

# THE MORNING WARRIORS

## Distance of commute disrupts student life

by Jonathan Nurko

As the only co-ed Jewish high school in the city, Yavneh attracts Jewish teens not only from Dallas, but also from Plano, Allen, Frisco, Richardson and even Rowlett.

Regardless of where they hail from, the first duty of a student is showing up to school. Some complete this task without difficulty, but others struggle for punctuality every morning. From five minutes to an hour and a half, by car, bike or their own two feet, students and faculty shoulder their way through the morning commute to reach campus.

Luckily for residents of the southern *eruv* and JCC neighborhoods, Forest Road provides a direct path to school. Micah [10] and Adina [12] Romaner have a convenient seven-minute drive to school—on a bad day. They usually leave their house at 7:50, giving them plenty of time to arrive at 8 a.m. for davening.

"It's nice not to sit in the car for long or wake up early," A. Romaner said. "I'm never stressed about rushing to school—it's a nice life."

Similarly, Zev Burstein [11] has an eight-minute drive from the southern *eruv*. Both he and Judaic teacher Rabbi Yaakov Tannenbaum, who also lives nearby, use their advantage to enjoy leisurely commutes.

"Biking to school starts me off on a great day," Burstein, who bikes on occasion, said. "I've had my exercise, and I feel free. It's just me and the world."

As a native New Yorker, Tannenbaum has never owned a car or driver's license and has traveled primarily by

foot all his life. His 45-minute walks provide him with an early morning meditation to sort through thoughts as well as a constant source of exercise.

"My walks truly improve my mood—my students can usually tell when I haven't walked because I am more irritable," Tannenbaum said.

However, not everyone shares the luxury of waking up relatively late or choosing their method of commute. Many students live much further away, and their long drives can overwhelm them and provide new challenges that accompany it.

"In the morning, I get to school exhausted after a 40-minute drive, which affects my morning classes," Plano resident Ryan Sukenik [12] said. "In the afternoon, I get home exhausted and have no drive to do my homework."

Sukenik's annoyance with traffic overflows into his day and affects his attitude and performance. Unlike A. Romaner who jokes that she sees her parents too much, Sukenik's late return home damages his family relationship.

"I don't remember the last time I saw my sister on a weekday," he said. "I occasionally see my parents for dinner, but other than that [there is] almost no communication."

Similarly, Noah Rubinstein expresses frustration about having to wake up an hour earlier than his peers to receive a 100 in davening. After school, he is faced with another wave of irritation as the evening rush hour further elongates his drive.

"By the time I get home, if I lived closer, I could've finished one subject of homework," Rubinstein said. "Just knowing that I have to get less sleep because of this drive is very distressing."

Aizik McFarland [12] and Tammy Schisler [12] bear two of the biggest burdens as their respective drives from Rowlett and Allen can be unpredictable, taking anywhere between 40 minutes and an hour. Both wake up at 6:30 a.m. and meet the dangerous drivers of the highway. Blaring music, they try to block out their drowsiness and focus on

the road.

"I leave the house at the same time everyday and on a good day, I can make it, but I can't predict the traffic and I can't wake up earlier than I already do since I stay up doing homework," Schisler said.

Schisler is frustrated with the difficulties she faces to receive an A in Shacharit, which earns a Judaic final exemption, compared to those who live close by and receive one with little effort. Principal Rabbi Meir Tannenbaum's advice to "leave 30 minutes earlier" provides little solace. However, this is not her only struggle; after school, she struggles to find time with family and friends who live far away. Sometimes when she reaches home late, her parents have already gone to bed.

Additionally, McFarland struggles to make time on the weekend for extra-curricular activities. Last year when he played JV basketball, his practices and the driving they required consumed his Sundays. When other events took place later in the day, unlike others who went home in between, McFarland had to remain near school.

Unfortunately, McFarland's commute damages something deeper—his connection to the school. He struggles to see it as the communal center everyone embraces.

"I don't feel like Yavneh is my second home because it's so far away," he said. "I don't think my mom has been here once."

English teacher Bonnie Atkins has the longest drive, ranging from 50 minutes to an hour and a half from Southlake. But while many students hold contempt for their daily travels, Atkins accepts her challenge and no longer sees it as a burden.

"I've always commuted even when I lived in San Francisco where I had a forty-minute commute, so I'm used to it," she said. "Usually you go to school near where you live but people don't usually work where they live. Commuting as a professional isn't an odd thing."

When Atkins applied for her job

at Yavneh, she was already driving her older son to school nearby. On the way, she bonds with her children, who she drops on the way, or unwinds with a radio talk show. However, her long drive home has prevented her from staying to watch after school athletic games or arts programs.

