



Heidi Goldsmith

Heidi Goldsmith had her first experience as a community organizer when she was 12 - organizing her neighborhood for charity fund-raisers. The Bethesda resident has been devoted to helping her community ever since.

As a teenager in Baltimore, she organized a citywide tutoring program for inner-city children. When she was 16, she spearheaded a citywide march against hunger, and as a University of Maryland student, she worked at help lines. Her first job out of college was as a fund-raiser for the United Jewish Appeal. That was followed by a year in Israel, participating in the Sherut La'am volunteer and educational program.

Back in the States, she worked for Hillel international office, and coordinated the U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding in Social Services.

In 1994, Goldsmith founded the Coalition for Residential Education (CORE), a D.C.-based national nonprofit that provides community-like options for at-risk children. Goldsmith's inspiration for the program is an Israeli program that she considers a hybrid between a kibbutz and a boarding school.

"Israel has a whole network of what they call children and youth villages," Goldsmith, 55, said. "What they do is they tell the child, 'Your family can't care for you well enough right now, but your community can.'"

Residential education is an option when foster care or adoption hasn't worked out, serving children who have been severely challenged by homelessness, abuse, neglect and low-income, high-crime neighborhoods.

CORE brought together a national network of more than 100 residential education programs, and also helps communities start new schools.

Goldsmith's parents were very important in helping her develop both her passion for community and her love for Israel.

She says her mother has always been involved in tikkun olam, repairing the world, and her father is an engineer. Together, they've combined in Goldsmith in what she calls "engineered tikkun olam."

"My mother volunteered in Israel two years before Israel was even a state," Goldsmith said. "She lived on a kibbutz and they were rationed one egg per week, so I grew up on stories like that. She gave me the love of Israel."

Goldsmith took her first trip to Israel when she was 16.

Just as her parents passed their passion on to Goldsmith, she is passing it to her 9-year-old son, Daniel.

"He's very aware of my work," she said. "For years he didn't want birthday gifts, he wanted contributions."

As a single parent, Goldsmith had to change her lifestyle when she adopted Daniel - not that she's regretted the decision.

"I kind of gave up almost anything else until recently," she said. "There just was no other time for anything."

In the middle of running a nonprofit during a national economic crisis, Goldsmith has been able to find time for one of her favorite activities: dancing.

Even so, when she's not working, she spends much of her time with Daniel. The two do a lot together including having Shabbat dinners, another of Daniel's requests instead of birthday parties.

The two are learning a lot from each other as Daniel grows older.

"It's not just him learning from me, though, of course he does," wrote Goldsmith in an e-mail. "His background, including his Asian heritage and personality/ interests (and his high energy level!) influence our family." - Ilana Yergin

Name: Heidi Goldsmith

Lives in: Bethesda

Synagogue: Fabrangen

Favorite Jewish holiday: Rosh Hashanah

Favorite Jewish food: Israeli fruit salad

Favorite Jewish celebrity: Bette Midler

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