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Media Contact:

Joshua Nunn

Director of Marketing, San Diego Jewish Academy

Phone: (619) 302-4694

Email: jnunn@sdja.com



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San Diego Jewish Academy Announces Chaim Heller as Next Executive Director

San Diego, CA – February 16, 2012 – After an extensive search process that involved numerous members of the San Diego Jewish Academy (SDJA) community, Board President Shari Schenk recently announced that Chaim Heller will be the school’s next executive director. Chaim will replace Larry Acheatel, who will be retiring in July after 12 years of distinguished service.

Chaim currently serves as the head of school at Brandeis Hillel Day School, a pluralistic Jewish independent school in San Francisco with two campuses and over 575 students, where he is finishing his 17th year. Prior to Brandeis Hillel Day School, Chaim served as the head of school for Morasha School in Orange County for five years.

“At Brandeis, we were able to create a school-wide culture of kindness. We made it a priority for our students, parents, faculty and staff to treat each other in a manner that elevated every interaction; a form of radical kindness that built our community up,” said Chaim Heller, SDJA’s future executive director. “We made sure everyone felt welcome, that all were treated with respect and that every person was valued and included. I see much of that philosophy at SDJA and hope to build upon it.”

Chaim grew up in Brooklyn, New York and was very active in youth movements and campus work for Israel. After graduating with a degree in drama from City University of New York, Chaim moved to Israel, where he lived on a kibbutz and met his wife Michal and raised their two children. During his time in Israel, Chaim was both a classroom teacher and a journalist, writing a features and film review column for the *Jerusalem Post*. While in Israel, Chaim also served in the Israel Defense Forces.

Chaim was drawn to San Diego Jewish Academy because of its innovative reputation. “SDJA has always been known as a forward-thinking school. Its students are known to excel in both academics and athletics, and the school serves as an anchor for its diverse and thriving community,” continued Chaim. “I am excited to be part of this world-class Jewish day school.”

Chaim holds a Masters Degree in Educational Administration from California State University – Fullerton as well as a Masters Certification in Elementary Education from Haifa University. Chaim also received a Certification in Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

“We are thrilled to have Chaim become part of our community,” said Shari Schenk. “After 12 years, we are sad to see Larry go, but I am confident that with Chaim’s passion and leadership, the school will continue to thrive and grow.”

About SDJA:

San Diego Jewish Academy provides infants to high school seniors a unique environment that challenges students to achieve their full academic potential and become individuals of strong character, while inspiring them to make Judaism a vital and relevant aspect of their lives.

For more information about San Diego Jewish Academy, visit www.sdja.com.

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