

ST. LOUIS JEWISH LIGHT
BY JILL KASSANDER
LOCAL | FUNDRAISER SET FOR MAY 6
St. Louis Arches plan trip to Israel



St. Louis Arches Deon White, Matt Viverito, Lemond Carmickle and Anthony Stile juggle knives while standing on rolling globes during a performance. The Arches are hoping to raise funds for a trip to Israel to work with Circus Galilee. The Arches will appear at a fundraiser at [Central Reform Congregation](#) on Sunday, May 6 from 2-4 p.m. Participants will have the opportunity to learn some circus skills, see the Arches perform and enjoy tasty circus treats including cotton candy and popcorn. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.



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BY JILL KASSANDER, SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT

St. Louis's bounciest ambassadors are going to Israel this summer. The St. Louis Arches have been invited to do a residency with the Circus Galilee. The two groups will spend a week working together

and learning from each other. Then they will create an inspirational cross-cultural show and perform it throughout Israel.

The St. Louis Arches are the advanced youth performers of the Circus Day Foundation. The group is a social circus organization using the medium of the circus arts to promote social change and teach the art of life. Participants learn life skills including communication and cooperation, which goes a long way to help with conflict resolution. The youths, ages 7 - 17 come from all over St. Louis and are representative of the rich diversity of the area.

"The kids realize it isn't about wealth, their parents or neighborhood or what high school they go to," artistic/executive director Jessica Hentoff said. "It's about focusing on our similarities and what we can accomplish together."

Marc Rosenstein, director of Galilee Circus, learned about the St. Louis Arches after reading about the Foundation's Circus Salaam Shalom (it has since evolved into the Patchwork Circus) which brought together Jewish and Muslim children in St. Louis following the September 11, 2001 tragedy. He discussed the similar purpose and goals of his program in an e-mail interview from Israel.

Like the Arches, Galilee Circus brings together close to 50 young people from diverse backgrounds: half of them Israeli Jews and the other half Israeli Arabs. They must learn to work together to become the circus by "learning, trusting, performing, taking risks together, laughing and making others laugh." While they can't forget the Jewish-Arab conflict is the reason the circus exists, they use the Galilee Circus to create common bonds among the performers and their audiences across Israel.

"We hope that the St. Louis Arches' visit here will help draw us completely out of the conflict and into the world of circus, by affording us an experience, not of the biculturalism we know, but of true multiculturalism, where the only language we will all have in common will be the language of circus," Rosenstein said. "I can tell you the Galilee Circus kids are extremely excited about this project, and can't wait to show their guests their homes, communities, and the beautiful region in which we live."

The Arches are looking forward to their upcoming trip to Israel. When Gateway Middle School eighth grader Lemond Carmickle found out the group was going to Israel, his first question was "Can we ride camels?" Like the other members of the troupe, Carmickle enjoys the opportunity to travel and meet people from around the world as part of the Arches. He especially enjoyed meeting comedian Steve Harvey when the group went to California.

Some of the other performers also expressed their excitement about the upcoming trip. Ten-year-old Kellin Hentoff-Killian is thinking about what it will feel like to float in the Dead Sea. Beaumont High School freshman Iking Bateman is looking forward to seeing "a lot of cool things." St. Louis University High School junior Matthew Viverito said his time with the Arches has given him the opportunity to meet and become friends with people he might not have met otherwise.

"I'm looking forward to meeting different people and learning about the different cultures in Israel," Viverito said. "But this trip is not just about performing: it's about teaching and sharing the life skills we are learning: trust, cooperation and responsibility."

It will cost \$45,000 to send the St. Louis Arches and two chaperones on this extraordinary journey. The Circus Day Foundation has been working hard to raise the necessary funds through various methods including applying for grants, direct donations and performances. They have already received generous contributions from: [Central Reform Congregation](#), Cirque du Soleil, Trudy Harris, Janet and Bert Krauss, Regional Arts Commission, Stahl and Ponder, Mary Strauss and Patty Vivierito.

On May 6, the community will be able to be part of the circus experience and help raise funds for the trip at a special benefit being held at [Central Reform Congregation](#). The event is taking place from 2-4 p.m. Participants will have the opportunity to learn some circus skills, see the Arches

perform and enjoy tasty circus treats including cotton candy and popcorn. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

"When you stand on someone's shoulders, you both stand tall," Hentoff said. "You're both doing something special."

For more information on the May 6 benefit event, Circus Day Foundation or how you can help send the Arches to Israel contact Jessica Hentoff at 314-436-7676 or visit www.circusday.org.