

Kraus/Smolovar Fundraising Kiddush
TBZ June 18, 2011

If it takes a village to run a synagogue, and it does, you are very fortunate indeed if Larry Kraus & Sarah Smolovar are part of that village. If they did nothing more than bring us Aaron, Micah & Adina – dayenu.

Individually, together, and as a beautiful family of five, the Kraus Smolover clan, with their steady presence here in the sanctuary every Shabbat, embodies the spirit of TBZ.

Today we are honoring two outstanding members of an outstanding shul. Let me speak for a moment about each of them. I'll start with Sara.

When TBZ in its new incarnation came on the scene about 13 years ago, one of its unofficial hallmarks was that it was an “adult shul”. That model can work for a while, but there is an inevitable problem with that scenario, and Sara was one of the first to challenge it.

Sara had a bug in her bonnet – otherwise known around here as “having a vision”. She wanted a Shabbat centered community, and she wanted children & families to be an integral part of that community. So she set about creating it.

To help encourage others, Sara, with Kim Myers & Marilyn Paul, wrote and circulated a lively, informative article filled with tips for making a weekly shul experience work for young children. They called it, *“A Guide to the Perplexed”*.

Along with Rav Claudia and Jane Daniels, her extraordinary co-chair of the Yeladim committee from 2008 -2010, Sara helped create the blueprint for a TBZ transformed by inclusiveness of our youngest members.

Sara co-chaired the second, enlarged family retreat. Every High Holiday, she chanted for us, filling our sanctuary with the voice of an angel. And let's not forget all those hamantashen – even before this Kiddush, Sarah has been responsible for a lot of “dough” at TBZ.

SARA- For all of this, and so much more, we thank you.

A few years ago when Jonathan approached me to join him as co-president, there was only one condition. I'd do it as long as Larry was planning to stay on as chair of the TBZ Board. Being a board member with Larry as chair is like being a passenger in a car with an excellent driver. You can relax and enjoy the view. On every complex issue, it is Larry's sound opinion I seek out.

At monthly board meetings, Larry's stable, fair, even-tempered manner was the constant that kept even the most fiery issues contained. And no matter how confusing or unsettling some of those conversations were at times, Larry had a way of almost imperceptibly managing the discussion, and then wrapping things up with a reminder that we were making progress and the process was good.

It was both enormously comforting, and, once articulated, it was clear that it really was so.

With three young children, a wife and a demanding career, Larry took on a major leadership role and held it for 6 years.

I was and am in awe of his dedication.

When an 8 o'clock meeting ended at 10:30 at night, you knew Larry had already put in a full day at the office, run home for supper and family time, and would be back at his desk sending shul emails into the wee hours. That is commitment in action.

And consistent with a shul founded by Reb Moshe, Larry's wit, humor and light touch were completely in keeping with the ethos of "serious does not have to mean solemn".

The former chairman of our board is one who chooses so often to stand in the rear of the sanctuary to greet each us as we enter on Shabbat; who chants Torah or serves as gabbai whenever needed; who has chopped vegetables in the kitchen for Kiddush; and who never misses an opportunity to put on a skirt for our amusement.

LARRY- For all of this, and so much more, we thank you.