

AJA STUDENTS DO THE *SUSTAINABLE* FUNKY CHICKEN



Yael Macon and Layla Metni work on their chicken coop model. *Credit: Risa Ferdman*

By Risa Ferdman

Think back to elementary school. What was your most memorable learning experience? Well, no offense, but the fifth grade class at Austin Jewish Academy has got it beat. Every Friday for three months, the class has been using Green Gate Farms as a real world classroom.

AJA teacher Karen Hidalgo makes sustainability a major part of the fifth grade curriculum each year. Hidalgo partnered with Erin Flynn, co-owner of Green Gate Farms, this past summer to develop curriculum combining science, math, health, sustainability, art and Judaic principles.

AJA is proud to be the first school participating in the New Farm Institute's School-to-Farm program. Each week students focus on a different topic while spending an entire day working and learning on the farm. The program will conclude with a Ted Talk event at the farm in which students will address the major themes of this learning experience.

As part of the School-to-Farm program, the fifth grade class was challenged by the farm's owners to design and construct a lightweight



mobile coop with capacity for up to 50 pastured birds using repurposed materials. Students created their own set of guidelines addressing functionality, engineering, sustainability, aesthetics and messaging incorporating Judaic elements.

The students then worked as partners to create their own unique designs. After constructing models of their designs, the students presented their creations to the farm's owners, Erin and Skip Flynn.

Students presented their models "with poise and confidence... in a prideful, intellectual way," according to Hidalgo. She attributes their performance to AJA's bi-annual Portfolio Days, when students presented their academic work before a panel of parents, teachers, administrators and other community members.

The farm owners then selected one of the models for the students to build. The finished product will be on display during the Funky Chicken Coop Tour on April 19.

The School-to-Farm project is integrated into a larger unit of study on sustainability. Students

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**Looking for a seder to attend?
Have extra room at your table for guests?
We're here to help!**

Passover Seder Pairing

It is customary for Jewish families and friends to invite neighbors, newcomers or college students who are far from home to join them for the seder meal. Every year, we read in the Haggadah, "Whoever is hungry may come and eat. Whoever is needy may come and join in the observance of Passover."

If you are interested in attending a Passover seder in Austin but don't have a place to go, or if you are willing to open your home up to guests, we want to hear from you so we can pair you together before the first seder on Monday, April 14.

Please contact Lital Yaacob, Director of Outreach and Engagement, at lital.yaacob@shalomaustin.org or (512) 735-8076 by Monday, April 7th.



THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

Yom HaZikaron Commemoration for Israel's Fallen

Sunday, May 4 7 PM | 4 Iyar/5774
Temple Beth Shalom | 7300 Hart Lane

Join us as we honor the memory of soldiers in Israel who have given their lives in Israel in the line of duty, as well as civilian victims of terror. Prayers, music, poetry, film, lighting of candles and readings will be shared during this meaningful ceremony.

*We have no unknown soldier.
Nor a tomb of the unknown soldier.
Whoever wishes to lay his wreath
Would have to take his wreath apart
Into many flowers and separate them
Into petals and scatter them.
And all the dead come home
And all of them have names ...*

- Yehuda Amichai

For more information, call (512)735-8030
or e-mail aliza.orent@shalomaustin.org.

