

Ramah Celebrates 50 Years

What happens when over 800 Ramah campers, alumni, friends, and staff converge on the hills of Ojai? A day-long song and *simcha* fest overflowing with joy, pride and camaraderie, that's what! On December 3rd, Camp Ramah in California culminated its 50th anniversary year by hosting a one day festival up at camp filled with meaningful activities, tributes, reunions, memories and plans for the future. The highlight of the day's events was a song-filled ceremony honoring the camp's directors spanning its 50 years in existence. The event was a poignant commemoration of the profound impact Camp Ramah has made on American Jewry over the past 50 years, and the large crowd in attendance could attest to camp's growing strength.

Honored at the event were past and present camp directors Rabbi Jacob Pressman and Miriam Wise, Dr. David Lieber, Rabbi Zvi Dershowitz, Dr. Ronald Levine, Rabbi Stuart Kelman, Dr. Israel Spiegler, Dr. Sheldon Dorph, Dr. Alvin Mars, Rabbi Glenn Karonsky, Robin Graff, Rabbi Eddie Feinstein, and Brian Greene. Dr. Chaim Potok and Dr. Walter Ackerman zl" were represented by family members. The ceremony, which was emceed by camp alumnus and NBC investigative reporter Joel Grover, included song, video and spoken tributes presented by decade. The ceremony paid homage to those men and women who have been responsible for shaping the Ramah experience and contributing to the Jewish growth, learning and identity of countless Jewish children across the U.S. western region and beyond. Directors enjoyed reuniting with their former colleagues, and responded to the musical tributes with their own light-hearted satirical song led by Rabbi Jacob Pressman.

Alumni reunions were also a major part of the day's excitement. Across the bottom of the hill, Camp Ramah in California alumni from the '50s, '60s, and '70s all the way up to the present could be seen embracing, schmoozing and catching up. Canopies were set up by decade, allowing alumni to gather with their former *edah'niks*, their counselors, and for those

who went on to serve as Ramah staff, their campers.

Guests had the opportunity to participate in their favorite *chugim*, including sports, swim, arts and crafts, Israeli dance, and *shira*. They enjoyed a plentiful barbeque lunch and perused a memorabilia exhibit filled with photos, videos and artifacts collected by alumni and staff showcasing 50 years of Ramah history.

The event honored the past, but it also firmly established Camp Ramah in California's goals for the future. In conjunction with Camp Ramah in California's 50th year, the board launched a capital and endowment campaign aimed at reducing camp tuition, improving facilities, and establishing program and scholarship endowments to ensure that the Ramah experience becomes more accessible and remains on the cutting edge of the American Jewish camping world. Julie Platt, Ramah California's board chair, announced that \$2.5 million has already been raised toward Ramah's goals thanks to the generosity of the Stone Family, Dr. David Braun, Janine and Peter Lowy, and everyone connected with camp's 50th anniversary event.

The *ruach* of everyone present at the event left no doubt that Camp's next 50 years will be even better than the last!



Zach Lasker leads campers in *shira* at Ramah's 50th Anniversary Gala Celebration

Photos and Press Coverage of the Day!

Eddie Friedman's great photos can be viewed at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/ramahcarol/50thAnniversary>

Press articles can be found at:
<http://www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=17013>

and
<http://www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=16882>

Details on a video of the day are coming soon!