

MAY HIGHLIGHTS

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SPRING CELEBRATION

Please join us for our annual Spring Celebration on Friday, June 14th. This year we are excited to honor, Deborah Goodman, Nina Silberman, Jeff Schwartz and Sherry Portnoy, four of Congregation B'nai Israel's Tikkun Olam Trailblazers.

We will gather for a festive oneg at 5:30 p.m., followed by a special Kabbalat Shabbat service at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:30 p.m. If you would like to help with this event, please reach out to Chris Rocha at crocha@cbibpt.org to be connected with Celebration Chairperson, Stacey Giglietti.

All four of our honorees have told us that they do not stand alone, they represent you, our many volunteers and congregants who have worked tirelessly on social justice and social action programs over the decades. They are excited for you to join with them to celebrate *tikkun olam* at B'nai Israel and look forward to *thanking you!*

You should have already received information in the mail from our ad journal, which supports our largest fundraiser of the year from our trailblazers with tributes in our Ad Journal. A formal invitation with dinner registration details will follow.

See Page 15 for a bio on each of the four Tikkun Olam Trailblazers.

WELCOME! WELCOME!

A warm welcome to our newest members. We look forward to their participation in our many programs and hope their affiliation will not only enrich their lives, but that of our congregation.

Amy Goldfeder
Fairfield, CT

Allison & Leticia Crespo
Fairfield, CT

Arielle Lynn Stephens
Fairfield, CT

Joshua & Elizabeth Ross
Trumbull, CT

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Duane Berlin, husband of Stacey Berlin

Lila Cooper

Delmar Bogner, father of Jake Bogner

John J. Selig, father of Kathryn Brown

BULLETIN BOARD

MITZVAH MORNING May 19, 2024; 10:00 a.m.

For the second year in a row, Mitzvah Morning will team up with the B'nai Israel Eco Justice Team for a community event.

We will meet May 19 at 10:00 a.m. at B'nai Israel and work together to plant native shrubs, flowers, and bushes on the temple grounds. The goal is two-fold: To make the physical grounds of our synagogue more beautiful and appealing; and to further develop the Pollinator Pathway in the Bridgeport area.

Pollinators (birds and insects) are critical to the natural ecosystem as they are vital to plant reproduction and play a very important role in maintaining biodiversity. Pollinators have been threatened in recent years due to overdevelopment and heavy use of pesticides and herbicides by homeowners and municipalities. Building and maintaining Pollinator Pathways will help ensure the health and safety of our local pollinators.

Attend this Mitzvah Morning event to help make our ecosystem healthier

and more vibrant! You will help feed the pollinators and learn a lot about the natural world that exists (literally) in our backyards.

If you have garden gloves, shovels, trowels, etc., please bring them. Children who attend will be able to plant their own flowers to take home and can paint rocks to help decorate the garden.

We hope to see you there!

For more information on Mitzvah Morning, please reach out to:

Judy Blumenthal
judygblumenthal@gmail.com

Annie Block
annblock53@yahoo.com

AARP DRIVING CLASS

Wednesday, May 8
9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
with Ernie Malecki

Please join our congregant, Ernest "Ernie" Malecki, on Wednesday, May 8, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for this one-day class designed by AARP for senior drivers. Please pre-register by calling the Temple office at 203-336-1858 or emailing Ernie directly at enmalecki113@gmail.com. The cost is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members (checks payable to AARP). Passing this course can save you money on your car insurance. A course will also be offered on Wednesday, June 5.

AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Wednesday, May 1
1:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Schedule your appointment by calling the Red Cross at 1-800-448-3543 or visiting www.redcrossblood.org.



SCAM ALERT

If you receive a request from any member of our clergy or board to "do an errand" or "purchase gift cards," this is a scam. Please disregard the request and report it to the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at [CISA.gov](https://www.cisa.gov).



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

CHOOSING HOPE

We are so thrilled that on June 14 we will celebrate and honor four Tikkun Olam Trailblazers at Shabbat services. Nina Silberman, Debbie Goodman, Jeff Schwartz, and Sherry Portnoy truly exemplify the Jewish ideal of *tikkun olam* — of repairing the world — through their actions and their volunteer work both inside and outside of the synagogue.

Our celebration on June 14 is both to honor four extraordinary people and to center hope in our B'nai Israel community at a time when the world may feel anything but hopeful. As we all know, October 7 was a tragic and traumatic event for so many of us. Antisemitism is rising in the United States and around the world. Many are worried that the conflict between Israel and Hamas will grow into a regional war. Where do we find hope?

wind: A twisted thing that cannot be made straight, A lack that cannot be made good.

