. I recall a council convention that we had in Columbia, which I planned. We stayed at the Jefferson Hotel downtown and had speakers and parties in and around Columbia. I planned the conference with help from my dad who helped me find the right person to permit this conference at the hotel. It was a success.

The ability to meet others from the surrounding area showed me that I could enjoy a Jewish environment as much as my Christian friends in high school. It offered me a platform on which I thrived and when I went to the University of Georgia for my first two years of college, I already knew many council members and friends. It was a wonderful feeling and, to this day, I still maintain a friendship with many of my BBYO friends in these cities. High school can be overwhelming to many, and if there is not a strong social group with which to be a part, high school can be lonely. My experiences were positive and I still remember them with love and joy!!

Emily Levinson

I'm trying to remember my very first BBYO event, but BBYO is so interwoven into my high school years, I don't recall the definitive moment it became such a huge part of my life. My very first Facebook album is a three-part series from "Labor Day Dance 07." This is followed by an exciting "AIT/MIT (Alephs in Training/ Members in Training) album," "Spring Convention 2008!," "Dixie Execs 2010," and many others usually accompanied by captions such as "SO FUN." A standout is my first, ever, trip to Washington, D.C., for a BBYO and AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) youth conference titled "The National Mall: Biggest Upset in History." It's both fun and wildly embarrassing to look back through these and see myself grow up from a cringe-worthy 14-year-old in glasses and braces taking photos of everything to a slightly less cringe-worthy 18-year-old leading Dixie Council. (Don't even bother looking it up; all of those are nicely hidden away.)

Between 2007 and 2011, I attended Lena Karesh Chapter 277 (Columbia, SC) meetings where I found a love for Big Bird and all things yellow, attended and planned countless Dixie Council convention weekends where I had the chance to share Jewish experiences with kids my age, and went on multiple summer leadership programs where I really grew as a leader. My freshman year, I was a sponge and soaked it all in. By sophomore year, I became *n'siah* (president) of my local chapter. My junior year, I ran for *mazkirah* (secretary) for the Dixie Council board, and then my senior



Top: cover of the Lena Karesh BBG scrapbook, Columbia, SC, 2008–09. Above: Emily Levinson and Nathan Rubinger in the same BBG scrapbook. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

year, I was *n'siah* for Dixie Council. BBYO was a massive part of my life: many of my friends were from BBYO, I connected with cousins in BBYO, and in some ways, it was like my first job.

In hindsight, it's quite shocking to me now that as 14–18-year-olds we were allowed to plan events. Of course, we had advisors to make sure we didn't totally fail, but we routinely planned convention weekends for 100-plus teenagers. One of my all-time favorites was planning Southern Region Convention at Camp Barney Medintz with the Atlanta Council. It was the largest event of the year for our council, drawing hundreds of teens together, and I had the opportunity to plan it with my cousin from Atlanta. Another favorite of mine was when we had our executive committee retreat and I suggested we host it in Edisto Island, South Carolina, which is a special place for me. We all piled in a large rental home and did our strategic exec planning for the year.

I don't think I realized how formative BBYO was for me until I took the time recently to reflect on my experiences. Being part of a Jewish teenage organization and connecting with kids like me was significant, and I got way more out of it than the obvious. I learned to be part of a team, manage a board, speak in public, and plan large scale successful events. These are skills that seem so natural to me now, ones that I use in my everyday professional life working in corporate real estate where I lead global workplace strategy for a financial technology company.

Louis Drucker

As I look back on my teenage years, some of my most cherished memories are tied to my time in the early 1970s with SEFTY, the Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth. Growing up in a small town with just a few Jewish children, SEFTY opened the door to a world where I felt seen, connected, and understood.

It brought together Jewish teens from all over—Charleston, Florence, Sumter, Columbia, Greenville, Savannah, and even smaller towns like Kingstree, Camden, Summerton, and Dillon. No matter where we came from, we shared a bond that transcended geography. It didn't matter if you came from a big city synagogue or a tiny

temple tucked away in a quiet town—when we gathered, we were one community.

