

Celebrating Israel at 71: Torch Lighter Biographies

Eric Barvin Eric grew up in Houston's Jewish Community. He is a product of Jewish schools (Shlenker and Emery Weiner), the JCC, and Beth Israel. Today, Eric is the President of Barvin Group, which he started in 2009. His firm acquires or builds, manages, and owns apartment communities that endure the test of time and strengthen the communities they serve.

Eric is married to Olivia Barvin and they have two kids (Ben - 3 and Marcela - 1), a dog (Samson), and 6 chickens. He will be representing the USA in the Pan Am Maccabi Games for basketball this summer in Mexico City.

Denis Braham is past Chair of the Board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. He has been active in various Jewish organizations, internationally, nationally and locally. Denis and his wife, Sarah, have two children and two grandchildren. They are frequent visitors to Israel.

Houston Shaliach Gil Brav served in the army for three years as a commander in regiment 932 of the Nachal Brigade. After his army service, Brav studied to become a tour guide and received his official license in 2015. Brav fell in love with shlichut seven years ago when he worked as a song leader at the JCC in Nashville, TN. His dream was to return to shlichut and he is excited to now be in Houston with his partner, Hadas Levy. Instead of bringing people to Israel, he is excited to be here and bring "his" Israel: the multicultural, diverse, musical, beautiful Israel to this wonderful community of Houston and the Evelyn Rubenstein JCC.

Stephen Breslauer is a retired nuclear engineer and a Houston resident for over 40 years. He has served on the boards of the Houston Jewish Federation, Houston Jewish Community Foundation, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and Congregation Beth Israel, among others.

Jadyn Grossman is a junior at the Emery Weiner School. She is involved in many organizations. She is a Teen Leader for Kehillah High, involved with the Target Teen Leadership Program, and part of the Israel Teen Ambassadors Program. Recently, she enjoyed learning more about Israel by attending the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. She feels honored to be lighting a candle for this year's program.

Arline Guefen moved to Houston in 1954 from Boston with her then husband, Warren Finn, and three children Lisa, Adam, and Jordan. Arline worked at Foley's Department Store as an assistant buyer in the stationary department, taught in the elementary school for the Houston Public school system for 4 years and then continued teaching at a private school for cerebral palsy young adults for 15 years.

Her first visit to Israel was in 1972 with the family. Warren passed in 1983 and Arline took over the business, Warren Alloy Valve Co. with her sons. In 1986, the family financed the racket ball courts at JCC and began The Warren Finn Racquetball tournament that ran for 15 years. She also served on the JCC Board of Directors in earlier years. Arline met Ben Guefen in 1989 and that is

when her true involvement with Israel and Judaism began. She travelled to Israel many times with her guide and teacher, Ben and went on 4 missions with Federation.

Arline is also very involved with Collage as table captain, active with AABGU, and served as president, on the board, and dinner committee. She supports many Jewish causes here in Houston and in Israel.

Ben Guefen

Ben, a retired businessman, first became involved with AABGU in 1997. He has served on the organization's national board since 2003, was a recipient of AABGU David Ben-Gurion Award in 2004, and remains an active member of the regional board of Greater Texas.

Today, he and his wife, Arline, are proud members of BGU's Negev and Living Legacy Societies. In May 2011 he was elected to the University's board of governors.

At age 20, he attended for one year (1949-1950), the Jewish Agency's Institution for Zionist Youth Instructors (*Machon Le'Madrichei Chut's La'Haretz*) in Jerusalem. During that time, he founded two *kibbutzim*: Ein Hashlosha in the Negev and Talmei Yaffe in the South of Israel.

Ben was born in Lithuania and raised in Mexico City. In 1950, he went back to Mexico, where he worked with the Young Zionist movement Hanoar Hatzioni in Mexico City, later he founded a chapter of the same movement in Havana, Cuba.

In 1953, he returned to Israel with his wife Lili and lived for two years in the kibbutzim Ein Hashlosha and Tel-Itzchaq.

In 1961, he signed a land agreement in Jerusalem as the chairman of the Tel Aviv Country Club. Ben spent the next three years traveling between Mexico City and Tel Aviv to build the "TEL AVIV COUNTRY CLUB" in addition to a 218-room hotel.

In the late 70s, he became vice president of Jewish National Fund (JNF) in San Diego, California, and joined the JNF Texas Region board in 1994. In 1989 he met Arline and moved to Houston.

Ben has also been a co-chair of the Houston Federation Campaign, Board member of the Houston Jewish Community Foundation, member of the Jewish Community Leadership Council.

Daniel Johary is a senior at Bellaire High School and is part of the Israel Ambassadors program. Both of his parents are immigrants, with his dad being from Israel and his mom from Argentina. His grandmother was a Holocaust survivor and recently passed away in December. Daniel is proud younger brother of two older siblings.

Livingston and Saranne Kosberg have devoted their lives to promote Jewish immigration to Israel. They were one of 18 families around the world who founded the Meir Amit Intelligence

Center in Israel in 1983. They have been involved in many national Jewish organizations at a leadership level and have led the Jewish Federation of Houston and past United Jewish Campaigns. They are grateful to be chosen to light a torch.

Hadas Levy is the Israeli Shlichah (emissary) for the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. She served the IDF as an educational officer in the Lebanon border, teaching the soldiers about the importance and meaning of IDF's mission in the northern border, along with Israel's history. After her army service she joined the Jewish agency Summer Shlichim program in North America, where she spent her summer making connections between Israel and American youth. After finishing her BA in Education and Israel state studies, and working for non-profits in Israel, Hadas and Gil decided to move to Houston in the hope that they will deepen the connections between Israel and The Houston Jewish Community.

Shay Luvshis is the first Energy Consul of the State of Israel. He was sent to Houston 2 years ago to represent the Israeli energy market in the world energy capital, Houston Texas. Shay has worked for the government of Israel his entire career. His main focus has been lowering the cost of living for the people of Israel while I worked in the Israeli Ministry of Economy for 10 years. Shay lives in Meyerland with his wife Mira and 3 their children Nataly, Eitan and Danielle.

Iris Mushin Iris Mushin was born in Lafayette, Indiana, where her Israeli father was completing his PhD at Purdue, and lived her formative years in Israel, where she served in the Israeli Air Force and was a caseworker with street gangs. She moved with her husband to Houston in 1985, where she raised three wonderful children, earned her MBA, and developed and implemented a program at Baylor College of Medicine to facilitate physicians' training. After 25 years of directing the program, she recently authored the book, "What Hurts the Physician Hurts the Patient," describing her philosophy and providing guidelines to improve health care professionals' well-being.

Iris has been a member of the AJC Board since 2007 and serves on the Board of Governors and the National Leadership Council. She has participated, along with her husband Uriel, in multiple AJC diplomatic delegations. She also served on the Board of the Israeli American Council and recently passed the torch to her son. Iris and her husband are very dedicated to Israeli and Jewish causes and frequently host events in their home, promoting multiple Jewish organizations.

Russ Robinson is a local businessman and entrepreneur. He serves on the Board of Federation, International Board of Moishe House, and on the Board of the University of Houston Business School. He is a former Board member of Hillel International and a former Federation Campaign chair.

Nofar Salman, 27, is a first generation Iraqi Jew. She works as a second-year Israel Fellow at Houston Hillel. Nofar finished her army service as a commander in the IDF and studied public policy. Prior to her Shlicut, Nofar worked at the Knesset (Israeli parliament).