



Gratz Insider, Summer 2015 - Story Continuation

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Gratz College Alumna Wins Distinguished Covenant Award

The following is an excerpt about Dr. Lilienthal from the Covenant Foundation news article announcing this year's Covenant Award winners:

DR. SANDRA OSTROWICZ LILIENTHAL, Curriculum Developer and Instructor at The Rose and Jack Orloff Central Agency for Jewish Education of Broward County (Orloff CAJE) in Davie, FL, attaches an uncommon passion and approach to adult Jewish education and in the process is equipping and empowering students to create and deepen their Jewish identities.

Affiliated with Orloff CAJE since 2006, she has transformed the agency, its educational impact, and the face of adult Jewish education in South Florida. She has done this through not only her dedication to teaching and her students, but also by designing and using new curricula and approaches that fuel personal and community growth through Jewish knowledge and perspective.

“Intellectual struggle is what generates spiritual growth,” Dr. Lilienthal said. “I encourage my students to examine their beliefs and their practices, experiment with what they are learning, and embark on a continuous journey of inquiry, whether in my class, our agency, or wherever they may find the opportunity.

“Ultimately, I want to guide students to achieve Jewish literacy, promote Jewish commitment, instill continued love for Jewish learning, and forge relationships that create a community of learners. I view my educator role as necessary for the continuation of the Jewish nation.”

Central in Dr. Lilienthal’s toolkit is Pillars of Judaism, a four-module, 50-session curriculum that she wrote and designed. Since its introduction, Orloff CAJE has seen a quadrupling in student enrollment in her classes. The depth and success of the curriculum has gained national recognition and interest by other agencies as research indicates it generates stronger Jewish identity and more meaningful Jewish experiences.

“Sandra has transformed the adult program into an innovative, exciting, and cutting edge forum,” said Vivian Grossman, past member of Orloff CAJE Board of Directors, who nominated Dr. Lilienthal for the Covenant Award.

“She has a unique ability to impart her broad-based knowledge of every branch of Judaism without judgment,” Grossman said. “As a result, her classes have become a vibrant, exciting melting pot filled with a passion for learning. She ignites a thirst for learning that spreads like wildfire. There has been a huge ripple effect.”

Dr. Lilienthal grew up in Brazil in a largely non-observant family. Her own thirst for a place on the Jewish chain fueled her journey toward education and a meaningful Jewish identity.

She eventually abandoned a career in marketing to pursue Jewish education full time, earning a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies from Gratz College, and an Ed.D. in Jewish Education from Gratz College last year.

Besides her affiliation with Orloff CAJE, where she has also created course materials for the Midrasha Graduate program, Dr. Lilienthal is an adjunct professor at Gratz College and is an instructor for The Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning.

“I have chosen Jewish education as my life mission because I believe that teaching Judaism as a living religion and infusing true passion in every learner encourages meaningful personal Jewish journeys,” Dr. Lilienthal said. “Every life we touch, every person we inspire, becomes a partner in building a stronger community and consequently a brighter Jewish future.

“I am humbled by receiving The Covenant Award, as it recognizes the value that I see in Jewish education. Being a recipient of this award encourages me to strive to engage and empower more adult learners of all walks of life and inspire them to strengthen their connection to their roots, their community, their past and their future by taking active roles in their Jewish lives. It also drives me to inspire a new generation of educators to join in this beautiful, sacred, journey of ours.”

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