

Célébrons nos communautés inclusives



Celebrating inclusive communities

Renowned comedian Brad Williams will take to the stage at this summer's *Nasty Show* at the Just For Laughs Festival

The **Just For Laughs Festival** has announced the return of *The Nasty Show* this summer, with six performances from July 18 to 21 at MTELUS in Montreal, with additional shows added from July 24 to 28.

(Read more on page 6)

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Brad Williams
(Photo source, Internet)



The Shalva Band: “It’s through music that I can be an equal”

By *Randy Pinsky*

Excitement filled the room as the renowned Shalva Band filed into The ADATH Congregation in Hampstead to vibrant Israeli music last October. With a mission to provide “transformative care for individuals with disabilities, empowering their families and promoting social inclusion”, The Shalva National Center, located in Jerusalem, offers a comprehensive array of therapies and resources.

Rabbi Kalman Sanders and his wife Malki started The Shalva Centre due to their own experiences with their son Yossi, who became blind, deaf and hyperactive due to a faulty vaccine at the age of 11. While many well-intentioned individuals recommended they place their son in an institution, Rebetzin Malki firmly believed there was a way of reaching him. She vowed that if he could be helped, she would dedicate her life to assisting others with disabilities.

Sanders described the moving story of how

Yossi’s special education teacher was able to crack his world of silence through finger-spelling “shulchan” (table in Hebrew); a spark of contact they akin to that of Helen Keller and her beloved teacher, Annie Sullivan.

Twenty-seven years after starting out as an afternoon program, the Israel Association for the Care and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Shalva) is “leading the way” the world understands, cares for and embraces disability. Providing specialized services to over 1,000 individuals from infancy to adulthood, therapy is far-reaching and meaningful as it is focused on enhancing the quality of life for all involved. The team is guided by the belief that everyone deserves to succeed.

One of The Shalva Centre’s most successful initiatives has been the Shalva Band, led by director Shai Ben Shus. Seriously injured while in the Israeli armed forces, Ben Shus



The Shalva band on Abbey Road. (Photo courtesy of the Shalva Band)



The Shalva band performing in Mexico. (Photo courtesy of the Shalva Band)

sought healing in music therapy. Creating a band for those differently-abled then became a form of personal rehabilitation.

While initially a modest group in the rehabilitation program, the troupe is now in high international demand. Indeed, the Montreal show was just one stop on a tour that also included Toronto, New York, Mexico, England and Moscow.

Each of the Shalva performers have a physical or intellectual disability and are clearly serious about their craft, glowing on stage, completely in their element. As shared by lead drummer Yosef Ovadia, “Music lights up my life. It’s through music that I can be an equal.”

The repertoire ranges from classic Israeli tunes to popular songs, with each performer having the chance to showcase their talents. Singer Dina Samteh provided a haunting rendition of *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* (Jerusalem of Gold), while Anael Khalifa masterfully belted out *Titanium*. Songs were chosen for their symbolic meaning, and included, *Let It Go*, *One Day* (with lyrics like “Never gonna let it get me down”), *Yachad*, *Lev b’Lev* (Together, Heart by Heart) and *Matanot k’Tanot’* (Little Gifts). The full house of guests were up on their feet dancing and celebrating, catching the energy of these talented musicians.

The ADATH’s growing inclusion program made the synagogue an ideal setting for such an event. As noted by Rabbi Michael Whitman, the mission is to “focus on ability

and celebrate how music can join us together and bring out the best in all of us”. And no one does this more effectively than the talented Shalva Band.



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Vanessa Grimaldi continues to give back to the community

By *Mike Cohen*

Reality TV show star Vanessa Grimaldi was at Coronation Elementary School in Côte des Neiges recently for a cheque presentation and ribbon cutting ceremony dedicated towards the building of four sensory rooms within the English Montreal School Board via her No Better You Foundation (www.nobetteryou.org).

Grimaldi, who worked as a special education teacher for the EMSB's Galileo Adult Education Centre in Montreal North before starring on ABC's *The Bachelor*, launched her own No Better You Foundation last summer in order to advance education by providing specialized tools and programs for exceptional learners across Canada. EMSB Chairman Angela Mancini wishes to express her gratitude towards Ms. Grimaldi as proceeds from the first No Better You fundraiser held in July have been directed to the construction, maintenance and operations of sensory rooms at Coronation School in Montreal,

Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary in Rosemount, Edward Murphy in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Galileo Adult Centre.