Some of the best times of my life happened during those weekends. Whether we were singing our hearts out in spirited song sessions, diving into meaningful religious discussions, or just staying up late laughing over nonsense, there was always something to look forward to. And sometimes, the silliness took over in the form of informal, completely ridiculous surveys like "Are Jewish girls loose?" or football games that were more aggressive than anyone expected. But through it all, one thing was always certain: there would be good-looking Jewish girls there, and for a teenage guy from a

small town, that was a pretty big deal!

None of this would have been possible without the incredible parents who gave so much to support us. They opened their homes to us, cooked countless meals, drove carpools, and gave freely of their time and energy to make sure we had safe, fun, and memorable experiences. Their quiet generosity formed the backbone of SEFTY, and we were all the better for it.

Marisa Rosenberg Kornblut

"Hi. Is this seat taken?" This is where it all began on a hot summer day in 1972. Two southern Jewish kids on the way to Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth (SEFTY) Camp.

Philip Kornblut was born and raised in Latta, South Carolina, to Moses and Freda Kornblut. In Latta, Moses' hometown, there were about 1200 residents and only three Jewish families. What were the ingredients to make and maintain a Jewish commitment under such circumstances? Two Jewish parents committed to Judaism. Model Jewish traditions in the home. Live a life filled with honesty and kindness. Charter a synagogue in a nearby town. Drive your sons to Hebrew school and bar mitzvah lessons each week, 50 miles round trip. Encourage your sons to join Temple Youth Group (TYG). Never deny your heritage.

I was born to Jack and Barbara Rosenberg, who decided to raise a Jewish family in Charleston, South Carolina. What were the ingredients to make and maintain a Jewish home in Charleston? Two Jewish parents committed to Judaism. Model Jewish traditions in the home. Involvement in a synagogue. Attend a Hebrew day school. Encourage your child to join TYG and B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG). Never deny your heritage.

"Marisa, you need to meet these Jewish guys I just met." And so it continued in 1975. We met again. David, a friend of mine, introduced me to Philip, a guy with a weird last name from a small town. "I remember you from SEFTY Camp."

Looking back now, SEFTY wasn't just a youth group. It was a lifeline. It gave me lifelong friendships, a strong sense of Jewish identity, and memories that still bring a smile to my face. I'll always be grateful for the people I met, the laughter we shared, and the feeling of being part of something bigger than myself. With gratitude and love, Dr. Louis Drucker, Kingstree, South Carolina.

An instant memory and connection ignited a friendship that was, once again, fertilized through a Jewish organization, Zeta Beta Tau.

"Yes, I will marry you." Engagement in 1978 and wedding in 1979 at Brith Sholom Beth Israel Synagogue in Charleston. It was now our turn to create our own home together. We always agreed upon the same path to that destination, a Jewish home.



Marisa and Phil Kornblut family, 2025. Courtesy of Marisa Kornblut.

Settling in Columbia, Philip talked his way into the broadcasting industry, and I stayed home the first 15 years after Ashley (1982) and Hayden (1989) arrived. Ingredients: two Jewish parents committed to a Jewish home. Involvement in synagogue. Expose our children to Jewish traditions. Spend time with our grandparents. Join Jewish youth groups. Attend Jewish summer camps. Be kind and considerate to others.

Know it's okay to be different. Travel to Israel. Never deny or dilute your Judaism for the sake of fitting in. Live a Jewish life.

The story repeats itself. It's 2025 and our daughter, Ashley, is married to Andrew Cohen, whom she met at the Jewish Community Center in Atlanta. They have three children, two just returning from Camp Judaea and one who attends the JCC camp. Their daughter will become a bat mitzvah in November and plans to join B'nai B'rith Youth Organization in a year. Our son, Hayden, is married to Rachel Silverman, whom he met on Jdate, and settled in Chicago. They have a daughter and a newborn son.

We met 53 years ago on a bus to camp, married 46 years ago, and Philip still likes the window seat and I the aisle!

Rachel Kronick Rothbart

Even now, when I look at my watch and the display shows 11:34, a little voice in my head starts singing, “1134, 1134, all the Dixie¹ Dolls are from 1134.” This simple little chant seared into my memory from 40 years ago continues to remind me of a small but significant chapter in my book of life. As I look back, my teenage years were not always the easiest; I was trying to figure out the world socially, politically, and academically, in other words, who I was and what I wanted to be as an adult. I did not shy away from my Jewish identity; I was proud of it. Being a Jewish teen attending Porter-Gaud School, an Episcopal private school in Charleston, made me want to connect with others who might be more like me and BBYO (B’nai B’rith Youth Organization) became the place where I grew as a person, as a leader, and as a member of the Jewish community.

