

Hundreds of Hamantaschen



Jewish Family & Child Service's Holocaust Survivor Services program, in partnership with Congregation Neveh Shalom's Sisterhood and program director, put on a festive and yummy Café Europa-style Purim event in the synagogue's Atrium. Jennifer Kalenscher, Sisterhood's indefatigable president, made dough for no fewer than 700 traditional hamantaschen – filled with apricot jam – some of which were folded into their three-corner shape, whisked away to bake and then enjoyed by about 20 Survivor clients, some family members and JFCS volunteers. Also on tap was Cantor Eyal Bitton on guitar with jaunty tunes. Why, he asked, when the story of Purim in the Megillah is anything but jaunty, and a nasty man wants to erase the Jews? "Because the Jewish people decided to take the Mel Brooks approach and laugh at it," he said. Naomi Leavitt, one of the afternoon's volunteers, told the story while Yelena Benikov, 90, who was born in Kyiv, translated it into Russian for many of the Survivors gathered. "I have no skills in cooking," she joked, "and I will happily help people with translation. It feels like family here." Joining in the fun, too, were Foundation School preschoolers led by puppeteer Candace Rothstein. (Marina Milman/Jewish Family & Child Service)

Rabins' 'Girls In Trouble' take to YouTube in new series

By HANNAH KAHN GLASS

In a groundbreaking fusion of art, feminism, and religious reinterpretation, "Girls in Trouble TV" is set to captivate audiences with its fresh take on the stories of Biblical women across the rich and diverse cultures of the contemporary Jewish diaspora. Inspired by Alicia Jo Rabins' acclaimed song cycle and filmed in Portland and New York, this new indie web series weaves together traditional and original commentary, asking how stories of the Hebrew Bible might read differently with women at their center.

"This project focuses on interpretation of Biblical women's stories across the rich and varied cultures of the contemporary Jewish diaspora," says Alicia Jo Rabins, creator of the series. "Our

concept is inspired by food and travel shows - but rather than visiting a location and exploring its food, culture and landscape, each episode explores a Biblical woman's story through storytelling, song, animation and interviews with diverse Jewish artists and activists."

The first episode was released Tuesday, Mar. 12 and centers on the story of Queen Vashti, often considered an anti-hero in the Purim story, and features an in-depth interview with Persian Jewish singer, cantor and anthropologist, Galeet Dardashti, original illustration by Jessica Tamar Deutsch and animation by Zak Margolis.

Set against the backdrop of ongoing societal sexism and religious conservatism, "Girls in Trouble TV" is more than just a web series; it's a call to ac-

tion. "We believe in the liberatory potential of our Jewish traditions," says Rabins. "Religion has the power to be a force for good or for evil, to liberate or oppress. With 'Girls in Trouble TV,' we're contributing to a larger mosaic of progressive religious voices, building an inclusive Judaism where all are equal and beloved."

"Girls In Trouble" TV is available for free on YouTube and Vimeo. Future episodes will include interviews with groundbreaking soferet (female Torah scribe) Julie Seltzer, chef & cookbook author Sonya Sanford, Black rabbi/artist/organizer Rabbi Kendell Pinkney, pioneering klezmer fiddler Alicia Svigals, and queer radical Jewish herbalist Dori Midnight. For more information, visit www.girlsintroublemusic.com.