The simple pleasure and joys such as running, riding a bike, and playing in the park on any sunny day, are sometimes not feasible for children and young adults with special needs. A Sensory Room provides students with new ways of learning while using all their senses. "It's a therapeutic space for students," Grimaldi explained. "It can help stimulate or calm students down. It heightens awareness, provides security and promotes mental and physical relaxation, which helps individuals realize that they don't have to feel like they have to be on guard all of the time."

Stay tuned to the No Better You Foundation website for future programs.



Vanessa Grimaldi joins students Benjamin and Etienne in a new sensory room at Coronation Elementary School. (Photo credit, Mike Cohen)



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Stars shine at "An Inspiring Evening of Song and Dance"

By *Cindy Davis*

It's not uncommon these days to see a Leonard Cohen song performed in tribute to the remarkable late artist. But on the evening of November 15, guests at a benefit concert held at the Shaare Zion Congregation in Montreal were treated to a very special rendition of Hallelujah.

The concert, held in support of The Centre for the Arts in Human Development at Concordia University, featured performances by past and present students of the program, all with special needs. Cohen's Hallelujah was performed by Robbie Zunshine and Joshua Benlolo, accompanied by guest musician Jason Rosenblatt on keyboard, and it was not only sung perfectly, but had everyone in the crowd singing along and visibly moved.

A unique program in Canada, The Centre for the Arts in Human Development is an educational, clinical, training and research centre for individuals with developmental disabilities and other special needs, that promotes personal development through creative art therapy programs. Through art, drama, music and dance, students learn how to better express themselves creatively to enable them to reach their full potential. The program is in high demand, admitting only 20 students every two years and currently has a waiting list.

If the performances at the November 15 concert are any indication, the talent pool at the Centre is overflowing. Performances included an interpretive dance number to Justin Timberlake's *Can't Stop the Feeling*, a performance of an original composition called *Never Want to Let You Go*, an homage to the Beatles and more. Special guest

performers included Cantors Adam Stotland and Daniel Benlolo.

The collaboration between the Shaare Zion and the Centre formed several years ago when Eleanor Diamond, president of the Shaare Zion Sisterhood, attended a performance by the Centre at another venue and wanted to get involved. The synagogue Sisterhood has been sponsoring this event ever since. In an emotional speech, Diamond said that this is a cause about which she is passionate, and that throughout the years, she has seen major changes in the participants' lives through the Centre.

"This is a great community outreach event," said Lenore Vosberg, co-founder and direc-



Miranda D'Amico, Lenore Vosberg and Stephen Snow, co-directors of the Centre – Miranda and Stephen are co-directors of research at CAHD in Montreal.

tor of Clinical Services and Public Outreach for the Centre. "It's a wonderful way for us to put out our message that everybody has gifts and something to share."

"We are educating, demystifying, and showcasing their abilities," added Miranda D'Amico, co-founder of the Centre.

It was a wonderful evening in celebration of a very special centre. Congratulations to everyone involved!



Bando played to a full house at Rock for Dimes in Montreal. (Photo courtesy of March of Dimes)

Rock For Dimes makes music in Montreal

March of Dimes Canada's 11th annual Rock for Dimes Montreal event smashed all expectations by raising more than **\$55,000** for kids and adults with disabilities. That's the most money raised at a single Rock for Dimes event to date!

Six local bands – The Cellar Rats, Exiled on the Main, The Sharx, Miss M & The Gents, pS, and MTL – rocked the Theatre Corona on November 17, 2017. It was an epic showdown, but **Exiled on the Main** edged out the competition, and was crowned Montreal's best corporate band.



Margarita Studios: A nice family-owned hotel on the Greek Islands

By *Daniel Smajovits*

When thinking of the Greek Islands, the big three come to mind: Santorini, Ios and Mykonos – but the true hidden gem is Paros, enchanting, quiet and perhaps even more importantly, still undiscovered by cruise ships.