Writer David Arnow notes that in the context of Ecclesiastes, the verb *tav-kof-nun* is twice associated with dismissing the possibility of straightening something that has been twisted. For Kohelet, the stoic king, trying to improve the world “is futile and pursuit of wind.”

Michael V. Fox adds,

Kohelet is resigned to the intractability of the world's fundamental wrongs. He doesn't call for fixing of distortions or the filling out of lacks, but only for the resignation to the state of affairs that God has built into the world. Kohelet does not tell us to pursue justice,

How strange that tikkun olam, an expression now synonymous with improving the world, should have its biblical roots in verses from a book that denies the possibility of change!

Our rabbis go on to shift the meaning of *tikkun olam* in their writings. They use the term *tikkun* to note that we do have the ability to shift and change that which we believe to be bent or unjust. As Arnow teaches,

If Ecclesiastes seems to be saying that what God establishes as crooked cannot be made straight, the Mishnah argues that law is in human/rabbinic hands, and, when it appears crooked, it can be changed... The rabbinic intent behind the expression tikkun ha-olam was not primarily

“We remind ourselves that at the core of Jewish belief and tradition is the incredibly hopeful idea of *tikkun olam*, that we do have the ability and wherewithal to change the world for the better.”

The Jewish notion of *tikkun olam* is not only about acts of volunteerism and kindness towards others. It is actually a message of hope! That is why it felt so appropriate and timely to bring us together in June around the notion of *tikkun olam*. So many of us are seeking hope these days.

Ironically, the origins of the term *tikkun olam* are found in the book of Ecclesiastes, or Kohelet, often considered the ultimate pessimist of the Bible. As Ecclesiastes writes in chapter 1, verses 12-15,

I, Kohelet, was king in Jerusalem over Israel. I set my mind to study and to probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun. An unhappy business which God gave humans to be concerned with! I observed all the happenings beneath the sun, and I found that all is futile and pursuit of

though he sees injustice. He does not tell us to comfort the oppressed, though he sees their discomfort.

Ecclesiastes goes on to say in chapter 9,

Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action was long ago approved by God. Let your clothes always be freshly washed, and your head never lack ointment. Enjoy happiness with a woman you love all the fleeting days of life that have been granted to you under the sun — all your fleeting days. For that alone is what you can get out of life and out of the means you acquire under the sun. Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might. For there is no action, no reasoning, no learning, no wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.

Arnow goes on to say,

to maintain the social order but to change it for the better... The Rabbis subverted Kohelet's maxim... they rejected his despair... When the crooked can be straightened — even if only sometimes and to a certain degree — hope flourishes and humanity renews its strength to repair the world.

Thus, when we gather in June, and each and every day before and after that, we remind ourselves that at the core of Jewish belief and tradition is the incredibly hopeful idea of *tikkun olam*, that we do have the ability and wherewithal to change the world for the better. What is crooked can be made straight. That is the mentality and mantra of our four honorees this year. That is the deep belief of the Jewish people. That even when the world can feel hopeless, we choose *tikkun olam*, we choose hope.

SHABBAT SERVICE SCHEDULE

In person on Fridays at 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays at 8:00 a.m. where indicated.
All services at this time can also be viewed on Zoom. The link is sent out in our weekly email.

Friday, May 3

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Leviticus 16:1-18:30
Haftarah –
Ezekiel 22:1-19

Saturday, May 4

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Joshua
Kretz, son of David &
Carolyn Kretz

Friday, May 10

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Leviticus 19:1-20:27
Haftarah –Amos 9:7-15

Saturday, May 11

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast

9:30 a.m. Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Benjamin
Schechter, son of Adam &
Stephanie Schechter

Friday, May 17

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Leviticus 21:1-24:23
Haftarah –
Ezekiel 44:15-31

Saturday, May 18

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Geoffrey
Sklar, son of Hallie
Levine

Friday, May 24

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Haftarah –
Jeremiah 32:6-27

Saturday, May 25

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom

Friday, May 31

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Leviticus 26:3-27:34
Haftarah –
Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

Saturday, June 1

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Lilly
Pearlman, daughter of
Scott & Shari Pearlman

Our temple Caring Committee can provide rides to and from services to congregants in need of assistance.
If you are in need of a ride for Shabbat or another synagogue event, please reach out to Chris Rocha at
crocha@cbibpt.org, or call the temple office at 203-336-1858.

