

Meet the Staff of the Congregation Beth Shalom Early Childhood Center

Leah Lemchen
Early Childhood Director



I am very proud to have Beth Shalom's Early Childhood Director Since September of 2010. My husband Matt and I have two daughters, Heather and Madeline, who attend the Seattle Jewish Community School. I have worked in the field of childcare for over twenty years. My experience includes supervising the after school program at the Jewish Community Center, teaching extended day Kindergarten and preschool, teaching at an English immersion preschool in Japan, running my own home based childcare and most recently working as the Mentor Teacher at Kidspace

Childcare Center in Seattle. I received a degree in Early Childhood Education from Bellevue College in 1998. I am also a certified childcare trainer through the Washington State STARS program. I love spending time with my family, taking vacations and day trips, photography and scrapbooking.

Zayit (3-5 years old)

Christy 8:30 – 5:00



I am originally from Denver, Colorado, and have lived in New Jersey, Idaho, Arizona and San Diego, prior to moving to Seattle 20 years ago. My parents, who are both over 80 years old, moved to Seattle 14 years ago to be closer to their eldest grandchild—my only daughter, Sara. I have taken many college courses over the past 30+ years in a variety of subjects and always seem to gravitate back to early childhood education and special education. I completed an AA degree at Shoreline

Community College a few years ago. I have taken most of the coursework required to complete a certificate of proficiency as a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant. The work I have always enjoyed the most and find most fulfilling is with children. I have been employed in a family day care, several child care facilities, with the public schools as a tutor and paraeducator, and as a private nanny for several families. I bring a strong desire to guide children to their fullest potentials to any program. I am passionate about developing character, compassion and positive values in our children through example.

Meirav 9:30-3:00



I joined the ECC staff in September 2010. I came to Seattle from Israel with my family eight months ago for my husband's postdoctoral research at the UW. In Israel I was a preschool lead teacher and worked mainly with the two and three years old children for more than 5 years. I was born and raised on a kibbutz which is a collective community based on agriculture. After studying in Tel-Aviv (I have a Bachelor degree in early childhood education) I came back to work on the kibbutz as a teacher. Working there, I liked mostly being close to nature, going on daily field trips to the horses stable or the cowshed. I'm happy to be here, to get to know more about the American Conservative Judaism and be a part of the ECC family.

D'vash (1-3 years old)

(Young Toddlers 1-2 years)

Ian 7:15 - 3:45



My name is Ian. I was born in San Francisco, grew up in Denver, and now reside in Seattle. I started working with children 10 years ago when I was in high school as a volunteer counselor for a summer camp for special needs children where I then got my bachelors degree in Psychology with an emphasis in child development from the Metropolitan State College of Denver. After I graduated, I moved here to Seattle and became a lead toddler teacher for a pre-school in Queen Anne. I have been the lead teacher in the D'Vash room since May of 2010. My goal is to one day be a Behavior Analyst working both in the field of education and within the realm of therapy in conjunction with ABA tutors and classroom teachers

Elisabeth 9:00 – 4:00



I started working at the ECC on September 20, 2010. I graduated from Shorecrest High School in 2008. In high school I took five education classes and one day hope to go back to school and get an early childhood development degree. When I was 8 years old I started babysitting and over the last 12 years I have worked with over 50 families. Outside of working with kids, I enjoy working at a summer camp (Camp Gilead) and playing sports: softball, volleyball, and basketball. I also coached softball for Shorecrest High School for two years.

(Older Toddlers 2-3 years)

Marina 7:30 - 12:00



I moved to Seattle from Kharkov, Ukraine when I was five and have lived here since, aside from a semester I spent in Israel in high school. I speak both Russian and Hebrew. I began working with children as a babysitter at age 12. I went on to tutor elementary school children and volunteer with a preschooler with special needs while I was in high school. I worked part-time in a childcare while I attended college. I have worked in the D'vash room since December 2009. I completed my degrees in Biology and Linguistics at the University of Washington, doing my thesis in child language acquisition. My interests outside of work include music, hiking, taking walks in the city, reading, spending time with my family and friends and travelling.

Tamara 8:00-1:00



I have worked at the ECC since the beginning of September 2010 and have loved getting to know all the kids here. Before working here, I worked at a Montessori preschool in Bellevue and currently I am also working in the children's ministry at my church on Wednesdays. I have a BA degree in Business management and in the afternoons work as a bank teller. When I have extra time I love traveling, (to Europe especially) and I have a passion for good food and photography.

Rimonim (Infants)

Marlen 7:30-1:00



I moved to Seattle in January 2008 to attend Bible College. I have since received a degree in Theology, interned at my church in the youth ministry, been a nanny, and a lead teacher in an infant room at a different childcare center. I began working in the infant room at the ECC in January 2011. I love good coffee, good music, and a good book. I enjoy maintaining a warm and calming environment for infants and have often been referred to as “the Baby Whisperer”.

Holly 12:00-5:30



My name is Holly. I have worked with children for about 28 years. I got my AAS degree in ECE/Special Education at North Seattle Community College. I also got my AAS in Special Education Degree 0-8 at Shoreline Community College. I have three children; two girls and a boy aged 22, 19 and 14.

Additional Afternoon Support Staff

Mali 2:30-6:00



I work with the toddlers in the afternoons. I started working at the ECC in June of 2010. My family has been involved in Beth Shalom for several years. I have volunteered at the Experimental Education Unit at the University of Washington. I also have four younger siblings that I have taken care of. I love playing classical piano and sports.

Kimmy 11:00 –5:30



I began working in the ECC during September of 2010 as a substitute teacher. Now I work in all the classrooms in the ECC as a floater, giving breaks to teachers and helping out as needed, working mainly with the preschool children in the afternoons. Since my adoption in 2006, I have found a passion for working with children. As a senior in high school in 2010, I was given the Career Award in my district for Child Development Studies. Now, I attend Seattle Central Community College for my Transfer Degree, with an emphasis on literature and drama, cultural sociology, teaching and anthropology. In my spare time, I write poetry, read, and spend time with loved ones. I enjoy attending concerts, festivals, painting, playing sports, and being active in my community.