The island of Paros, which is easily accessible by ferry from Athens, gives travelers the opportunity to enjoy the best of the Cyclades and Aegean Sea, away from the throngs of crowds. Whether you'd like to spend your time swimming in the crystal clear waters, relaxing on the beach or kicking up dust on your ATV, Paros offers it all.

Tucked away on the eastern tip of the island are the Margarita Studios (www.margaritastudios.com), a family-owned and operated hotel that exemplifies the hospitality of Greece and the beauty of its islands in one. Owner Stella Fyrogeni Antiparioti welcomes guests as if they were family returning home.

Perhaps the true highlight of the Margarita Studios, aside from the beautiful view of the Aegean Sea, were the meals: all either cooked by Stella herself or baked locally on the island. In fact, Stella's culinary expertise is so well known that she offers cooking lessons, ranging from a one-day introduction to a six-day intensive course.

We started each day with Stella's incredible breakfast buffet that included fresh feta

cheese, bread, pastries, yogurt as well as a wide selection of fruits and vegetables. With only two dinners while on Paros, we spent one evening in town, where seafood restaurants dot the Naoussa marina. The second night, we opted to return for a late dinner, indulging in Stella's grilled octopus and some traditional tzatziki.

With limited time on the island, Stella ensured that we made the most of our short trip. After spending one morning relaxing by the hotel's marvellous pool, Stella arranged for an ATV to be dropped off at the property, allowing us to explore the island at our leisure. With a map in hand, we set off to discover Paros' beautiful golden beaches, try our hand at some watersports and bask in some views. At only 64 square miles, guests can tour the island in one day, but two is recommended should you like to stop often.

Margarita Studios is accessible for all guests with three wheelchair accessible suites on the ground floor, located next to the hotel's beautiful garden. Since rooms are booked quickly during high season, it is advisable to contact in advance to make Stella aware of individual needs. Furthermore, accessible transportation to and from the port can be arranged for guests with limited abilities.



Poolside at the Margarita Studios Hotel.

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Entertainment Notebook

by Wendy Singer

Brad Williams returns to Just For Laughs

If you have yet to experience *The Nasty Show*, this is your chance to see the boldest, most foul-mouthed and audacious lineup of comedians around, who are masters at pushing the envelope and shocking audiences with their crude humour.

Comedic talent Brad Williams will be back to entertain once again this year. Williams was born with achondroplasia, a type of dwarfism. His condition plays a large part in the bits in both his stand-up comedy and television roles. You may recognize him from his many television appearances, including *Mind Of Mencia*, *Live at Gotham*, *The Tonight Show*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, and *Pitboss*.

The late Robin Williams referred to this comic as “Prozac with a head,” referring to his high energy shows. Brad’s ability to make humorous observations on disability, relationships, sex, and race are winning over audiences and proving that anyone can overcome their shortcomings.

If you’d like to see Brad Williams perform this summer, contact The Just For Laughs Box Office at 514-845-2322 or visit hahaha.com.



Brad Williams
(Photo source, Internet)



AMI Inc. provides a voice for Canadians with disabilities

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) is a non-profit media company that entertains, informs and empowers Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. AMI has evolved significantly throughout its more than 26-year history, from its inception as a reading service to the ground-breaking media and social enterprise that it is today. This media source operates three broadcast services, recognizing and celebrating creativity, imagination and critical thinking.

AMI-audio is an accessible television channel and streaming service offering original content to Canadians who are blind, partially sighted or otherwise print restricted. This includes daily live programs focused on news, technology, community events, lifestyle issues, health and information directly affecting the blind and partially sighted community, and a selection of feature articles read by a team of professional

narrators. Content is available as podcasts through all major podcasting apps and platforms.

AMI-tv is a national English-language television channel licensed by the CRTC as part of the basic digital package offered by cable systems and satellite direct-to-home services. It was the first channel in the world to broadcast all content with open format described video for individuals who are blind or partially sighted, in addition to closed captioning for people who are Deaf. AMI-tv provides original content, and shows and movies broadcast in an accessible format.

