

[Search All Issues](#)
[Community Directory](#)

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STORIES IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

[On a search for chametz](#)
[Teens raise money for ARMDI](#)

COMMUNITY

[Federation adopts public policy process](#)
[Madrid blasts raise concern](#)

SPECIAL SECTION

[Passover Planner](#)
[Passover in Poland](#)

FOOD

[Chicken soup contest](#)

NATION

[Jews give nod to 'under God'](#)

WORLD

[Keep pressuring Iran](#)

ISRAEL

[Suicide bombings in Ashdod](#)

[Young and elite meet](#)

OPINION

[Editorial - Our need to clean](#)

[Commentary - 'Lessons' from Gibson's dad](#)

[Commentary - Family of terrorism](#)

[Commentary - Know thy neighbor](#)

[In the Mail - Letters to the Editor](#)

BUSINESS

[Pita's potential goes extreme](#)

[People on the move](#)

COMING UP

[This Week](#)

MILESTONES

[Births](#)
[B'nai Mitzvah](#)
[Weddings](#)
[Obituaries](#)

SENIORS

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Teens raise money for ARMDI

JENNIFER GOLDBERG

Staff Writer

[E-MAIL](#)

Most Jews have a heart for Israel. Some just realize it earlier than others.

On Feb. 28, the Arizona Students for Israel club (ASFI) at Horizon High School in Scottsdale sponsored a bowl-a-thon to raise money for American Red Magen David for Israel (ARMDI) to help support Magen David Adom, the Israeli Red Cross. Twenty Jewish teens bowled at Via Linda Lanes in Scottsdale to support the cause, which raised approximately \$2,500 for ARMDI. More than 50 students participated in fund raising. All Jewish high school students were invited to attend, and Horizon, Chaparral, Desert Mountain, North and Pinnacle High Schools were represented at the event.

ASFI of Horizon president Josh Borenstein says the club was founded in the 2003-04 school year in conjunction with the Phoenix Community Kollel as an advocacy club to teach students about Israel.

"I've always been a supporter of Israel and a Zionist," he says. "I wanted to start the club to educate others who don't know what's going on ... and prepare them for what they're going to experience on college campuses, so they can take part in discussions and be effective advocates for Israel."

The ASFI of Horizon club is one of three Jewish Student Union clubs for Jewish teenagers that Phoenix Community Kollel has helped found in public high schools. There is also a club in Chaparral High School in Scottsdale and in Central High School in Phoenix. Plans for a club in Arcadia High School in Scottsdale are underway.

Rabbi Raphael Landesman, associate rabbi and director of teen programming for Phoenix Community Kollel, says that it's important for Jewish teens to have an outlet in their school in which to express and explore Jewish identity.



Local Jewish teens participated in a Feb. 28 bowl-a-thon hosted by the Arizona Students for Israel (ASFI) club of Horizon High School Club. More than \$2,000 was raised for ARMDI. From left, Bryan Siegel of Horizon High School; Josh Borenstein, president of ASFI of Horizon; Jay Bycer, coordinator of Arizona Friends of ARMDI; Andrew Weintraub of Horizon High School; and Dana Schechter of Horizon High School.

Photo courtesy of Jay Bycer

[Events](#)
[SINGLES](#)
[Datebook](#)
[YOUTH](#)
[A treat for Passover](#)
[TORAH STUDY](#)
[Sacred purposes in life's journey](#)

"There are lots of Jewish kids in public schools. I think it's good that within the school that kids feel that they are part of a group that identifies as being Jewish, and in the Horizon club, that has a voice that is pro-Israel," he notes. Some schools have clubs that "aggressively try to get kids to be more Christian, so it's important to have a counterbalance to that." Landesman estimates that there are about 500 Jewish teens at Chaparral and about 300 at Horizon.



Despite the fact that ASFI of Horizon was formed for Jewish students, several Christian teens have also joined the club.

"There are a few Christian kids who are very active in the club. We don't turn anyone away," says Landesman. "They support Israel and they feel strongly about it as well."

[Home](#)