

# Green Day

*Eco-friendly aspects of the simcha can elevate a young person's conscience*

by Elyse Glickman

Given that many high-profile celebrities expound on the virtues of their environmental involvements (among them, Natalie Portman and Alicia Silverstone), it is inevitable that eco-friendly activities, foods and fashion — along with a side of social justice — will appeal to a wide range of teens ... and that this will get some of them seeing green for their bar or bat mitzvah.

The Web site Green Mitzvot ([greenbarmitzvahs.com](http://greenbarmitzvahs.com)) is testament to the green movement's impact on teens nationwide. It provides comprehensive information on various essentials, ranging from party favors, to reception supplies, food, formal clothing and details on planning a green bar or bat mitzvah in Israel. There's information on organic beauty products, recycled cuff links, fair-trade *kippot* and more.

With green being this year's black, the operative question for parents is how the investment of going green can reinforce the lessons and values of Hebrew school rather than be a potentially expensive fashion statement. Planners who do a significant bar and bat mitzvah business with a green focus, such as Deborah Kattler Kupetz ([dkkevents.com](http://dkkevents.com)), suggest that getting kids involved in the party-planning process may also plant seeds for good civic and personal habits.

Kattler Kupetz is best known in Southern California for creating eco-friendly parties covering everything from the selection of the foods to the décor to the post-ceremony activities with a philanthropic slant.

"The whole point of a bar or bat mitzvah is to validate a teen's learning from a sacred text and then finding ways for him or her to use the knowledge," said Kattler Kupetz, who fell into her "green" business several years ago by accident, when her daughters' green b'not mitzvah proved to be a hit with the guests.

"I had to really develop, create and advocate for all the other elements that would complete the experience," Kattler Kupetz recalled. "During the process of sourcing the party elements and planning the activities, I was surprised at how far I could make my dollars go and how I was able to find ways to connect with the community and even Israel by sourcing things from local vendors and seeking out alternatives for décor and activities. It made me realize how interconnected I could

make a celebration be on different levels."

Celebrity event planner and author Rená Puebla ([coastconcierge.com](http://coastconcierge.com)), meanwhile, believes that the teachable moments built into a bar or bat mitzvah theme can speak to not just other teens in attendance but to adult guests as well.

"The essence of a bar mitzvah is about the transition to adulthood and the responsibilities that come with that transition, to oneself and to society, and that includes the environment," she said. "[A green event] can also be a way for adults to show other adults about the conscien-



Reuse, repurpose: These clocks were purchased at Goodwill and given to guests as gifts.

scious way they planned the event. Teaching by example is an adult responsibility."

Puebla and Kattler Kupetz are like-minded in that they believe a green bar or bat mitzvah is in line with the Jewish teachings learned from Hebrew school education. The resulting experience ends up being more personally empowering, helping the teen realize he or she can make a difference at a very early age. Kattler Kupetz also stresses that a green bar or bat mitzvah shouldn't seem like a punishment or an obligation for a child. Instead, it can be presented to a youth as something

*Continued on page 16*

Today, he is a man.  
Even if his suit size says otherwise.



John Varvatos • Donna Karan • Elie Tahari • Joseph Abboud • Tallia

FREE BASIC ALTERATIONS

**rudnick's**

Selling Boys' and Young Men's Dresswear for over 66 years

17037 Ventura Blvd. Encino, CA 91316 (818) 788-9170  
BRING IN THIS AD FOR A FREE GIFT WITH THE PURCHASE OF A SUIT



**CLUB  
NOKIA**

Flexible party options for 50 up to 350+ guests.

Visit [www.clubnokia.com/specialevents.php](http://www.clubnokia.com/specialevents.php) and

[www.clubnokia.com/vip.php](http://www.clubnokia.com/vip.php)

Contact **Berenice Palacios** at 213.765.7004 or  
[bpalacios@aeglive.com](mailto:bpalacios@aeglive.com) and mention "Mitzvah" when  
you book your party to get a DJ for free!\*

\*Offer valid until December 31st, 2013

## Green Day

Continued from page 14

spectacularly fun and festive, but with more depth and meaning.

"I feel the bar mitzvah moment is a most magnificent device to put all kinds of opportunities in front of a teen to make a difference and have it be family-supported," she said. "At its root, a green bar or bat mitzvah is a wonderful alternative to a blingy teen dance party. My job is as much about encouraging a conversation involving everybody in the family, because incorporating relevant social issues into the bar or bat mitzvah experience can improve communication among family members."