The AMI website offers a wealth of information and will easily guide you on how to connect with them. While their primary goal is to service the blind or visually impaired, the content is most interesting to all. *For information visit www.ami.ca.*

Seeing Voices meets Montreal Improv and SOUND OFF

Seeing Voices Montréal consists of a diverse group of volunteers ranging from native American Sign Language (ASL) users and, native Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ) users, ASL students and other individuals from the Montreal Deaf community.

On February 9, the Visual Improv event brought Deaf improvisers from Seeing Voices Montréal and **The Montreal Improv** together to compete on stage in silence. Neither words or ASL were allowed. This formula guarantees golden opportunities for physical comedy and quick wit to shine, and of course, loads of laughter. What stands out when these two groups meet is the ability for all players to feed off of each other’s ideas and actions without the use of the spoken or ASL word.

Seeing Voices recently participated in **SOUND OFF: A Deaf Theatre Festival** at the ATB Financial Arts Barn in Edmonton. Canada’s national festival dedicated to the



Jack Volpe from Seeing Voices Montréal, Jordan Sangalang from Winnipeg Manitoba, and Connor Yuzwenko-Martin from Edmonton at the SOUND OFF Deaf Theatre Festival. (Photo credit, Seeing Voices Montréal)

Deaf performing arts, **SOUND OFF** brings Deaf artists from across the country together to showcase and celebrate their stories, talents and the beauty of ASL.

Building upon the rich legacy of Deaf performers and Deaf performing groups in Canada, **SOUND OFF** is dedicated to making theatre accessible. All performances and events are accessible for both Deaf and hearing audiences. Most shows are in ASL and all shows have interpretation for both languages where necessary. In addition, ASL/English Interpreters are available throughout the festival to provide communication services for all.

For information about Seeing Voices Montréal, visit www.seeingvoicesmontreal.com. For information about SOUND OFF, visit www.soundofffestival.com.



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Saddlebrook Resort near Tampa offers attractive walking village concept

By *Mike Cohen*

WESLEY CHAPEL, FLORIDA

Some 25 years ago I was part of a press tour to Tampa. Our group was hosted at a spectacular place called the Saddlebrook Resort (www.saddlebrook.com) in the suburb of Wesley Chapel – a half hour drive from downtown Tampa. I could not believe my good fortune when I was given the keys to my own private town house condominium.

I never forgot my experience at Saddlebrook, so when we recently set our sights on another trip to Tampa I targeted this 480-acre property for a return visit. We were fortunate to spend five nights there. The three of us booked a 950-square-foot two-bedroom suite. It included a spacious living room, separate dining area and a fully-equipped kitchen with a serving bar. The master bedroom boasts a King bed as

well as a separate dressing area and elegant marble bathroom. The second bedroom is thoughtfully-appointed with a Queen bed, as well as an additional dressing area and marble bathroom. Both bedrooms offer complete privacy. These spacious two-bedroom suites also feature a private patio or balcony that is accessible from the living room. There were two in-room safes.

All accessible units are equipped with ramp access, wider doorways, grab bars, roll-in showers, lower shower heads, lowered clothes rail in closets, chairs for bathing and toilets, visual smoke detectors and available TDD telephones. There are reserved accessible parking spaces and golf cart service to take you anywhere on the property. There are no less than nine handicapped accessible washrooms on the vast property. At the spa there is a service elevator and a ramp to the treatment area. A ramp also exists in the main lobby next to the registration desk leading to Tropics and Dempsey's restaurants. Outdoors, there is a lift for one of the Jacuzzis.

Saddlebrook formally opened in 1981, with a unique car-free Walking Village design that allows guests to easily walk throughout the



The beautiful pool at Saddlebrook.

resort without the need of a transportation system while providing sanctuary to nature.

During your stay, you may catch a glimpse of the area's colorful wildlife, which includes an array of birds from Sandhill Cranes, Wood Storks and Great Blue Herons to Snowy Egrets, and wildlife, even alligators. Fragrant flowers compliments the swaying palms and stately cypress trees dripping with Spanish moss beckoning guests to explore and convene with the elements.

When it comes to guest room transportation, resort maintenance and golf course use, the majority of the carts in the Saddlebrook fleet run on rechargeable electric batteries. Not only is this better for the environment, but also results in less noise pollution so you can fully enjoy your resort experience. By using a model of central parking and providing bus transportation for team members, it is calculated that on average about 200 miles per day of cars being driven on the open roads is saved.