Having the longest commute, Atkins sets an example for all students. "I made a decision to work here and the students made a decision to come here," she said. "Fair is not equal. You will be expected to adhere to the same hours and regulations that other people do no matter where you live so you decide and plan accordingly."

However, Atkins stresses that case-by-case understanding must be taken when situations like traffic deadlocks arise. In this respect, some students feel that administrators show little sympathy.

"I've had some discussions with the administration—they think I should leave home at 6 am but I think that's ridiculous," Schisler said. Rubinstein

accepts that he must meet the same standards as those who live 5 minutes away. He and others have taken a pragmatic approach and developed some ideas to compromise with the administration.

"It's our choice to come to this school, but perhaps there should be a few times a week an alternative davening for the north to provide us the same luxury of waking up as the people who live closer [to school]," he said.

Schisler has proposed that after-school meetings be moved to a more central location. Sympathizing with his peers, M. Romaner has offered an open invitation for his friends who want to stay at his house and avoid long drives.

As the Jewish community continues to expand, students throughout The Metroplex will consider Yavneh for high school. Understanding the difficulties of the long commuters will maintain a happy and growing student population.



# Popularizing parkour

## Trio bonds and stays fit through shared hobby

by Zach Epstein

Two months ago, David Cohen [9], along with brothers Jonathan [9] and Daniel Gross [11] began pursuing their passion for parkour.

"Parkour is officially a sport where you have to get from point A to point B in the fastest way possible," Cohen said.

From the French word *parcours*, meaning "the way through" or "the path," parkour is a means of getting around objects using your body.

Cohen attends parkour classes two-to-three times a week at Fugitive Fitness, currently the only parkour gym in Dallas. Fugitive Fitness works with both genders ages six and older to combine the skills and techniques of parkour with strength and conditioning training.

"I've always been really into running, climbing and jumping, and parkour combined them all and turned them into one sport," Cohen said.

His parkour education began with watching tutorials on YouTube, covering the basics of the sport, and then practicing skills unaided in his backyard. Upon hearing that a parkour gym opened nearby, Cohen immediately signed up.

D. Gross developed his love for parkour when playing the mobile game *Vector*, a game where players have to run and jump over obstacles as they are pursued by an enemy. As they progress, players add more complex moves to their arsenal.

When Fugitive Fitness opened in Dallas, D. Gross ditched the virtual world to train in the real world. As he continues to refine his talent, D. Gross has set two primary goals for himself.

"I can stand on a bar. I want to be able to stand up on one 20 feet tall," he said.

"I can jump and roll from 8-10 feet tall. I'd like to increase that height to 15 feet." For J. Gross, D. Gross's younger brother, the allure of his favorite action movies attracted him to the extreme sport. However, he never believed he had the ability to replicate these Hollywood stunts.

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"I thought you had to be some crazy gymnast," J. Gross said.

When his brother proved the seemingly impossible, J. Gross recognized that he too could pursue his dream alongside his brother.

"Daniel started doing things I didn't think he could do, so I thought, 'if Daniel could do them, so could I,'" he said.

Upon learning that they shared a passion for parkour, the trio decided to embark on their journey together. They often schedule their Fugitive Fitness classes on the same days and enjoy each other's company.

However, the vaults do not end at the gym. Cohen and the Gross brothers continue their practice at home or even at school. Trash cans and desks make useful props while practicing certain moves.

"I'm trying to get to the point where I can go outside and just run and overcome any obstacle fast without stopping [the] flow," Cohen said.

Cohen also unofficially partakes in freerunning, a version of parkour that focuses less on efficiency and more on entertaining moves like flips and twists.

Parkour is now recognizable through common moves such as the "kong vault" and the "gap jump." Although spectators may not know the name of the sport or of its various moves, they are still

amazed by what they see.

Parkour and freerunning have gained popularity in recent years with the arrival of Youtube in 2005, allowing athletes to post their videos for fans to enjoy and build an online community.

The World Freerunning Parkour Federation (WFPF) was later established in 2007. The hit TV show "American Ninja Warrior" brought the sport to the television. Parkour gyms incorporate

"American Ninja Warrior" inspired obstacles and promotions. Cohen hopes to one day compete on the show himself.

With the rise of parkour in America, the trio hopes to continue refining their skills and stamina. Whether they star on TV shows one day, or start a class at Yavneh, the trio has built friendships through the sport.

"When you're ten feet in the air on a beam, and the only thing between you and being injured is a friend, you build a lot of trust," D. Gross said.

photos by Alan Presburger

