

Rabbis DO sweat

Tampa Bay area Jewish clergy exercise for health, fitness, spiritual well being

By ELAINE MARKOWITZ
Jewish Press

Some Tampa Bay area rabbis and cantors are on the run — or on the treadmill, the bicycle, or the yoga mat. What these members of this active group seem to share, whatever their preferred form of exercise, is the need to bring mind, body and spirit into balance and, in so doing, find relief from some of the pressures of the job.

Among those responding to *Jewish Press* queries were two Tampa rabbis, Rabbi Marc Sack of Congregation Rodeph Sholom and Rabbi Jason Rosenberg of Congregation Beth Am, both committed to daily exercise.

Rabbi Sack spoke of the stress that is part of the rabinate:

“In this job you deal with a lot of sorrow and a lot of pain,” he said. “You need to leave that and recharge.”

He added that the job of a rabbi can be physically tiring as well and requires building stamina.

“I’m at minyan at 7:30 a.m.,” he said, “and sometimes I don’t get home until 8 at night.”

Biking is one of his favorite outlets, he said. For years he was an avid long distance biker.

With a small group of friends the rabbi once rode 50 miles a day through Colorado and logged some 465 miles in six days, riding from Montreal through upstate New York and across upper New England.

“Our longest day was 90 miles,” he said.

Following several bad spills resulting in concussions, Rabbi Sack said he decided enough was enough on a standard bicycle.

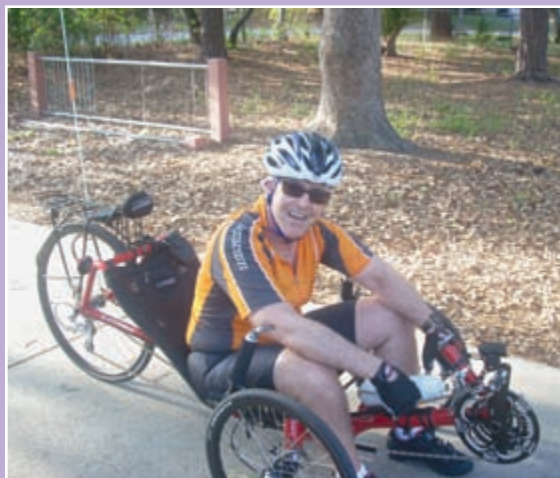
“I promised my wife,” he said.

His compromise was the purchase of a three-wheel recumbent, which is low to the ground and affords little opportunity to fall. He has begun riding on his day off and Sunday afternoons.

Rabbi Rosenberg, a native of Toronto, came on board as spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Am three years ago. He said that exercise was a natural part of his day back in Canada, but not here.

“Being in a big city you can walk to restaurants and stores,” he said. “Here everything is car based.”

He said being sedentary had begun to have an impact on his health.



Rabbi Marc Sack takes his new recumbent bike on its Maiden Voyage, including a stop at Taylor Park in Largo.

“Your mental capacity and spiritual health depends on your physical health,” he said.

To that end he recently started running for the first time.

“Running is convenient,” he said. “You just put on your shoes and you can do it any time.”

For motivation Rabbi Rosenberg follows a program he discovered online called “Couch Potato to 5K Runner in Two Months,” one of the many programs that provides guidelines to daily training.

In addition to running, the rabbi said he has been walking daily and going to the gym when he can squeeze it into his week.

Other Tampa Bay area rabbis exercise for specific purposes.

In Clearwater, Rabbi Daniel Treiser of Temple B’nai Israel began an exercise regimen last January. He started his program for practical reasons.

“I wanted to be healthier for the congregational trip to Israel,” he said of the then pending April trip, “and healthier overall.”

“I try to make it to the gym every day,” the rabbi said. “It’s enjoyable.”

And in Tarpon Springs, Rabbi Cyrus Arfa of Congregation B’nai Emmunah

said he goes to the gym three times a week.

At least three local members of the clergy have worked yoga into their week with what they said are notable benefits.

Cantor Deborah Jacobson of Temple Ahavat Shalom in Palm Harbor is an enthusiastic yoga practitioner and

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Mom recounts her child’s life with genetic disorder, efforts to save him

By ERIC FINGERHUT
Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON — Fourteen years ago, Washington, D.C. resident Laurie Strongin remembers, it seemed almost like “science fiction,” the notion that you could “pick the baby you could get pregnant with.”

Moreover, cells from that newborn might save the life of her young son, Henry, who was suffering from a rare genetic disease, Fanconi anemia.

A new vitro fertilization procedure known as preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) could potentially achieve both results, but it was ethically controversial. For guidance on whether to use it, Strongin and her husband, Allen Goldberg, turned to Jewish values.

PGD would enable doctors to select the right embryo for implantation, one that would allow Strongin not only to give birth to a child free of Fanconi anemia, but would also provide a perfect match for the stem cell transplant that Henry needed to save his life.

“Saving a life is held in the highest regard in Judaism,” Strongin said in an interview discussing her new book, *Saving Henry: A Mother’s Journey*. “It was very clear to us, and consistent with that Jewish value in not only Henry’s life, but the baby’s life to not have this disease. ... To us, the decision was clear.”

In the end, PGD wasn’t successful, although Strongin and Goldberg did later have another child, Joe, now 8, naturally. Saving Henry tells the story of the in vitro process (now more common), but also recounts the life of Henry, who died at the age of 7 in 2002 and, said Strongin, was “such an incredible lover of life.”

Each chapter of the book, released by Hyperion in March, begins with a few items from the list of “Henry’s Favorite Things” — everything from Batman and baseball great Cal Ripken Jr. to Shabbat Sing at Adas Israel’s Gan HaYeled Preschool. And Strongin said Henry’s zest for life — “he looked at medical procedures as something to get over with to get back to what he was doing” — inspired doctors and others he came in contact with to “work harder to find a cure.”

“I hope that will be inspiring and hopeful to any parent that reads the book, not just those facing a terrible illness,” said Strongin, 44.

Strongin, a D.C. native who grew up in Chevy Chase and



Henry Strongin Goldberg died in 2002 at age 7 from Fanconi anemia

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Cantor Deborah Jacobson, husband Jordan and children competing in the Athletes Who Care Mini-Triathlon in 2008. The money raised goes to help children with cancer.