Among trends Kattler Kupetz sees taking shape are girls visiting vintage clothing shops instead of department stores or trendy boutiques.

Puebla says that Southern California offers interesting alternatives to the traditional hotel or banquet hall, including whale-watching trips and beach picnics with a guest speaker from an ocean preservation organization explaining why the ocean is so important and the importance of the ocean to the climate and global warming.

"Party favors [for outdoor-specific events] can include a beach bag with a water bottle that includes a filter, a hat, a pull-over and beach sandals, all made from eco-friendly materials," Puebla said. "In terms of clothing that works for casual and formal gatherings, H&M just launched an eco-friendly formalwear line called Conscious Exclusive that is also budget-friendly and includes age-appropriate styles."

Kattler Kupetz also encourages "twinning," where families financially affiliate their child's celebration with a charity so the day not only syncs in with the child's mitzvah project but also raises money and awareness for a greater cause. Some of her favorite organizations are Remember Us ([remember-us.com](http://remember-us.com)), a project dedicated to connecting youths preparing for their b'nai mitzvah and children killed during the Holocaust; the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry ([nacoej.org/get-involved/be-a-twin](http://nacoej.org/get-involved/be-a-twin)); and AMIT ([amitchildren.org/how-you-can-help/twinning-program](http://amitchildren.org/how-you-can-help/twinning-program)), which twins your child with an underserved Israeli child who shares the same bar mitzvah date.

Cindy Hassel, president of Tarzana-based S&R Originals/SRO Events Inc. ([sroevents.com](http://sroevents.com)), has seen other trends taking shape, including sourcing food from local farms and purveyors, and doing some form of online invitation.

While Kattler Kupetz says companies like Evite Postmark have raised the bar for online invitations, Hassel admits that some of her clients still feel that online invites diminish the importance of the big day. A compromise she suggests is sending out the traditional invitation but replacing the reply card with a prompt to RSVP by e-mail or on



A natural grapewood centerpiece is surrounded by herb plants that can be donated to food pantries. Photo courtesy of SRO Events, Inc.



Live orchid plants used as a centerpiece can be replanted. Photo courtesy of SRO Events, Inc.

a Web site set up for the teen's bar or bat mitzvah.

As always, issues of finance sometimes trump issues of conscience, and Hassel says there are clients who haven't gone green because preparations for a specific theme can end up being more expensive than one might expect. By the same token, however, she points out that many things she recommends to cost-conscious parents can also end up being environmentally conscious because recycling is involved.

Even if a family doesn't bring up the issue of being eco-friendly, Hassel believes that there are teachable moments in the process.

"We can suggest to kids, for example, that we skip such party favors as glow sticks, plastic sunglasses and other 'toss-outs,' as they are not biodegradable and will sit on the floor and end up going into landfills after the party."

Another way Hassel said teens can be channeled toward more purpose-driven b'nai mitzvah experiences is through centerpieces. In lieu of flowers, parents can make a donation to organizations like the SOVA Community Food and Resource Program ([jfsla.org/SOVA](http://jfsla.org/SOVA)), and mention on special place cards that after the party the centerpieces will be donated to the organization.

Other examples include the child and family encouraging donations of toys and sports equipment, which in turn, can be artfully displayed before being sent to children's charities; animal shelters; and organizations like Vista Del Mar, which provides social and psychological services and has summer camp and sports programs. This could be based on what a teen's mitzvah project is focused on, if he or she has one.

"I realized that I could go beyond helping clients create a 'green' party experience after having create my own," Kattler Kupetz said. "I was able to introduce the event as a platform for causes I was completely passionate about, including the environment, economic development in the community, zero-waste events. A well-planned party could become a platform, in turn, for social action." **MT**

# UN DEUX TROIS

A unique shopping experience for girls & tweens.

10% OFF

when you bring  
in this coupon






Styled for

## ALL OCCASIONS

NEW STORE OPENING

WESTLAKE VILLAGE

140 Promenade Way Ste. G, Westlake, Ca 91362

OTHER FABULOUS LOCATIONS

<p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">BEVERLY HILLS</p> <p>9631 Brighton Way</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">BRENTWOOD</p> <p>11670 San Vicente Blvd. Ste. C</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">STUDIO CITY</p> <p>12417 Ventura Blvd.</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">TARZANA</p> <p>18632 Ventura Blvd.</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">DALLAS</p> <p>6124 Berkshire Lane</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">HOUSTON</p> <p>2402 Rice Blvd. Ste. A</p>
---	--

[www.udfashion.com](http://www.udfashion.com)

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Valid at UDF stores only.