This Florida hotel and conference center is completely self-contained, with restaurants, spa, golf, tennis, fitness facilities, three pools and an outdoor team building course all on-site.

The restaurants at Saddlebrook offer both fine and casual award-winning dining served by their signature hospitality. Whether you are enjoying a post-game lunch while over-

looking the 18th green, or enjoying a fresh breakfast with the family at Tropic's Restaurant, options are sure to delight every palate. The hotel also offers In-Room dining services 24 hours a day.

In addition to the world-class golf courses and tennis courts, the fitness facilities at Saddlebrook cater to every interest and skill level. The Sports Village features grass and sand volleyball courts, a regulation-size basketball court and a Field Turf sports field. The refreshing waters of the 500,000-gallon free-form Superpool are a highlight of any stay. There are two additional pools at the resort, including the adults-only Serenity Pool.

Bicycle rentals and fishing poles are available at The Swim Shop, and the resort also offers a variety of scheduled activities from morning power walks and group fitness classes to poolside games. Families visiting the resort can take advantage of S'Kids Club, a fun-filled program for guests.

To reserve your stay today at Saddlebrook Resort contact a Reservations Agent toll-free at (800) 729-8383 or locally at (813) 907-4401. You might enjoy the place so much you will consider buying a unit. The sales office is located right next to the registration center.



A two-bedroom suite king bed option.



A return visit to the historic Don CeSar Resort in St. Pete Beach

By *Mike Cohen*

ST. PETE BEACH

Just over a year ago my family and I made our first visit ever to St. Pete Beach, Florida and stayed at the extraordinary and historic Don CeSar (www.doncesar.com). It was a Loews property at the time. Soon after Host Hotels & Resorts purchased it and engaged Davidson Hotels & Resorts to manage the main locale and the Beach House Suites down the street.

The new management is in place just in time to mark this historic hotel's 90th anniversary. This hotel features 277 luxurious guest rooms, including 36 suites, six restaurants and lounges, two deluxe heated pools, more than 38,000 square feet of event space, the 11,000 square foot Spa Oceana, fitness center, Camp CeSar Kids Camp, The Shoppes of The Don, and access to beach rentals and water sports. We were very fortunate to be invited back for a lavish day on the beach and let me say for certain that the Don has not lost any of its charm!

The poolside concierge provides everything from cucumber hydration to tropical smoothies. For those who are physically disabled, the pools and whirlpools at both complexes have special lifts.

The Don CeSar Hotel partners with the award-winning Boucher Brothers Management to pamper guests during their day on the beautiful St. Pete Beach. Take a walk from the pool deck and have some fun on the Gulf of Mexico, seeing the beautiful pink castle from a different view while cruising on wave runners or exploring on ocean kayaks. We got to spend our day lounging in private daybeds and chilling out on a chaise for a luxurious take on fun in the sun. Jimmy from the Boucher Brothers team could not have been nicer in setting us up like kings. He in fact came back several times over our seven-hour stay to adjust the umbrellas and make sure everything was okay.

Lunch and drinks were available right at our chairs via the Beachcomber. Here you can enjoy frozen drinks, mojitos, fresh seafood, salads, burgers and other traditional dishes. We started off with some drinks, an Iguana Smash, a Blueberry blast and a Pina Colada followed by our lunch selections of tortilla chips, fish tacos, a Beachcomber burger and chicken quesadilla. The orders turned around quite quickly and were delivered in large plastic containers, with serving plates and cutlery inside. I have never felt so comfortable dining on a beach chair before.

In terms of beach rentals, run by the Boucher brothers and its BouYah Watersports Division (www.bouYahWaterSports.com), there are full and half day rates for chaise lounges, sand chairs, umbrellas, cabanas and luxury queen and king beds.

We also took advantage of the Jet Ski rentals. It is \$120 per hour or \$60 for a half hour after lunch time. The staff will sit you down in the Jet Ski in the water, provide a series of guidelines and then allow you to start the motor and go on your merry way. This was a real "rush" for my family. The one hour went by very quickly. BouYah also rents out banana boats, kayaks and paddle boards. You can book your choice experience right at the hotel or call in advance and ask to be connected to someone from the Boucher Brothers team.