Congratulations to our Confirmation Class of 2024

We are thrilled to be able to join together on
Sunday, May 19 at 2:00 p.m. for our Confirmation Service

Brooke Dressler

Charley Halpern

Madeleine Enos

Beckett Liotta

Ephraim Weinstein

Congratulations to the Merkaz Graduating Class of 2024

Mazel Tov to Our B'nai
Israel Students!

Ben Feinstein

Lindsay Oberhand

Campbell Liotta

Reid Powning

Alison Markus

Benjamin Selter

Ethan Meltzer

The 2024 Merkaz Graduation
will be held at Mozaic Senior Life at 5:00 p.m.
on Sunday, June 2, 2024



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL INTERGENERATIONAL WOMEN'S PASSOVER SEDER

BY RABBI MARION

Nearly 200 women from the B'nai Israel community joined together on Sunday, April 7, for our annual intergenerational Women's Passover Seder. Together, we celebrated the power and potential of women, and we honored the women of the Passover story. Our seder this year held particular meaning and significance as it took place on the day marking exactly six months since the October 7th attacks. Each table at our seder paid tribute to one of the 14 remaining female hostages, Abby Leviss spoke about the Jewish National Fund's impactful work in Israel over these past several months, and Rabbi Miri Gold from Kibbutz Gezer in Central Israel joined us live, via Zoom, to offer special Passover reflections and greetings. The event was truly the result of so many coming together to share their time, efforts, energy, and passions. Thank you to all who sang, read, helped and volunteered in so many ways!





ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER

WE LOVE OUR TEACHERS!



As the school year comes to an end, (I can't believe it), it is time to say thank you to the amazing teachers in our Bonim Preschool, and Kehilah. National Teacher Appreciation Week is traditionally the first week in May. In Kehilah, we are celebrating it a bit early with a brunch on Sunday, April 28 and a Shabbat dinner and service on May 3. In Bonim Preschool we are celebrating it a bit late with a week of festivities from May 13–17, including breakfast, flower day, spa day, and a candy bar. The parent committees in both schools really know how to make the teachers feel special. We are so grateful to the co-chairs of these committees, (Sarah Fridman, Ilana Roby, and Jessica Cohen), for their tireless efforts to make sure all of the teachers in both schools have a present for their birthday, a holiday gift, and an end-of-the-year gift. The worker bees, (the class parents), are ones who collect money from parents and make sure everyone feels special. We are so lucky to have such an amazing group of parents who care so much about the programs and people of B'nai Israel.

Speaking of lucky, I consider myself to be the luckiest because I have the opportunity to work with such a loving and talented group of teachers in Kehilah and Bonim each year. Sure, they teach kids how to read Hebrew and celebrate the Jewish holidays in Kehilah and how to write their names or learn to crawl in Bonim, but the items that are not on their lesson plans are so much more important. Our teachers lead by example. So much of what kids learn from adults they learn through observation. When kids see adults treat other adults and children with respect, they learn that it is the right thing to do. Our teachers are educating not just their students, but also the families at B'nai Israel. Working with families to make sure that potty training is successful requires a partnership between

the teachers and the parents. Everyone must have open communication and clear expectations for the child to feel supported. A teacher sharing their own struggles with their child helps the parents feel supported and less alone when there are stumbling blocks. Similarly with older children, having a face-to-face meeting with their child's Kehilah teacher about learning issues and how the teacher can adapt the classroom lessons helps ensure that the child is set up for success. Really listening to what works for a particular child or when a child struggles with anxiety makes all the difference, and our teachers are "all in."

Being a teacher can sometimes be a thankless job: consoling a toddler as they are vomiting all over the school lobby

(true story) and don't understand what is happening, listening to a child who tells them that their parents are splitting up, waiting with that last child whose parent is late picking them up from school, and making the child feel comfortable. But then there is the joy of seeing a bright smile when a child builds a huge tower and is so proud to show you or when a little one brings over a book and plops in your lap to read them a story, or a Bet Mitzvah student shines and so proudly recites his Torah portion, knowing you are right there with them for moral support.

Being a teacher is so rewarding! Let's reward our teachers by celebrating them this month.

A good teacher can inspire
hope, ignite the
imagination, and instill
a love of learning.

