

# THE Jewish Georgian

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## MJCCA News

**PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK FESTIVAL.** Brace yourselves for a blistering new novel. On September 26, at 7:30 p.m., the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA) will welcome the legendary #1 *New York Times* best-selling author Nelson DeMille, presenting his latest novel, *The Cuban Affair*. Appearing in conversation with DeMille is special guest Alan P. Gross, former Cuban hostage and economic development and community engagement advisor. Tickets are \$10-\$15. A book signing will follow the event. For information, visit [atlantajcc.org/bookfestival](http://atlantajcc.org/bookfestival) or call the MJCCA box office at 678-812-4005.

*The Cuban Affair* features an exciting new character—U.S. Army combat veteran Daniel “Mac” McCormick, now a charter boat captain, who is about to set sail on his most dangerous cruise. The book features DeMille’s signature humor and heart-pounding pace. It rings with authenticity, a result of his research trip to Cuba.

All of DeMille’s novels are still in print, including his first major novel, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, published in 1978. He is a member of American Mensa and the Authors Guild and is past president of the Mystery Writers of America. He is also a member of International Thriller Writers and was chosen as Thriller Master of the Year 2015.

Before his sudden imprisonment in Castro’s Cuba, Alan P. Gross spent more than 35 years traveling the globe as an international economic development and community engagement advisor. He worked on behalf of private clients, NGOs, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, an organization dedicated to administering civilian foreign aid and promoting democracy around the world. Gross helped fight poverty and oppression by developing projects to help people in more than 50 countries around the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Gross’s personal and professional communities were shocked when, in December 2009, he was arrested by Cuban officials, who wrongly accused him of working for American intelligence services. He was actually working on a humanitarian project to improve wireless broadband Internet access for small communities across Cuba, with a special emphasis on helping Cuba’s small Jewish community. In March 2011, Gross was wrongfully convicted for “acts against the territorial integrity of the state” and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

During his captivity, Gross spent 23 hours a day confined to a small jail cell, almost completely isolated from the outside world. His physical, mental, and emotional health were continually challenged, as he slowly began to wonder whether he would ever return home alive.

Gross’s wife, Judy—along with Jewish, interfaith, and humanitarian groups worldwide—fought for his freedom. Finally, on December 17, 2014, after being unjustly imprisoned for 1,841 days, Gross was released by the Cuban government on humanitarian grounds. He presently divides his time between Washington, D.C., and Tel Aviv.

**ZABAN SHARKS UNDEFEATED.** For the first time in the program’s history, the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta’s Zaban Sharks Swim Team went undefeated, completing its 2017 summer season with a historic 5-0 record. The Zaban Sharks, a recreational and competitive swim team, participate in the Georgia Swimming branch of USA Swimming and the North Atlanta Swim Association.

Thirty members of the Zaban Sharks swim team qualified to compete in the Atlanta Swimming Association’s Divisional Tournament, June 28-30, at the McAuley Aquatic Center, formerly the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center. The tournament included six divisions, comprising hundreds of teams and thousands of swimmers competing in freestyle and medley relays, as well as back, breast, and fly stroke competition. On July 1, 16 members of the Zaban Sharks earned their way to the Championship Finals, where the top 50 swimmers ages 10 and under and the top 40 swimmers ages 11 and over, as well as the top 20 relays, from all six divisions, competed.

For more information on the MJCCA Aquatic Programs, visit [atlantajcc.org/aquatics](http://atlantajcc.org/aquatics) or [atlantajcc.org/interior-pages/sports-aquatics-team](http://atlantajcc.org/interior-pages/sports-aquatics-team).



MJCCA Zaban Sharks (photo courtesy of MJCCA)

**CLUB J.** For working parents, managing their kids’ after-school activities, solving transportation needs, and ensuring a safe and fun environment is a juggling act. Monday through Friday can feel like a three-ring circus. What if there was a way to be at the office, knowing your child will be safely transported to a program with exciting indoor and outdoor fun, provided healthy foods, and given supervised homework time? For families in North Atlanta, Club J, an after-school program dedicated to making life more convenient for working parents and life more enriching for kids between the hours of 2:30 – 6:00 p.m., provides all this and more. Whether it’s getting a head start on homework in a supervised setting or having your child served dinner one night a week, convenience for working parents is seriously considered.

Club J is a one-of-a-kind, after-school experience for rising pre-k through 5th graders, located at the MJCCA Zaban Park campus, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody. Private, supervised buses pick up students from 15 area schools, and safely transport them to the MJCCA, where kids are greeted and escorted inside. Flexible three-, four-, and five-day options are available.

“I searched for an after-school program where I didn’t have to worry about how my kids would get there, and where there were activities other than just playing on a playground, or sitting for hours in yet another classroom,” says Megan Usow. “The options were either inconvenient, or uninspired, but Club J at Zaban Park takes the concept of after-school programming to another level.” Usow, now Club J director, is dedicated to providing parents with a level of convenience and caregiving that is vitally important to her and many other employed moms and dads.

Kids are offered a wide variety of counselor-led programs, including swimming, sports, science discovery, dance, cooking, rock wall, and more. Counselors accompany kids from one activity to another, ensuring a safe and fun-filled experience.

For parents with part-time or flexible-hour jobs, a Transportation Only plan is available. This enables kids to be picked up at their school, in supervised buses, and

dropped off at the MJCCA.

To register for the 2017-2018 school year, visit [atlantajcc.org/afterschool](http://atlantajcc.org/afterschool). For more information, or to schedule a tour, contact Club J Director Megan Usow, at [megan.usow@atlantajcc.org](mailto:megan.usow@atlantajcc.org) or 678-812-3761.



Club J bus provides transportation (photos courtesy of MJCCA)



Getting started on homework at Club J



Swimming at Club J

**WE STAND**



**WITH ISRAEL**