

'Living Waters' trip to Sabino Canyon set

Deborah Mayaan and Gregg Garfin, members of the Southern Arizona Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, will lead an interfaith pilgrimage to Sabino Canyon, "In Search of Living Waters," on Sunday, March 28, 8:30 a.m. to noon. Living waters can be collected for the new ritual of filling a Miriam's Cup at the Passover Seder, explains Mayaan.

Participants can carpool or meet at Sabino Canyon, where they may walk or take the shuttle one mile to the spot where the group will gather water.

The excursion is part of The Water Project: Tucson's Synergistic Water Festival, which will celebrate, educate and facilitate creative problem-solving regarding water. The festival, organized by Jewish Arts Alliance member Jodi Netzer, includes a variety of events from March 26 to March 28.

For details, including the water pilgrimage schedule, see www.waterprojectfestival.org. For more information about the pilgrimage, contact Deborah Mayaan at 881-2534 or deborah@deborahmayaan.com.

Israeli consul will speak on global issues



Shahar Azani

Shahar Azani, Israel's consul for culture, media and public diplomacy in Los Angeles will present a free "Heartbeat of Israel" lecture, "Israel: Global Challenges and Opportunities," on Thursday, March 25 at 7 p.m. at the Tucson Jewish Community Center.

Azani has been instrumental in promoting cultural interactions between Israel and Eastern Africa. He was Israel's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations Environment Program as well as to the UN Human Settlement Program.

For more information contact the Israel Center at israelcenter@jfsa.org or 577-9393.

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dangerous, about what you can do as a state entity or not. The Israeli lobby has been very powerful in this country for many years."

In an e-mail to the AJP on March 3, Shelton wrote that the article "was the result of a conversation I had with the author who never mentioned the phone discussion was an interview for an article. We discussed many issues and she chose selected comments. I add that such deception is unusual for the Wildcat, which is normally an excellent student-run publication."

The Feb. 15 Wildcat article appeared on national listserves as a news article stating that Shelton "was supporting divestment from Israel," says Blumenberg. "What was most upsetting was the implication that he would look at divesting but can't because of the powerful Israel lobby."

The students' letter emphasized that "the sourcing in this piece can hardly be described as credible. Human Rights Watch has a long history of being a biased organization that constantly discredits everything Israel says and does. (Recently though, it has been working with the Israel Defense Forces to bring to world attention the human rights abuses that Hamas enacted in the 2009 Gaza War and previously.)"

"Not only in the Jewish community were people upset about this [story]," says Blumenberg. The letter to the Wildcat "wasn't a Jewish response," says John Winchester, 26, president of the UA CUFI club and a graduate student in near eastern studies. "It's a pro-Israel student-led reaction to the Feb. 15 article."

Blumenberg notes that "to the best of my knowledge," no one from the UA Jewish community or from Hillel was asked to comment for Koehmstedt's article.

"The story was reported with imbalance, which wasn't on purpose, but not with bias," Madden told the AJP on March 8. "The reporter not talking to anyone at Hillel might have been an oversight."

Madden hasn't spoken with Koehmstedt, but has discussed the story with the Wildcat news editor, Michelle Monroe, who, he says, "kept trying to get the reporter to get more from [UAPD Commander] Sommerfield, but ended up with only one sentence" in the Feb. 15 story.

The Wildcat has published several letters to the editor expressing different views of the situation.

It also published a Feb. 17 opinion piece, "Allegations against Israel Blind, Ignorant" by Aaron Jacobs, a junior majoring in media arts who is a Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America campus fellow.

But the Feb. 15 story wasn't the first time that the Wildcat hasn't shown "journalistic integrity" in its stories regarding Israel, says Blumenberg. When two IDF women draft dodgers and Yisrael Dovid Weiss, a spokesman for the anti-Zionist group Ne-teuri Karta, spoke at the UA, she says, the Wildcat ran stories on both occasions with no input from those holding opposing views.

On Feb. 19, Blumenberg and Jacobs met with Madden, Monroe and opinion editor Anna Swenson, to request an apology for their "unfair reporting," says Blumenberg. At that meeting, the Wildcat editors refused to publish an apology but said they "would be

more careful in the future," she says. At their second meeting on March 5, says Blumenberg, Madden said, "If the Wildcat were to apologize, we would be apologizing all the time."

"If they're feeling like they have to apologize all the time," Blumenberg says, "there are perhaps deeper issues going on with their reporting." On March 9, Madden published an editorial in the Wildcat, "Anger Works in Funny Ways," contending that Blumenberg "spearheaded a campaign to have people sign a letter to the Daily Wildcat," which Blumenberg says is not true. "I didn't spearhead anything. Students spearheaded the letter," she told the AJP.

"It's cowardly for [Madden] to blame Michelle [Blumenberg]," says Winchester. "He acted like it was a Jewish conspiracy and it's not. It's pro-Israel."

Another inflammatory issue has been opinion pieces that have appeared in the Wildcat. Jacobs had been contacting the newspaper about anti-Israel pieces written by Gabriel Schivone since the fall, says Blumenberg. Opinion pieces, including Schivone's, says Madden, "are not the views of the Arizona Daily Wildcat." Schivone wrote an opinion piece, "Dial 'D' for Death: The UA and Motorola," in the Feb. 15 Wildcat. His byline says that he's "an art, literature, and media studies junior. He is also a member of the student-led monitoring board University Community for Human Rights."

In his March 9 editorial, Madden acknowledges, "In hindsight, we could have published the news story and the opinions piece on different days and we could have tried to counter the opinions piece with a view from the other side.

"But we didn't, and it caused a great stir in

the Jewish community on campus," he wrote.

The Wildcat's March 9 editorial also asserts that the signature section of the Hillel student letter, which was delivered to Madden and Shelton on March 5, "looks shaky, to say the least." The editorial questions duplicate signatures — saying one name appears seven times — and says that UA alumnus Michael Schwartz, a former Wildcat employee, "said he received two e-mails from Hillel about signing the letter, but never agreed to sign anything, and is appalled that his name is listed."

"Maybe it's Hillel's ethics that should be in question," the editorial says, concluding with "Regardless, it's time to move on."

"There are multiple people with the same names in this world," says Blumenberg, who followed up with the AJP after seeing the Wildcat editorial. The Michael Schwartz who signed the Hillel letter, she says, is a local artist and a UA alumnus, but was never employed by the Wildcat. After reading the editorial, "we went over the signatures on the letter," says Blumenberg. "There were 10 duplications out of nearly 600. Nobody was repeated seven times" as the editorial stated.

Blumenberg says the Wildcat didn't "fact check. They didn't question the bigger issues. When we met with the Wildcat editors the first time [on Feb. 19], they admitted they didn't realize there were larger issues. They didn't do their homework."

Says Blumenberg, "it's an incorrect strategy to use divestment as the way to pressure Israel. What is it going to achieve? Divestment from businesses has nothing to do with bringing peace to the Israeli and Palestinian people, but it is encouraging an anti-Israel agenda."



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