BRAD HENRY

@weareteachers

MAY EVENTS

Support Israel by Adopting a Tree!

Are you looking for a meaningful way to support Israel right now? Congregation B'nai Israel has partnered with My Tree in Israel, an Israeli organization that works to directly support Israeli farmers. When you adopt a tree with My Tree in Israel, you will receive back a portion of their harvest. You can choose either private label olive oil, whiskey, or wine, which will be shipped directly to you from Israel. Additionally, a portion of your donation is donated back to B'nai Israel, as well as to lone soldiers. You can learn more about My Tree in Israel here: <https://www.mytree.org.il/partnership-1/congregation-b'nai-israel-ct>.

Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Dennis Ross

Spirituality in Our Relationships: Hiding in Plain Sight Tuesday, May 7, noon–1:00 p.m.

There's Jewish spirituality hiding in plain sight in the give-and-take between us. Rabbi Dennis Ross of Congregation Mishkan Israel will draw from his latest book, *A Year with Martin Buber/Wisdom from the Weekly Torah Portion*, to discuss spiritual opportunities that so often pass unnoticed.

A Year with Martin Buber was named a Top Ten Book by the Academy of Parish Clergy. Rabbi Ross is author of *God in Our Relationships: Spirituality between People from the Teachings of Martin Buber*, *When a Lie Is Not a Sin: The Hebrew Bible's Framework for Deciding (Jewish Lights)* and *All Politics Is Religious: Speaking Faith to the Media, Policy Makers and Community*. Rabbi Ross has written for *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Forward* and other publications.

Yom Hazikaron Service and Share Monday, May 13, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Join with fellow congregants as we observe Israel's Memorial Day together with a short service. The service will be followed by an open, safe space for congregants to share feelings, thoughts and emotions about Israel and one another's personal journey since October 7.

CBI Banned and Challenged Book Group Meetings

Join us for as many sessions as you can! All meetings will take place at B'nai Israel. We will be discussing each book together; participants are encouraged to read each book in advance.



All Boys Aren't Blue by George M. Johnson Thursday, May 16, 7:00 p.m.

Discussion led by Rabbi Marion and Cadence Pentheny from the Triangle Community Center.

The 2nd most challenged book of 2022 according to the ALA



Rosh Chodesh May/ Iyar Gathering Monday, May 20, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Join with women from across the B'nai Israel community as we celebrate the Hebrew month of Iyar. Women of all ages are welcome to participate; both current and prospective members are welcome. Watch your email and Hashavua for more information. If you have questions, please reach out to Rabbi Sarah at smarion@cibipt.org.

Kids Going to College? Come Share How You Are Feeling.

Tuesday, June 4, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Are your kids going to college this fall? Are you feeling worried? Nervous? Need a place to talk with other parents feeling similarly? Join with Rabbi Schultz for an open-space conversation for parents of high school seniors heading off to college in the fall. RSVP to bpribylek@cibipt.org.

Summer Lake Mohegan Dates!

June 21, July 19, August 16, 6:00 p.m.

We're thrilled to return to Lake Mohegan for three Shabbat Services this summer. Bring your beach chair and blanket as we welcome in Shabbat by the lake. This year's dates are June 21, July 19, and August 16. Services begin at 6:00 p.m.

Confirmation Info Session

Thursday, May 16, 8:30–9:30 p.m.
On Zoom

Join with Rabbi Schultz to learn more about our 10th-grade confirmation year at B'nai Israel. This is a wonderful year for 10th graders to connect with one another, build friendships, have open conversations about Jewish identity, and go on an incredible trip to Washington, D.C. RSVP to eschultz@cibipt.org for the Zoom link.



The B'nai Mental Health Awareness Team invites you to a Mental Health Awareness Shabbat



Join us for a Shabbat evening with
Dr. Tara Kerner
Friday, May 10, 2024

5:30 p.m. Oneg/Mental Health Literature Table

6-7:15 p.m. Shabbat Service with remarks by Dr. Kerner

7:15-8:15 p.m. Congregational Dinner

8:15 p.m. Post-dinner discussion with Dr. Kerner; "Mindful Shift: Employing behavioral change to manage depression"

Dinner is \$25 per person

RSVP required by May 8th; please sign up under events on ShulCloud or email Ilene at ifeuerberg@cibipt.org

Congregation B'nai Israel
2710 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604



MAY DONATIONS

(We greatly appreciate all donations to our special purpose funds.)