For me, that BBYO chapter was Ahava² #1134 in Charleston, South Carolina, in the late 1980s (1985–1989). More specifically, I was joining the B’nai B’rith Girls (BBG). Being a member of a Jewish youth group was not unfamiliar to me. In middle school, I was a member of Young Judaea, a Zionist youth group. Through Young Judaea, I attended a conclave

1. The council level was named Dixie Council. The use of Dixie is problematic considering its ties to the Confederacy and the continued underpinnings of racism post-Civil War. Often a term that is part of the cultural norm at a certain time will be seen differently later in life. Words evolve as humans do. I include the term Dixie in this essay as an identifier and fact at the time (the ‘80s).

2. Growing up in Charleston, many of us participated in Young Judaea in our elementary and middle school years. Iris Baker served as the adult advisor of our Young Judaea chapters. She died during our Spring Convention in April of 1987. As a tribute to her, our BBG Chapter renamed ourselves in her memory to Iris Baker Ahava.

in Columbia, South Carolina, where I met Jewish kids from other southern cities like Augusta, Georgia, and Columbia. I also attended Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina, one summer. However, it was in BBG where I developed many of the life skills that continue to serve me unto this day.

Through BBG, I served in leadership roles both on the chapter level, serving as *s’ganit* (VP, programming), *n’siah* (president), and MIT (Member in Training) Mom, and as *mazkirah* (secretary) on the council level. Running our chapter developed skills such as programming, budgeting, recruiting, and leadership. I still have my *BBG Member’s Manual*, which was quite comprehensive in terms of teaching me about BBG rituals, programs, *tzedakah* (charitable giving), chapter officers, and even parliamentary rules. It could serve as a guidebook today for individuals serving on Jewish boards. I even have my chapter t-shirt with both Hello Kitty (our chapter’s mascot) and Mickey Mouse (the council’s mascot) and my BBG pins.

As *n’siah*, I attended monthly board meetings for the Charleston Jewish Community Center (JCC). With my own eyes, I observed adult lay leadership make important decisions for our community. These were the adults I read about in

our *Center Talk* (the Charleston Jewish monthly newspaper) and wanted to be one day when I was an adult. Serving in these roles enabled me to build confidence in myself, which continues today in both my personal and professional life.

Participating in BBG meant I attended conventions both on a regional level and council level. Growing up, Charleston, Savannah, Augusta, Columbia, and sometimes Spartanburg/Greenville comprised Dixie Council. Atlanta had its own council (Atlanta Council). Together, Atlanta Council and Dixie Council composed Southern Region.



Young Judaea Is Re-activated by Hadassah and JCC with Cook-Out and Games September 27 for Girls and Boys

A cookout was held at the JCC Campsite to introduce Young Judaea to boys and girls from ages nine to 13 by Paul Joffe, regional director, from Atlanta.

Games in the William Ackerman Gym, explanations of the Young Judaea program, and hearing about Mindy Spar’s summer trip to Israel gave the young people much to think about.

The two young Judaea groups (9-11 year olds and 12-13 year olds) will meet twice a month. All interested Jewish boys and girls are invited to participate.

Bootsie Terry, chairman of Hadassah’s Youth Commission, Judy Schwartz, Ellen Mintz, Iris Baker and Tommy Terry are advisors; Doris Cohen is director.

Also attending the “cook-out get-together” was Mrs. Joan Frisch, president of Charleston Chapter of Hadassah, who, along with the JCC, will co-sponsor the newly-reactivated Charleston Chapter of Young Judaea.



