

## Eye on Youth

### Good, Clean Fun for Malden Family

**Susan Jacobs**

*Jewish Journal Staff*

In 2004, Chana Goldberg's aunt gave her a small soap-making kit as a gift. She, along with her mom and her sisters, crafted a few simple soaps. The Malden-based family quickly became hooked on the hobby, turning it into what has become a profitable business.

The company is called 4 Sisters Soaps, named in honor of siblings Batsheva, 12, Chana, 10, Penina, 5, and Ilana, 2, Goldberg. The girls' mother, Ellen Zagorsky Goldberg, oversees the operation, while father Sam, a computer programmer, provides business advice.

Using dozens of different molds, the family has a huge line of offerings — from hand painted ducks and feet with pedicures, to frosted cupcakes and giant red lips. Some of the soaps contain little toys inside, and many are decorated with sparkles and/or beads.

The observant family also makes a unique line of Jewish-themed soaps. For Chanukah, they make menorahs and Jewish stars. For Passover, they craft authentic-looking matzah boards. On Rosh Hashanah, they make honey cake soaps that smell good enough to eat. And on Purim, they craft tiny hamantashen soaps that can be added to Shalach Manot baskets.

All soaps are painstakingly made by hand from 100 percent vegetable glycerin. Most pieces retail for under \$5. Although some of their products can be found at the Israel Book Shop in Brookline, the company does most of its business online. They get a lot of orders for customized products. They recently produced 220 'Mazel Tov' soaps, in an assortment of colors and scents, as bat mitzvah favors.

According to their mother, soap making offers a world of educational opportunities. "The girls are learning how to run a business including the more difficult sides of it — such as how to follow through with a big order. They are learning lessons about economics, and important life lessons about how to make a boring job interesting, and how to get along with their co-workers," Ellen said. Ellen, a registered nurse, home schools the younger girls. Batsheva attends the New England Hebrew Academy in Brookline.

Each girl plays a special role in the business. Chana does much of the painting, Penina adds the sparkles, and young Ilana brings her mother the cubes of glycerin that must be melted to pour into the molds. Batsheva is becoming involved with advertising and has designed several pieces, including a two-part "Best Friends" soap.

Together they prepare the raw material, which comes in 80-pound blocks that resemble icebergs. They add colors and scents, mixing it all wearing big yellow gloves. "We look like mad scientists," Ellen quipped.

People often think the company is bigger than it is. "We made 60 customized soaps for some teachers in New York. The woman who ordered them told us she wanted to come visit our factory. She didn't realize that the 'factory' is located in the front parlor of our home," Ellen said.

Eventually, the Goldbergs hope to expand their offerings to include bath salts, body lotions and candles packaged together in gift sets. For now, however, they are focused on making soap.

"One of our regular customers is a piano teacher. She says all of her students ask to use the bathroom during lessons so that they can check out what new soap she has in the dish," Ellen said.

"I like things that help kids get clean and make hand washing fun. If this helps pay college tuition, that would be great, too," she added.

For more information, visit [www.4sisterssoaps.com](http://www.4sisterssoaps.com) or call 781-322-6888.



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**The Goldberg family shows off some of its favorite soaps. In the front (l-r) are Penina, Batsheva and Chana. In the rear are Ellen, Ilana and Sam.**