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

Steven & Natalie Fried, in memory of Duane Berlin, husband of Stacey, father of Carley & Taylor.

Sam & Cheryl Green, in loving memory of Irving Glazer.

Bernie & Janice Jacobs, in loving memory of Mary Jacobs, in loving memory of Sally Rosenblum.

Jack Kadden, in memory of Delmar Bogner, father of Jake Bogner.

George & Alice Kelly, in memory of mother Annette Kelly.

Alan & Sylvia Neigher, in memory of Stuart Schloss, husband of Geraldine Schloss.

David & Hillary Ortiz, in appreciation to Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Robert & Susan Rosenblitt, in loving memory of my beloved father Harry Weintraub; we will love you forever.

Harold Rosnick, in appreciation to my friend Eric Gross.

Naomi Schaffer & Roger Jackson, in loving memory of mother Brenda Levenson, and in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz.

Peter & Martha Small, in memory of Lilla Cooper; her memory will live on in our hearts.

Joseph & Leslie Varon, in appreciation for your thoughts, prayers and many kindnesses over the last few difficult months.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

Rhea Farbman, in loving memory of mom & dad, Bella Reichel Bocian Guzik & Morris Wolf Guzik.

Bernie & Janice Jacobs, in loving memory of Delmar Bogner, father of Jake Bogner.

David & Hillary Ortiz, in appreciation to Rabbi Sarah Marion.

Harold Rosnick, with thanks to my friend Eric Gross.

Naomi Schaffer & Roger Jackson, in loving memory of mom Brenda Levenson, and in appreciation to Rabbi Marion.

Richard, Rachel & Lee Sheiman, in loving memory of Gloria Sheiman.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Joseph & Louise Bobrow, in celebration of Cantor Harris's installation.

Gary & Gail Felberbaum, in celebration of the installation of and appreciation for Cantor Harris.

Milton Jacoby, in honor of Cantor Scott Harris's installation.

Dennis & Jan Magid, in appreciation to Cantor Scott Harris's installation, a wonderful evening of celebrating.

David & Hillary Ortiz, in appreciation to Cantor Scott Harris.

Harriet Polansky & Sandy Dakofsky, in honor of Cantor Scott Harris.

Naomi Schaffer & Roger Jackson, in loving memory of mom Brenda Levenson, and in appreciation to Cantor Harris.

Mark Schiff, in honor of the installation of Cantor Scott Harris.

Rabbi James Prosnit Discretionary Fund

Joseph & Leslie Varon, in appreciation for your thoughts, prayers and visit during this difficult time.

Music Fund

Robert & Carson Berkowitz, in memory of Brenda H. Levenson, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

Beth Brivic, in loving memory of Brenda Herskovitz Levenson, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

Judith Lessler, in appreciation to Cantor Harris for enriching our services.

Eric Pacelli & Sarah Tropp-Pacelli, in honor of Bands for B'nai.

Jonathan & Nancy Rosenthal, in memory of Naomi Schaffer's mother, Brenda Herskovitz Levenson.

Marcia Tubin & Martin Shmagin, in loving memory of Brenda Herskovitz Levenson, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

Enhancement Fund

Ilene Feuerberg, in memory of Duane Berlin, husband of Stacey and father of Carley & Taylor.

Jeff & Jackie Madwed, in loving memory of Duane Berlin.

David & Hillary Ortiz, in memory of Hillary's mother, Arlene Feldman.

Judy Zeisler, in loving memory of the yahrzeit of Jeff Zeisler.

CONECT thru Social Action Fund

Gary & Gail Felberbaum, in memory of Rosa Averbach, stepmother of Renee (Rick) Beitman & grandmother of Lauren & Sara; Brenda Herskovitz Levenson, mother of Naomi Schaffer (Roger Jackson).

Sylvia Prosnit Adult Education Fund

Jack & Sandy Germain, in loving memory of our son-in-law Duane Berlin.
Jeffrey A. Savelle, in memory of Brenda Levenson, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund

David & Judith Pressler, in memory of Marian Waxner, sister of Ilene (Steven) Kandler.

Rabbi Martin Library Fund

Barbara Rifkin, in memory of my great-grandmother Tiba Terry, grandparents Jeanette & Nathan Schine, and parents Eunice & Sidney Postol.

Religious School Enrichment Fund

Gerry & Andrea Kilroy, in honor of my dear cousin Scott Harris on your installation as cantor!