ACCESSIBILITY: The hotel has several ADA (American Disability Act) sanctioned rooms. There are eight at the main resort, including one of the Penthouse suites, and four ADA sanctioned rooms at their Beach House Suites property down the road. These rooms include roll-in showers and in the Beach House Suites the washer and dryer units are next to each other, rather than

stacked on top of each other.

Hearing impaired guests can take advantage of written materials that they receive upon check-in, including the Daily Resort Activities guide and reading boards that are on the lobby floor next to the elevators. The hotel also provides notepads and pens for speech and hearing impaired guests who would prefer to communicate in writing. The bell desk employees offer to escort guests with vision and hearing impairments to their rooms and other hotel outlets. Those with hearing disabilities receive a TDD phone, closed caption decoder and a devise that flashes and vibrates the bed when the phone rings, door opens and alarm is activated. These services are demonstrated to guests upon arrival. Visually impaired people are offered a team member's arm if that person prefers to be guided. Team members offer assistance with pushing wheelchairs and thoroughly explain wheelchair accessible routes. If someone has a hand coordination disability and is dining in one of the restaurants, an offer is made to cut their food for them.



One of the pools at the Don CeSar.



Tampa's Straz Center for the Performing Arts: A commitment to accessibility

By *Alexandra Cohen*

The entrance to the Straz Center. (Photo credit, Rob Harris)

TAMPA - While in Tampa recently, I was fortunate enough to have the chance to see *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* in Concert, featuring the Florida Orchestra. The production took place at the always lively Straz Center for the Performing Arts (www.strazcenter.org), where only one year earlier I had seen the Broadway touring production of *An American in Paris*.

The Harry Potter concert series has been growing in popularity. For those unfamiliar with the concept, the film is projected as if in a movie theatre, but rather than listening to the music previously recorded for the film's soundtrack, the orchestra sits on a stage below the screen and performs the score live, creating a full and beautiful sound sweeping throughout the theatre. This, however, is no typical orchestral performance. Prior to the show, audience members are asked to identify their Hogwarts houses, immediately setting the tone for the rest of the evening. The audience, in fact, was encouraged to react audibly throughout the film to their favorite characters and moments. Loud boos were even elicited upon the arrival of more villainous characters, contributing to an incredibly energetic and enthusiastic atmosphere.

The Straz opened in 1987, and I must say

that it is a beautiful performing arts center; in fact, it is the largest in the Southeast. I simply love this venue and was thrilled to find a reason to return. The center has demonstrated a commitment to making the performing arts as accessible as possible. Wheelchair accessible seating may be purchased online or by phone, and other available services include ASL interpretation, open captioning, and headsets for patrons with hearing impairments to assist with both amplification and clarity. If you hope to attend a show and require any of these services, you are encouraged to call ahead at (813) 229-STAR.

If you are planning on visiting Tampa at any point in 2018, be sure to look into what show is playing at the Straz. You can consider taking in a production by Opera Tampa, the Straz Center's resident opera company, and this year, the Straz will also be receiving hits including: *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Color Purple*, *Beautiful - The Carole King Musical*, *Waitress*, *Sound of Music*, *Forever Plaid*, *The Illusionists*, *The Body Guard* and *Cinderella*. Not only that, but they are fortunate enough to have secured for their 2018-2019 season the most in-demand musical currently in the world: *Hamilton*. With a season like that, it is no wonder that the Straz continues to thrive!

Learning how to be inclusive at BBYO International Convention

By *Stuart Nulman*

ORLANDO, FLORIDA – For nearly a decade, the worldwide Jewish youth organization BBYO has promoted its regions to adopt the concept of inclusion amongst its 80,000-strong membership.

At BBYO's annual International Convention (IC), which took place this year from February 15 to 19 in Orlando, Florida, you couldn't miss that sense of inclusion amongst the more than 3,000 Jewish teens from around the globe who were in attendance, and that was quite evident with a large number of attendees with special needs.