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Jewish monthly newspaper) and wanted to be one

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In the fall, we had our AIT (Aleph in Training)/MIT weekend at a YMCA camp near Columbia and we had a council convention at Thanksgiving in various locations, but always close to a JCC gym so our AZAers (members of Aleph Zadik Aleph, the boys’ BBYO youth group) could play in basketball competitions (CHAZA, Charleston’s AZA chapter, #143 always won in my memories). During the winter we had regionals, and in the spring we had our Dixie Council Spring Convention. Each convention had themes and programming centered on these themes, along with a business meeting, competitions, Friday night and Shabbat services, and mixers, enabling us to connect with other Jewish teens and build friendships. I remember creating dances and songs so we could compete at the Thanksgiving Council Convention and Winter Regionals. During board meetings for the council conventions (and maybe regionals), we ate spooey (canned frosting) and announced our “Home ofs.” While at spring conventions, we always had our Life Ceremonies for our seniors. At the center of all of these events, teens and their adult advisors were creating stronger ties, Jewish identity, and community.

In addition to our conventions, we attended dances in the various cities. During Labor Day weekend, Charleston was the place to be, and local members hosted teens in their homes. Labor Day weekend, of course, occurred during hurricane season. The year I was president, our dance was to be held at the Exchange building (Old Exchange & Provost Dungeon) in downtown Charleston, but due to flooding we had to move our dance to the Ackerman Gymnasium at the Charleston JCC. At these dances, we had photographers capture the couples, the executive boards, and friendships. On Saturday night, our BBG chapter held its dance and named our next year’s beau. Sunday night, CHAZA hosted its dance and named its sweetheart. I will never forget being named CHAZA’s Sweetheart in 1988, baking cookies and brownies to bring to meetings, wearing the Sweetheart’s jacket and attending meetings and programs. I still have my dress I wore when I was elected as Sweetheart and the beautiful pendant I received at the end of my term.

BBYO functioned as a place where we could be Jewish and act Jewish. Every convention involved a welcoming Shabbat ritual where Jewish teens, no matter their level of practice, could find a place to observe. During the year, we raised funds for International Service Fund (ISF), which taught us the value of *tzedakah* and actively programmed on Jewish-related topics. During my BBG years, the plight of Jewish refuseniks in the Soviet Union was an important issue. We sold and wore bracelets for the Soviet Jews (mine was for Ida Nudel, which I still have today) to remind us that we were not all free. In one particular program, co-sponsored by Charleston BBYO and KKBE’s NFTY, one of our Jewish teens, himself an émigré from the Soviet Union, translated a live call from a refusenik. I will never forget this call and what it meant to understand that the freedoms I had did not always extend to other Jews around the world.

Looking back, I imagine my BBYO experience was in part shaped by growing up as a Jewish teen in the South. Meeting other Jewish teens from small southern cities like Columbia, Savannah, and Augusta, and even the big city, Atlanta, made it more special to know that there were others like me and that we were different from the Jewish representation I witnessed in the media and entertainment (a good bit different!). I treasure my BBYO memories and experiences and know that they are a core building block of my own personhood. To this day, 11:34 will always be a special time.

Clockwise from top left: Clipping about the reactivation of Young Judaea in Charleston. Source is likely Center Talk, 1978, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries. Rachel Kronick with her date, Sidney Halpern of Savannah, Georgia, 1986 Labor Day Dance. Rachel’s dress and Sweetheart pendant, 1988. Ahava BBG #1134 performs in a Southern Region Convention contest, late 1980s. BBYO photos courtesy of Rachel Kronick Rothbart.



Kayte Steinert-Threlkeld

It is impossible to understate the role that BBYO played in my life. I was fortunate enough to lead the Charleston BBG chapter, serve as sweetheart for CHAZA 143 (1969–1970), and hold the position of BBG *s'ganit* (vice president) for Dixie Council (1970–1971). Leadership skills, team building, and strong moral values were imparted to me through BBYO, its management, and the many friends I made not only in Charleston, but throughout the Southern Region.

Advisors like Joan Frisch, Joe Mendelsohn, and my uncle Max Kirshstein gave so unselfishly of their time to guide us in our activities, particularly as it related to community service events. I remember “can can” drives when, for the entry fee of one can of food, you could attend a private showing of the latest movie at Charleston’s Gloria Theater.

I can’t imagine my teen years without the meetings, the conventions, and the dances. Sometimes I find myself humming songs we made up for competitions at the Dixie and Southern Regional Conferences. I still know the words to Chapter 143’s “fight song.” Ask any member of 143 and they will readily tell you “Charleston, Charleston, 143, Tops in the National we’ll always be.”