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

David Abbey & Deborah Goodman, in memory of Irving Abbey.

Robert & Carson Berkowitz, in memory of Arlene Bogner, mother of Jake Bogner, grandmother of Sophie.

Dennis & Jan Magid, in memory of the yahrzeit of Marc J. Berkman, father of Jan.

Randy & Beth Reich, in honor of Peter & Bonnie Stein's grandson Tyler becoming a Bar Mitzvah.

Daniel & Laurie Schopick, in memory of Sally Blatter, mother of Marge Krubiner.

MAY DONATIONS

(CONTINUED)

Francine Stein, in memory of my dear friend Lilla Cooper.

Robert & Susan Sussman, in loving memory of Norman Coleman.

Vision Loan Reduction Fund

Ellen Sheiman, in honor of Eric Gross, for all he does for the synagogue and the community.

Jim and Barbara Abraham Education Fund

Robert & Carson Berkowitz, in memory of Sally Blatter, mother of Marge Krubiner.

The George Markley Chesed Fund

Robert & Carson Berkowitz, in memory of Mirian Waxner, sister of Ilene Kandler.

Bruce & Laura Braverman, in memory of Mirian Waxner, sister of Ilene Kandler.

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in memory of Duane Berlin, husband of Stacey Berlin.

Jim & Lisa Greenberg, in memory of Delmar Bogner, father of Jake Bogner; in memory of Brenda HersHKovitz, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

Steven & Ilene Kandler, in loving memory of my sister, Marian Waxner.

Daniel & Lori Underberger, in memory of Naomi Schaffer's mom, Brenda HersHKovitz Levenson.

Alan Weinstein Scholarship Fund

Michael & Joni Greenspan, in memory of Stuart Schloss.

Gillette Judaic Enrichment Fund

Alan & Joan Newman, in memory of Duane Berlin, husband of Stacey, father of Carley & Taylor.

Peter & Karen Tolk, in loving memory of Henry Velenchik.

Yakhani Caring Fund

Janet Jurow, in memory of Naomi Schaffer's mother, Brenda Levenson.

Ellen Sheiman, to Louise Bobrow, wishing a speedy recovery and the best of health.

SPRING CELEBRATION TRIBUTE JOURNAL

Don't forget to get your
Tribute Journal entries in!

Deadline for entries is Friday, May 17.

SAVE THE DATE

Monday, June 10, for the 2024 annual
meeting of Congregation B'nai Israel
at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

All congregants welcome.

CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

At B'nai Israel we...

...TREAT each person in our community as created b'tzelem Elohim, in the image of the divine,

...DEVELOP, foster and nurture vibrant and meaningful Jewish lives in accordance with the values of our Torah and sacred texts,

...BUILD and deepen sacred relationships both within the synagogue community and the broader Greater Bridgeport community,

...ACT justly with a sacred obligation to tikkun olam (repair the world),

...FOSTER and deepen a love, commitment and connection to the land and people of Israel.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

BY BETH LAZAR, CO-CHAIR OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TEAM

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. Here at B'nai Israel, we have had the Mental Health Awareness Team operating year-round for the last two years. Our mission is "to fight stigma by bringing awareness to mental health issues and advocating for better access to mental health services." We seek to implement our mission through education:

1. An article about mental health in each B'nai Israel monthly bulletin.
2. Mental health awareness informational literature tables.
3. Presenting speakers, films, and field trips about the issue of mental health to B'nai Israel and the community at large.

The words "mental" and "mentally ill" are often used as pejoratives to describe someone you disagree with or who you think is evil or violent. Compare how the word "Jew" became a pejorative with how the words "mental" and "mentally ill" became pejoratives. In both cases, it is due to ignorance, fear of the unknown, stereotyping, and discrimination. To many people, the word "Jew" is synonymous with "greedy" or "miserly," as in the saying "Jew him down" when making a business deal or "dirty Jew" when discussing someone you don't like. Some Jews have dealt with these attitudes by making their Judaism invisible, hiding their true identity and using a euphemism such as "Hebrew" rather than Jew as an ethnic identity. The way to tackle this problem is head-on. Let your friends, networks, and community know you are a Jew, that Jews are like any other ethnic group — most people of any ethnic group are good, some are bad.