On "BBYO Leads Day", I attended a session called "Creating Inclusive Environments For All: A Look into Disability Services", where experts in the field of inclusion services for the disabled spoke about new, innovative approaches and best practices.

It began with an engaging and entertaining presentation that was given by Pamela Schuller, a New York-based professional stand-up comedian and inclusion advocate. Diagnosed with what she call "the most severe case of Tourette Syndrome in the country," Pamela explained to the teens and staff how she uses improv, comedy and storytelling to not only inspire people to have a new sense of awareness about inclusion, but also

encourage people – especially teens – with disabilities to embrace, love and even find the funny in what makes them different (like she has done with her struggle with Tourette Syndrome). Pamela uses her talents towards being an inclusion advocate through her work as an inclusion specialist, a manager of a teen and mental health initiative for the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services in New York, as well as her own organization Stand Up Inclusion (www.standupinclusion.com).

Afterwards, I attended a session that was run by the Nora Project, which teaches empathy by creating friendships between students and their peers with disabilities – through three goals: teaching students how to see the world through another's eyes; creating opportunities for children with complex medical needs and disabilities to experience social inclusion; and building communities that are filled with support and kindness. Rena Rosen, ambassador for the organization, explained how they pair children with special needs with students from a grade 5 or 6 class. The positive im-

pact of this pairing is recorded by a mini-documentary that the students put together, and is shown at a special "Nora Night". Ms. Rosen showed a mini-documentary produced by a grade 5 class from a Chicago area school. It documented their special friendship with William, a young boy their age who suffers from a genetic disorder that leaves him unable to communicate.



Pamela Schuller speaking at BBYO International in Orlando.



Finding your way around Singapore in two simple days

By *Daniel Smajovits*

SINGAPORE - From high atop the serene Faber Peak, Singapore appears to have two unique personalities. In your immediate vicinity: hiking trails and luscious forests, culminating with one of the country's most spectacular views. Yet, by taking a ride on Faber Peak's cable car, which travels through an office building no less, the city's modern and fast-paced lifestyle made famous is on full display.

The city-state of Singapore can be easily experienced in two full days. From its highest point to bustling outdoor food courts, the city is completely accessible for travelers with special needs.

A trip to Singapore would not be complete without a visit to Faber Peak. A natural oasis on the southern edge of the city, from a picnic on the mountain to hiking its trails, a number of outdoor activities await you on the Mountain of Happiness. Early risers should make the peak their first stop, especially if they're staying on Sentosa Island, which is connected to the Peak via accessible cable car. Offering a stunning view by day or by night, the cable car is also a must-do while in Singapore. If time allows, try to experience the cable car by Dining on Cloud 9, where guests can enjoy a four-course meal while traveling high above Singapore.



The cable cars in Singapore.

Sentosa Island can constitute a day or more by itself: home to Universal Studios as well as an 18-hole golf course, a water park, beaches and other attractions only rivaled by Orlando. With a number of hotels on the island and a quick 20-minute drive into the heart of the city, it is a perfect compromise for parents and children.

Perhaps the most stunning aspect about Singapore is the city's green spaces. The highlight of Singapore's greenery is Gardens by the Bay, a 250-acre man-made park dedicated to the world's flora and fauna. Towering over the lush forest are its Super Trees: vertical gardens ranging from 25 to 50 meters in height. Access to certain areas of the gardens is free, but the two premiere attractions: the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest require tickets. All areas of the gardens are wheelchair accessible. A minimum of three to four hours is required to take in the natural beauty of Gardens by the Bay.

Following the Gardens by the Bay, guests should take a stroll along the beautiful waterfront promenade surrounding Marina Bay. Directly across from the Marina Bay Sands is Singapore's famous Merlion, the iconic symbol of the country.

If there's room in your budget, the luxurious five star Marina Bay Sands is arguably the most famous hotel in the world and worth the splurge. Also scattered around the Marina Bay district are a host of other four and five star hotels as well as basic options. For the shoppers, Orchard Road should be your home base. Hotels are mixed in between the malls and high end stores on Asia's Rodeo Drive.



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WHEN

Saturday, April 14, 2018
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

WHERE

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Wheelchair accessible
Free parking

INFO

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