I can visualize practicing Israeli dancing at the JCC. In fact, it still surprises me when I speak to friends from the Northeast who were not active in BBYO. And so much of that activity was carried out at Charleston’s Jewish Community Center, which is where I had my bat mitzvah party as well as my Sweet Sixteen birthday party. It is sad to think that perhaps I hit my prime between the ages of 13 and 18!



Kayte Steinert (Charleston, SC) and Kenneth Shusterman (Augusta, GA). Courtesy of Kayte Steinert-Threlkeld.

Josh Lieb

I have to begin any history of Columbia AZA in the mid-'80s with an apology because, boy, were we jerks. I mean, not the worst jerks, but we were definitely teenage boys, and mouthy Jewish teenage boys at that, and sometimes we could be a lot. As I’ve grown older, and my rear-view vision has grown clearer, my appreciation for our long-suffering, insanely patient advisor, Jerry Emanuel, has grown immensely. Without him, Paul Schwartz AZA wouldn’t have been possible. So thanks, Jerry—and I’m sorry.

Beth Friedman over at BBG had it easy because the girls were angels (ha ha), but she had to deal with us, too, and I really am astonished by how well they wrangled us.

We met once a week at the old JCC, which smelled funny and was far from

luxurious (the boys’ locker room by the pool could be terrifying), but was the center of our lives for many years. Meetings were fun. A lot of the guys were very funny—Eric Jablon, Jay Kline, the Marks twins, Bruce Miller, to name a few—and you got to see kids who went to different schools. A lot of times Beth Shalom kids didn’t know Tree of Life kids very well, and vice versa, so it was nice to finally mix it up.

Neal Lourie was the revered leader when my group joined. Randy Stark (and I think David Marks? Bruce Miller?) became president later. Some of the guys were just, by nature, destined to lead the chapter, and some of us were destined to yell out jokes from the back of the room. It took all kinds.

Basketball was king. Every meeting ended with a game. Kyle Reeves and Sam Moses were our stars (or will tell you that they were), but everyone played—Brian Milman, Jeffrey Politis, Kevin Ginsburg, even shorties like me and Eric. The official Paul Schwartz team (which I was never on) played against the chapters from Savannah, Charleston, and Augusta at conventions and the annual Run-offs tournament. I competed in other events, like extemporaneous speaking.

Seated (l to r): Kimberly Ginsburg, David Marks, Neal Lourie, Suzanne Politis. Standing: Randy Stark, Rob Miller, Keith Marks and Kevin Marks (or Kevin Marks and Keith Marks), Jeff Rubin, Andy Gendil, Bruce Miller. This photo and photo at top of page 25 are from the Paul Schwartz AZA Chapter 254, scrapbook, Columbia, SC, mid-1980s. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

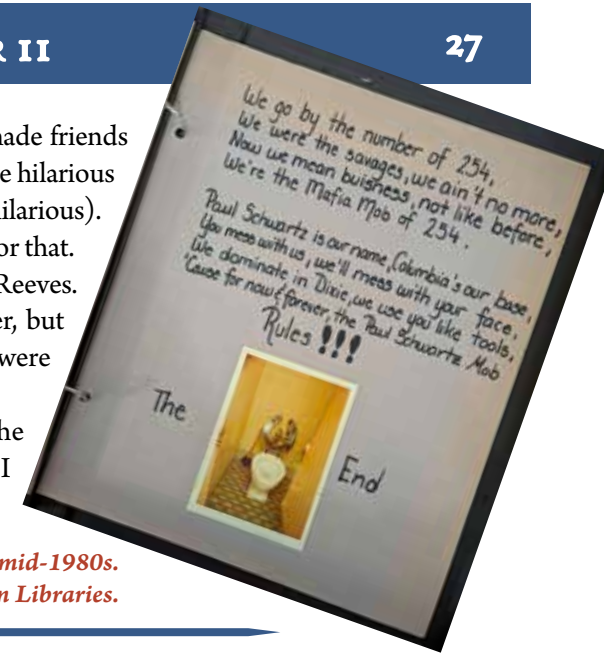


The conventions were great. We met kids from all over Dixie Council and made friends for life. In fact, I had dinner last week with Greg Rothschild, who used to just be the hilarious kid from Charleston, and is now a respectable pillar of his community (but still hilarious). Our kids are friends; they go to Camp Judaea together. And I have AZA to thank for that.

