

**By Tonyia Cone**

Special to The Jewish Outlook

The 21 Jewish children who have signed up for the PJ Library program in Austin will have something to look forward to in the mail each month starting in February — an age-appropriate book or CD to help them learn about Judaism and strengthen their Jewish identity.

Lisa Apfelberg, the Jewish Community Association of Austin's director of outreach & engagement as well as the Austin Jewish Book Fair, said she is excited that the JCAA is making families a priority by helping young people connect to Judaism in an easy, accessible way.

"I think that it's such a lovely way for families to have something Jewish to do every day or every week," Apfelberg said. "It makes it so easy. If you're reading to your child anyway, these books have Jewish content. It brings on more meaning and connection to Judaism."

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation of Springfield, Mass., the JCAA and members of the local community fund the program. Locally, the Garber Family Foundation, the Clifford Zeifman Family, Bobbi and Mort Topfer and the Aytz Chaim Endowment Trust of Congregation Agudas Achim have provided funding to enable more than 500 children to participate in the PJ Library.

The program is free for children ages six months to six years in their first year of participation and \$18 a year in subsequent years. The PJ Library is designed to be a learning experience for parents as well as children. A guide for parents about topics raised by the book is included with each shipment in order to help parents provide an informed answer to children's questions and to help them encourage meaningful conversations with children about issues in the books.

Apfelberg said her children, who are four and six years old, have loved books included in the program, such as Elsa Okon Rael's award-winning "Rivka's First Thanksgiving" and "A Grandma Like Yours/ A Grandpa Like Yours," by Andria Warmflash Rosenbaum. The family has discussed topics raised by the stories and reading books with Jewish topics to her son's classmates at school has been a way to help his non-Jewish friends understand his culture and has

## PJ Library to bring Jewish books to local kids

been a source of pride for her son.

"It reinforces what they learn at synagogue, Sunday school and their time at the JCC," Apfelberg said.

To enroll in the PJ Library, visit the Web site [www.shalomaustin.org/pjli](http://www.shalomaustin.org/pjli)

brary. Austin families will begin receiving books in February. Those who would like to share the program with friends or relatives outside the Austin area can do so for \$60.

To learn more about the program or

to become a PJ Library funding partner, contact Apfelberg at [lisa.apfelberg@shalomaustin.org](mailto:lisa.apfelberg@shalomaustin.org) or 735-8076.

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## Gala art auction Feb. 2

"Art in the Heart of Texas" next month will feature an evening of art and community.

While viewing art and placing bids, participants can enjoy a wine-and-cheese reception as well as coffee and desserts, at Congregation Agudas Achim at the event Saturday, Feb. 2.

State of the Art gallery and auction house will bring lithographs, engravings, etchings, watercolors, oils and more at prices that are 30-50 percent of gallery prices, organizers said. The framed art will include works by Agam, Kinkade, Dali, Erte, Chagall, Neiman, Max, Miro, Pissacco and others.

The event is open to all. For tickets and sponsor information, contact Earle Sherrod at [esherrrod1@austin.rr.com](mailto:esherrrod1@austin.rr.com) (ask about the "early bird special."