Likewise, many people use the words "mental" and "mentally ill" to describe those they disagree with, such as political opponents, Nazi racists, and perpetrators of gun violence and mass shootings. Due to all this negativity and the stereotypes

associated with mental illness, many people who have a mental illness are afraid to speak up or seek help. In fact, mentally ill people come in all different political persuasions, nationalities, races and genders. Mental illness is not the cause of mass shootings. To the contrary, mentally ill people are two and a half times more likely to be victims of violent crime compared to the general public. Mental illness is all over the world, yet only in the United States are there so many mass shootings. This is due to the proliferation of easy access to military-style guns. In truth, there is nothing shameful or evil about being mentally ill. It is because of ignorance, fear, stereotyping, and stigma, that the words "mental" and "mentally ill" are used as pejoratives. The way to tackle this problem is head-on. Mental health advocates and people with mental

illness and their families need to speak up to their community. Let them know that mental illness is an illness like any other and should be treated as such. Mental illness is not a character flaw.

Hopefully, during this Mental Illness Awareness Month, members of B'nai Israel will show the same passion and enthusiasm for fighting the stigma of mental illness as we do in combatting antisemitism. Please attend Mental Health Awareness Team events at B'nai Israel during May and year-round. Friday night, May 10, is Mental Health Awareness Shabbat. Services will be followed by a dinner and guest speaker Dr. Tara Kerner, a psychiatrist and fellow congregant.



Congregation
B'nai Israel
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The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel is published every month except July.

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Congregation B'nai Israel, founded in 1858, seeks to be a vibrant Reform synagogue dedicated to the perpetuation of Jewish life and values within the framework of contemporary American Judaism. We are a gateway to Judaism for all. The Congregation B'nai Israel Bulletin publishes monthly 11 times a year (except July). To submit an article, announcement or ad to the Bulletin, please contact Co-Editors, Amy Pressman at apressman@cbibpt.org or Lauren Tropp at ltropp@cbibpt.org. Submissions are due by the first day of the month preceding the publication month. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for length or style.

KESHER CORNER

Family — that's what we're all about. When you haven't seen someone you care about for a while and you come together heart to heart, suddenly you are both beaming and so happy.

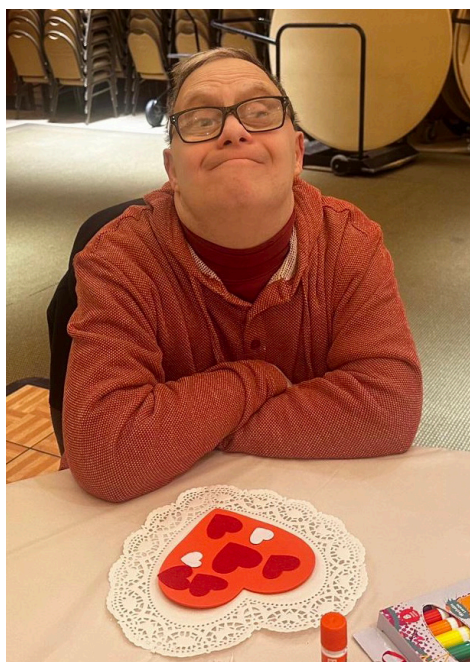
Every event is filled with this fiery energy to create, sing, dance, and snack with each other. You are invited to join us at B'nai Israel on any of the following dates from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m.: May 16, June 27, and July 25. We welcome you to be uplifted by our Keshet family.

We have good news to share. Our drama troupe, the "Keshet Players," will perform our first original play, *Our Beautiful World*, in late June or July. We are reaching out to perform for others in and beyond our B'nai Israel community. Please let us know if you can suggest an audience.

Donations are always welcome. We are looking for funding for "Keshet Players" t-shirts.

We welcome your questions and suggestions.

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CARING COMMITTEE

The B'nai Israel Caring Committee makes shiva calls to our members and drops off meals and challah to those who are ill, bereaved, or overwhelmed. We also bring meals to members who are new parents. We make calls and visits to those members who may be homebound and could use some company. We drive members to services for those who are unable to drive.

The committee is always looking for volunteers. Even if you can only do one of these mitzvot a single time, or maybe just a few times a year, we welcome your help.

If you know of anyone who would like or need any of these services, please let us know.

We are here to help the B'nai Israel community.

Thank you.