The Lena Karesh girls were run by Cara Bedford, Melinda Milman, and Amy Reeves. They always seemed a little more together than the ragtag boys. They were older, but even the girls my age—Jenny Gendil, Ali Bedford, Amy Stahl, Andrea Gold—were just a little more mature.

Paul Schwartz AZA was chaotic and loud, but it was fun. It seemed like the silliest thing possible at the time, but in retrospect, it was kind of important, and I value those memories a lot.

The “Mafia Mob” chant, Paul Schwartz AZA Chapter 254, Columbia, SC, mid-1980s. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.



Lisa Collis Cohen

What do a 1989 Atlanta Jewish Federation Young Leadership Mission to Amsterdam and Israel, a 1990 wedding in Ahavath Achim’s Ellman chapel, a 1992 bris, a 1994 baby naming, a 2002 adult bat mitzvah, a 2005 bar mitzvah, a 2007 bat mitzvah, a 2019 wedding, a May 2022 bris, a December 2023 bris, and a July 2025 bris ALL have in common? My participation in Temple Youth Group (TYG) laid the foundation that made these all possible.

I was raised in Kingstree, South Carolina, in an observant home and a small Conservative shul, Temple Beth Or. In town and at school, I was “different.” In TYG, I was “me.” Although I reluctantly attended my first TYG meeting in 1972 at Temple Sinai in Sumter, I immediately felt at home. The kids were friendly. I loved the warmth and ease with which the Reform Movement celebrated Judaism. Worship, art, music, singing, sleep-ins, conventions, friends, and SEFTY (Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth) Institute made TYG a year-round activity. I loved every minute!

Several of my TYG friends hailed from small towns. We all shared similar experiences of being Jewish and feeling different from most of our local friends. Meeting teens from and attending conventions in larger Jewish communities of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida added variety to my circle of friends and experiences. District conventions for East SEFTY gave us chances to strengthen our bonds

with the teens we saw fairly often. Regional conventions and SEFTY Institute gave us a chance to meet kids from Atlanta and Miami, the southern Jewish meccas of the 1970s. The song “Leaving on a Jet Plane” held a special significance as we struggled to say our goodbyes at each event’s conclusion. Long distance calls with friends were treats as were the arrival of letters or postcards.

In my experience kids loved either BBYO or TYG. A few were involved in both. I felt out of place amid the BBYO cliques.

And while I think in larger cities the group to which you belonged was dictated by your family’s choice of congregation, I never experienced that in TYG. The camaraderie was strong and everyone felt welcome. It was a true melting pot.

Leadership opportunities abounded in TYG. At committee, chapter, district, and regional levels, everyone was given the chance to learn and to lead. Of course, this all sounds great, but let’s face it; we were all teens and several crushes and relationships resulted from TYG. Like all teens, we engaged in mischief, but here’s where I’m taking the Fifth.

The impact of TYG on my life was and continues to be indelible. Although my husband and I were brought up in Conservative homes and shuls, I am still drawn to the values, worship, and music of the Reform Movement—all gifts of TYG. To this day, I’m still very close friends with some TYG friends and continue to make connections with others at various events like the Jewish Community Legacy Project get-togethers.



Michael Cohen (son of Sumter TYG’s Lisa Collis and her husband, Sherman Cohen) and Emily Kahn Cohen (daughter of Savannah TYG’s David Kahn and his wife, Diane Lovitz) with newborn son Beau Hudson Cohen at his bris in Savannah on July 23, 2025. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen.

In my family, the relationships that began in TYG have come full circle. My son married the daughter of a TYG friend from Savannah (we have photo evidence of our friendship in the 1970s!). They were married by Rabbi Haas of Savannah's Congregation Mickve Israel. My TYG in-law and his wife and my husband and I share three beautiful grandsons. Not exactly a by-product of TYG, but certainly a sweet coincidence.

