

Kids Blast Trumpets Made in the Shofar Factory

Children will welcome Rosh Hashanah at sundown tonight with their own handcrafted rams' horns, signaling the Jewish spiritual New Year and the start of a three-week High Holy Day season.

By [Todd Svance](#) for *St. Louis Park Patch*, an affiliate of *The Huffington Post*



“God’s shofar will travel,” said a smiling Rabbi Mordechai Grossbaum, who brought a box of rams’ horns and power tools to a [Heilicher Jewish Day School](#) classroom in St. Louis Park on Thursday.

Grossbaum’s mission is “to make Judaism come alive,” driving his Shofar Factory-on-wheels daily to kids at eight citywide Jewish schools and synagogues whose families are about to enter the High Holy Days, beginning with Rosh Hashanah at sundown tonight.

“You can push a book in a kid’s face or you can involve him so he enjoys it,” said Grossbaum,

as children with hacksaws cut a mouthpiece into the horns, used as home versions of the sacred trumpets that will blast 100 times in temples around the world to awaken spiritual sleepers for a three-week season of self-reflection and renewal.

“A picture paints a thousand words with children,” said Grossbaum, a Minnetonka-based rabbi who runs the educational outreach called [Living Legacy](#). “We have 13 hands-on programs. Last year we made a nine-foot menorah (Jewish candelabra for Hanukkah) out of jelly beans.”

The philosophy is that fun is an aid to learning, and that what kids taste, touch and hear, they remember. “I keep myself entertained in the process,” said Grossbaum, chuckling.

The ram’s horn-sculpting activity certainly stirred excitement among the day school’s fifth graders on Thursday.

“I’ve been dying to get to fifth grade to make my shofar,” said Anthony Davis, treasuring the moment and sanding his horn by himself outside the classroom-turned-workshop, away from the dust cloud, loud power tools and bantering classmates.

“I like music. I play drums in our school band. I think it’s cool how people long ago could make instruments out of rams’ horns,” and without modern technology, he noted.

Inside, a burly kid from one pair of boys got the 15 to 30-minute job of sawing off the tip of the horn to create the mouthpiece. His more slightly built partner cheered when they were the first ones done.

"He's so strong, he could be the best quarterback in the league," the second kid said.

Girls teamed with girls, focused and intent, muscling the saw with pride. "It's hard work, but it's worth it," one said.

A more hesitant boy stood off to the side. A tuft of wirey hair reminded him of the ram whose horn he was handling. "I'm a vegetarian, so this is all kinda creepy to me."



As children finished and the Rabbi drilled, power-sanded, and honed each piece, kids pursed their lips and blew 'til they were red in the face, as the chorus of sounds grew louder and louder.

Down the hall, lunching students who had brought shofars from home lined up. They have sounded the blast daily through the month of Elul, a month of preparation similar to the Christian Advent.

"The sound is so evocative," said Aviva Hillenbrand, chief program officer next door at the [Sabes Jewish Community Center](#). "It's not a sound you hear in modern times. It's a call to attention. It creates a powerful sense memory, just like the eating of apples and honey."

Families will gather, many observing two Rosh Hashanah meals this week, eating symbolic foods like honey cakes and pomegranates and wishing each other a sweet new year. "We create the sound, feel and taste of the holiday," said Hillenbrand.

It also launches the self-reflective 10 Days of Awe, similar to the Christian's season of Lent, ending with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, on Oct. 8.

"It's a time of prayer and fasting, to rebuild relationships with God and others that have been severed due to sin or a loss of joy in following God," said Rabbi Grossbaum, putting aside his drill.

"We step back and ask, 'Am I running an honest business? Why am I making this money? Only to become wealthy, or to raise a family, give to a charity, and use it for positive purposes?'"

Assessing motives, and leaving behind the dishonorable ones, is important, said Grossbaum. "You can complain and kvetch," observing the Holy Days begrudgingly, he said, "or you can observe them out of awe, joy and love of God. The goal is an intensification of our relationship with God until all of life becomes godly."