

Local Preschool Educator Receives National Honor

Miriam Gurantz, long-time preschool educator, recently received the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. The award, presented in conjunction with JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America, recognizes outstanding Jewish educators throughout North America.

Miki, as her young students affectionately know her, has been involved in Jewish education for more than thirty years. The mother of three grown sons, Miki began her teaching career in her native Israel. In 1975, she moved with her family to Los Angeles, where she held a variety of preschool teaching and leadership positions. She has been the head teacher at Sinai Nursery School in San Jose since moving to the Bay Area three years ago.

Tsilla Brafman, head of Sinai Nursery School, said, "Immediately upon meeting Miki, I knew she would be a great asset to our school. Her warmth and dedication, together with her professional experience, help our children to flourish."

Brafman believes that one of Miki's strongest qualities is her ability to nurture and motivate children to fulfill their potential. "Anyone can teach a child to copy a flower. Miki teaches the child to look at the flower and draw what they see," said Brafman.

Nominees for the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award are selected by the local Council on Jewish Education (CJE) and submitted to JESNA for confirmation. "The people who know Miki, or who have had the pleasure of having a child in one of her classes, have all been thrilled that Miki was nominated for this national award," said Dottie Miller, head of the CJE for Greater San Jose.

Participation of the San Jose CJE was made possible by a local group of generous donors who put up the \$1,000 local contribution. The Harold Grinspoon Foundation and Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation provide a matching \$1,500 to be used for professional development. Award recipients will also be honored at a reception and professional development seminar in Florida in February 2004.

For her part, Miki says she feels privileged to be working in the field of Jewish education. "When children go home and "teach" their families about our traditions and beliefs as a result of what they've learned and experienced at school, I feel a tremendous sense of satisfaction. By being a Jewish educator my personal life as a Jew is being enriched."