All organizations go through cycles and TYG is no exception. Congregations in small towns and cities have struggled in recent years. Temple Beth Or in Kingstree is

now home to a Catholic church. Temple Sinai in Sumter is a museum and has a modified schedule of religious services. I feel so lucky that Temple Sinai welcomed teens from small towns and other congregations into their youth group. When I visited a few years ago, the docent accompanied me as I toured the kitchen, social hall, and sanctuary—all in pristine condition and just as I remembered them. My request to see the TYG lounge on the second floor was granted. As I stood in the bright yellow room tagged with big green outlines of frogs, the memories came flooding back. GORF Court, anyone?

Amy Bernstein

Growing up in Augusta, Georgia with a small Jewish community, BBYO (1981–1985) opened my eyes to the joys that can be found in extended community. As a teen, finding others with whom I could identify in my formative years, was heartwarming and eye opening. Some of those

friendships have lasted more than four decades. The exposure to Jewish teens from Charleston, Columbia, Savannah, and the other nearby southern cities paved the way for me to pursue Jewish friendships in college and beyond. I am thankful for my time in Dixie Council and wish it continued success for the youths of today.

JHSSC Wants You!

by Rachel Gordin Barnett, JHSSC Executive Director

Recently, a friend and I were discussing how we came to be hooked on southern Jewish history and realized that during the summer of 1973 we each read *The Provincials* by Eli Evans. His book became the foundation for what would follow in the academic arena of southern Jewish history and beyond. What was it about this book that was so intriguing to me? Perhaps it was because my life was similar to Eli's, although Durham, North Carolina, had a much larger Jewish community than my hometown, Summerton, South Carolina. But, for an 11th-grader growing up in a small town, it was eye-opening to realize that there were more families like mine—small town Jewish families who maintained Jewish traditions while trying to “fit into” their secular community.

My parents often talked about their Jewish friends from the University of South Carolina and College of Charleston and their memories of growing up in Charleston and Summerton. My siblings and I termed this “playing Jewish geography” and their conversations fueled my interest in South Carolina's Jewish history. When Isadore Lourie and his fellow founders established the JHSSC in 1994, I was thrilled that there was an organization dedicated to preserving our stories.

Fast forward 30 years, and now the JHSSC finds itself in a new home but still under the College of Charleston umbrella. Yes, we

have moved from Jewish Studies to Addlestone Library, also home to the Jewish Heritage Collection. This is solely an administrative change. We will continue to collaborate on programming with our colleagues at Jewish Studies. I want to thank Dean John White and his excellent folks for welcoming us to Addlestone. The Society has enjoyed a closeness with the Jewish Heritage Collection since our inception in 1994. Many family papers, photographs, documents, objects, and oral histories in the Collection are from the Society's membership. The JHSSC's commitment to community outreach is only strengthened when we join forces. Thank you to Dean Aimee Arias and Dean Beth Meyer-Bernstein for their support this past year. I would like to thank Enid Idelsohn for her many years of service to the JHSSC as the administrator and operations director. Tamara Rosas-Bossak will now serve as director of operations for the JHSSC. Alyssa Neely will continue in her position as administrator and editor and designer of our biannual magazine.

But what does the future hold for our organization and why does a historical society matter in the 21st century? How do we attract the next generation of members? Fortunately, the JHSSC has a staunchly supportive membership and the backing of more than 40 Pillars. We are very appreciative of everyone's patronage, which enables us to stand by our mission to collect, preserve,

and share the impact of Jewish citizens in the larger South Carolina story, because—

“A generation which ignores history has no past—and no future.” —Robert Heinlein

I am most interested in your suggestions and thoughts about the organization. How can you be involved? Let us know if you have an interest in joining the Board. You could volunteer to conduct oral histories or photograph cemetery headstones. You might research and write about your family. Help us ensure that the contributions of Jewish South Carolinians are documented and passed down from generation to generation.

My passion for learning about South Carolina's Jewish history, born in that summer of 1973, propels me forward. I hope that the same interest will capture the next generation as well.

Suggestions? Contact me at jhssc2020@gmail.com.

THANK YOU, ENID!



The JHSSC Board recognizes Enid Idelsohn for her 23 years of dedicated service to the Society as administrator and director of operations. She has been an integral part of the JHSSC and we are forever grateful for her strong guidance, unwavering support, and faithful friendship.

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Make checks payable to JHSSC and mail to address above.

Register now for the November 8–9 meeting at jhssc.org/events/upcoming.
See page 15 of this publication for program information.