Jim Grutzmacher:
jamesgrutz@gmail.com

Sara Laden:
sara.laden1988@gmail.com

Co-Chairs of the B'nai Israel Caring Committee

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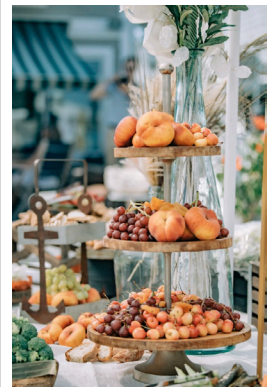
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WHO ARE THE TIKKUN OLAM TRAILBLAZERS?

THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WILL BE HONORED
AT THE B'NAI ISRAEL SPRING CELEBRATION ON JUNE 14TH.

Debbie Goodman

started volunteering for St. John's and Operation Hope 15 years ago. For most of this time, she has shopped for both soup kitchens and has cooked, delivered, and served meals. She has been the coordinator of this program for the last four years and was part of the original "meat loaf team" who met regularly in the B'nai Israel kitchen to cook, schmooze, and package meatloaf to serve at St. John's. During covid, things shifted and Debbie began purchasing and delivering packaged sandwiches and other goodies to the food kitchens. Debbie works with a dedicated committee of volunteers who now meet regularly to prepare roast chicken for St. John's. She also has been very involved with our Reproductive Justice team and with the voting rights initiatives through CONECT.

Sherry Portnoy

has been a member of the Caring Committee, which she says is a committee closest to her heart, for 24 years. She drives members to appointments, shopping, services for both Shabbat and holidays, and any program that they want to attend and cannot get to on their own. She spends her free time visiting the homebound and members who are in the hospital or live in senior housing. She prepares meals for families who are going through challenging circumstances or just need a little support. Sherry is also a shiva minyan participant

and sends condolence notes and makes phone calls regularly. Sherry can always be counted on to bake, shop, and clean up for almost every program at the synagogue. She is thoroughly entrenched in synagogue life and, unless she is away visiting her parents in Florida, you will find her handing out candy at the end of services on Friday night — she will always remember your favorites and makes sure the basket is stocked, just for you!

Jeff Schwartz

has been the co-chair of CONECT with Emily Lehrman since 2017. Their program, 2 Books, 2 Films received the Irving J. Fain Award from the URJ's Religious Action Center (RAC). CONECT has continued the book and film discussions over the last eight years and has done interfaith work with congregations in Fairfield & New Haven counties on issues such as Clean Slate, gun control and equity in education. Jeff is also the co-chair — with Barbara Edinberg — of the B'nai Israel Voting Team that began with voter registration during the summer of 2018 and has continued every year through this fall with voter registration, "postcarding" to underrepresented voters, outreach to pass the Early Vote Bill, and collaboration this year with the Reproductive Team on ballot issues on this topic. For the last two years, Jeff has also been a member of the leadership team of the

RAC — last year helping to organize congregations to advocate for the Power of Purpose (environmental justice) and this year's Every Voice Every Vote campaign.

Nina Silberman

began shadowing Shari Nerreau at Mitzvah Morning programs seven years ago and took over as co-chair in 2018 with Danielle Forma and then with Mitch Weinstein after that. As a vice president on the Board of Trustees, Nina helped to expand the Tikkun Olam Program from three independent programs to a group of programs under one umbrella with the guidance of Rabbi Marion. Nina mentors committee chairs, sends out a monthly announcement to publicize everyone's hard work, and has been instrumental in adding the Tikkun Olam Committee bulletin board near the office. She is proud to work with so many generous congregants and volunteers who regularly give of their time to support our social action and social justice programs: Mitzvah Mornings, CONECT, Operation Hope/St. John's meals, Reproductive Justice, Eco-Justice, ADL, Kulanu, Voting Rights, the Caring Committee, the Mental Health Awareness Committee, and the CBI/CIRI Refugee committee. Nina was also instrumental in bringing the Shmira program to B'nai Israel and in helping to launch the George Markley Chesed Special Purpose Fund.



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BIFTY



BIFTY, B'nai Israel's high school youth group, is looking forward to our final programs of the year! All CBI teens in grades 8–12 are invited to join BIFTY. We meet on Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the BIFTY lounge. To stay up to date on events, follow us on Instagram @cbi.bifty and ask to join our text group.

Our May events are:

May 9 — Join us at Mind Factory Escape Games in Bridgeport for an Escape Room! We will meet at 6:00 p.m. at Mind Factory, and our program will conclude at 8:00 p.m.

May 16 — Bring your artistic talents to Bob Ross Paint Night!

May 23 — Wrap up a great year of BIFTY as we participate in a mashup of our favorite activities at the Best of BIFTY!