

ROCKLAND Jewish Reporter

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O&A

Bruce Varon is the world's oldest kid and proud of it. For the past 15 years, Varon, a pharmaceutical representative deeply involved in Jewish youth programs, has organized and run a carnival at Jawonio, an organization that provides services for those with special needs, and will be honored for his involvement on Saturday, Oct. 24 at the Dellwood Country Club in New City. Varon lives in New City with his wife Linda and has two sons, Josh, 23, and Ben, 20.



Bruce Varon

How did you get involved with Jawonio? I grew up with my neighbor having cerebral palsy and I learned information from them and they got me involved.

What is your personal connection with Jawonio? I have been involved for about 20 years now and for about the last 15 or so years I have run a Koach USY (United Synagogue Youth) carnival there.

You are also the divisional director for the Koach Division of USY. How did you get into that line of work? I was asked 27 years ago to do the job and I have had it ever since. I also did youth work within the organization before that.

How far back does your connection with USY go? 1975. I was very active at New City Jewish Center and I enjoyed it a lot. I later went on and became president of the division.

Why do you still continue to work for United Synagogue Youth? I love it. I really think this is great stuff. I really enjoy meeting people and meeting kids. I get to encourage kids to become leaders of the organization and of our movement as well. Kids are just great.

What is the best part about being involved in USY as an adult? Watching kids' faces during ruach (the time when USYers gather to sing together). It is unbelievable the passion in their faces. They are not just singing the songs they are living it.

Why are youth groups a good way to connect Jewish youth to Judaism? It gives them a chance to meet. Everyone needs a meeting venue and youth groups bring people together. You can't just do it on the phone or on the computer. Creating a meeting place is the basic of what we do, and together the kids can connect.

Why do you think teenagers are drawn to USY? It is an avenue for them to be comfortable and show their true colors. They can't always show their ruach, their spirit, in school. Often in school they are lost in a big fish bowl, and in USY the fish bowl tends to be smaller. In USY kids are able to express themselves.

-Marisa Kelly