

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

SPRING 2015
by Norwin Merens
Membership Vice President

Elly Bauman



As 2015 unfolds, the Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah community is getting to know its new executive director, Elly Bauman. She officially assumed this position on December 22, 2014 succeeding our revered congregant and long-time synagogue leader, Bruce M. Hershman, who functioned as BHCBE's executive director for nearly six years. We wish Bruce and his wife, Eunice all the best in their retirement, and know they will remain active in synagogue life.

Recently, Elly took the time to answer the following questions. In part, her responses provide the framework for how she plans to direct BHCBE, manage the synagogue office, and interact with clergy, lay leadership, congregants and our North Shore community.

Getting to Know Elly Bauman

She grew up in East Brunswick, New Jersey and graduated from the University of Albany with an undergraduate degree in sociology and Judaic studies. Elly then earned a master's degree in educational administration from New York University. After moving and working in Buffalo, New York, she returned to New York City where she earned a master's degree in Jewish education from The Jewish Theological Seminary.

Elly and her family relocated to Skokie, Illinois in September 2014. She and her husband, David, have two sons, Matan and Ori. In her leisure time, she enjoys cooking, reading, traveling and spending time with her family.

What first interested you about the BHCBE executive director position?

Working in synagogue management for the past 15 years has been very rewarding. As an education director, I was responsible for all administrative and curricula issues regarding the synagogue school. In the last four years, I became attracted to the administrative end of my position. As my family transitioned to our new home in Skokie, I wanted to use my skills and abilities in a new way. When I initially saw the executive director position advertised, I was immediately pulled toward applying. I viewed the opportunity as a way to combine my love of administration and synagogue/nonprofit management.

What qualifications do you bring to your new job? What are some of your goals?

First, is my experience working in synagogues since 2000. I have come to understand how synagogues run and how the executive director plays a key role in the success of the organization. Second, I bring the experience of working with other professional staff on a management team as well as serving as the liaison to many lay-lead committees. These experiences will help me relate to all of BHCBE's stakeholders and allow me to bridge any gaps between the professional staff and lay leaders. Finally, I bring my administrative experience that includes supervising staff, program planning, developing marketing materials and nonprofit fiscal management.

As I begin this position, some of my goals include building relationships with the staff and lay leadership. Secondly, evaluating what systems are in place to ensure that BHCBE is working succinctly and responsibly. Finally, I would like to significantly expand our building's use for outside events and parties through a concerted marketing campaign.

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What are your expectations of this position?

My objective is to work successfully with both our lay leaders and professional staff. I expect to be the point person for all areas of synagogue management as I work to integrate everyone's concerns. In addition, I hope to have the support of the congregants as I continue learning and working to make any changes, which will lead to more productivity and synergy of programming and management.

What about the position would be the most challenging for you?

The most challenging aspect of this position is putting names and faces together for as many congregants as I can. I trust everyone will be patient as I slowly learn names and faces. Change is always difficult — I hope people will come to embrace the new ideas I will try implement as I begin to learn more about BHCBE and work toward adding my own stamp to the office of executive director.

How do you believe you will best contribute to BHCBE's future growth/vitality?

I plan to contribute through my management style. By organizing and staying on top of the calendar and programs, we will be able to advertise and plan our programs more efficiently. This will send a message to the community of who we are and what we are about. With my years of experience at various synagogues in New York City, Toronto, and most recently, Scotch Plains, New Jersey, I plan to offer new ideas for programming, fundraising and management that can benefit BHCBE.

How will you work/interact with clergy members, staff, lay leaders and congregants?

Since I have been here, I have instituted weekly staff meetings with the office staff. During these meetings, we review the upcoming week to ensure everything is prepared and all the staff knows what is coming up. In addition, I attend weekly meetings with the clergy and youth director to coordinate programming and other synagogue-wide issues. I feel the most important part of my job is building relationships with the clergy staff and lay leaders. We are all players on the same team and the more we work together the better BHCBE will be. I will try to be present at meetings and events so people can get to know me.

What are your initial impressions of BHCBE after your first several weeks on the job?

I am very impressed with the level of volunteerism that exists at BHCBE. The Shabbat community that exists here at the synagogue is also very impressive. It is a testament to the love people have for BHCBE by supporting weekly services, programs and volunteering to help make these events all run smoothly.

In what areas do you feel you will need further education/training?

I am always learning and enhancing my skills. To that end, I began an online certificate program in nonprofit management from Molloy College in New York. The program consists of eight 12-week classes, that focus on the issues an executive director needs to be most knowledgeable. In the next few months, I plan to continue taking classes in fiscal management, marketing and governance.

