

**Committee Reports for the Congregation's Annual Meeting**  
**May 17, 2021**  
**For the fiscal year July 2020 to June 2021**

**Adult Education Committee:**

Submitted by Jenny Pariser

Despite the pandemic, the Adult Education Committee had a busy year. All of our programs were offered online, often attracting more attendees than we typically host in-person. We also responded to many current events in the world, with programs about race and diversity, the 2020 presidential election, and the evolving situation in the Middle East.

Rabbi Jaffe taught a series considering what the Bible has to tell us about responding to hate and disinformation. Billy Planer, Founder of Etgar36 Social Justice Trips, helped us to be comfortable having uncomfortable conversations around race. Dr. Allison Briscoe-Smith, a clinical psychologist who specializes in trauma and race, taught us how to move from intentions to results in diversity and inclusion. Our Laster Lecture featured Ilana Kaufman, Director of the Jews of Color Initiative, looking at who counts as Jews in the context of people of color. The Bader Lecture featured Rabbi David Ellenson (former President of HUC) who offered a two-part series on diversity and the Holocaust. Dr. Steven Windmueller of HUC joined us to explain the motivations of Jewish voters and polling expert Ben Tulchin broke down the trends and told us what to expect during the 2020 election. Rabbi Cohen taught a series entitled "The 14 Hinenis: Expanding our Willingness to Limit Ourselves and Respond to Others". Finally, we invited journalist Ben Sales of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency to help sort out the situation in Israel and Gaza right now.

We hope you enjoyed our programs and look forward to next year. If you have any program suggestions, please contact me at [jpariser@gmail.com](mailto:jpariser@gmail.com).

**Caring Committee:**

Submitted by Penny Hamlet

The Caring Committee continues its mission to support families during 'Life Cycle Events'. Providing meals for Shiva, supporting families through the loss of a loved one, planting trees in memory and in honor of temple members, celebrating the joy of a new baby and arranging driving assistance to congregants in need.

This year due to COVID, it was not possible to provide in person support, however we made phone calls of condolence, sent baby gifts and planted trees in Israel in honor of members who have passed away.

We are planning to schedule our Books Bring Comfort project in the fall.

Donations of new books for adults and children will be donated to an organization or program that would benefit from these donations. In the past the Westchester Medical Center's Caregiver Program was one such recipient.

Being involved on this committee enables our co-chairs and over 20 volunteers to give back and support our temple community.

### **COVID Task Force:**

Submitted by Rhonda Regan

In response to the global pandemic Beth El quickly formed our COVID Task Force in March 2020. In the very beginning the task force was a small group with temple leaders, health care professionals and our professional staff. The directive was to make swift decisions based on the guidelines presented from the governing bodies in order to create a safe environment for our congregation. In the 18 months since the formation, the task force diversified and expanded, forming sub-groups that covered our Early Childhood Center, Religious School, Worship, and Summer Activities. Each sub-group met at least monthly to review new information from the medical community, as well as ever changing guidelines, and logistics in order to create recommendations. The COVID task force also met at least monthly, and sometimes weekly, to review recommendations and outline protocols and plans as our environment changed.

This has been a year like no other and the COVID Task Force, along with the sub-groups, have been able to guide our congregation through it by setting practical protocols and clear communication. Our ECC has been open all year in person. Our Religious School opened in the fall holding all programming in person outdoors and in our tent city, then shifted to online learning for the winter, and completed the school year back in person in the building and outside. Our Friday night worship services have remained online, however we are thrilled to now roll out in person, monthly services in person for the summer. Our B'nei Mitzvah services were brought back into the building in late August, if a family desired. This summer we hope to offer a few in person programs for the members. And finally, our High Holy Day sub-group is back at work figuring out the very difficult task of how we may be able to return to the building in September.

At our Gala this year we honored the members of our COVID Task Forces for all their hard work, sticking to our main goal of keeping our congregation safe.

### **ECC Committee:**

Submitted by Lisa Crandall

The majority of our focus on the preschool committee this past year has been COVID. We had several meetings throughout the year, discussing such areas as summer programs/camp, virtual shabbat celebrations, how to engage new families, and

generally how to manage all these things within the larger context of COVID. Discussions also included tuition and registration, drop off and pick up procedures, playground playdates for new families, buddy systems, and teacher appreciation. Though COVID posed a major challenge for Hope and staff this year, incredible efforts and planning helped to mitigate the circumstances and the school year ran successfully without any closures of the ECC. The parent feedback and involvement on this committee was especially valued and appreciated. In spite of the difficulties everyone contributed to this success.

### **ECC Parent Committee:**

Submitted by Vanessa Baker and Val Robbins

In spite of our unusual circumstances, the ECC Parents Committee worked hard this year to maintain and strengthen the bonds within our community. Comprised of five subcommittees along with our class parents, new family buddies and Chesed volunteer, the ECC Parents Committee truly involves the entire school.

Due to the COVID housing market, we welcomed more new families than any year in recent memory. We continued our program pairing new families with a buddy to help ease the transition into the ECC, and also more generally from city to suburb. When weather permitted, Class Parents planned socially distant events, Heather Feig led a mask chain making workshop on the front patio, and the Working Moms group gathered in our courtyard. During the colder months, we held zoom challah making and knitting workshops.

We chose Blythedale Children's Hospital as this year's tzedakah box recipient, and have raised over \$800 to date, almost triple the usual yearly amount. We also collected diapers and wipes for 914 Cares and art supplies for seniors at the New Jewish Home.

We surprised our teachers with small tokens of our gratitude throughout the year and recently held a modified Teacher Appreciation Lunch. Our Chesed volunteer, Michelle Dinenberg, sent cards or a meal when an ECC family experienced a birth, death or other life event. The Fours parents created a beautiful keepsake book in lieu of the full school yearbook, and are in the midst of planning a beautiful Growing Up ceremony to end the year.

### **House Committee:**

Submitted by: Gregg Diller & Stephanie Saltzman

After a pause of several months due to COVID, the house committee was able to bring many projects to completion:

- Using funds from a security grant from NYS security planters were installed outside the TBE lobby entrance and had evergreen shrubs planted in them.
- Our project to build cabinetry in the sanctuary entrance that will display a collection of Judaica and also replace the folding tables that currently greet our

members was approved and funded by a member donation. The new cabinetry is being built and will be installed later this spring.

- After the repaving of the parking lot was put on hold it was given a green light and repairs were completed in March. Repaving is scheduled for in the weeks between school and camp
- A group of members generously agreed to fund re-staining the siding of both building. This project will be scheduled over the summer.

### **Religious School Committee:**

Submitted by: Jill Liebman & Pam Goldfarb

Despite the challenges that COVID created this year, the Religious School Committee had a very successful and robust school year. The Committee acts as a parent liaison between Rabbi Linzer and Heather Satin and the Religious School families. We are a sounding board for various ideas that Rabbi Linzer and her team are looking to roll out, and we also organize many Religious School events and fundraisers throughout the year. This year the Religious School had a total of 354 total students enrolled, as well as 41 Madrichim (our teen teachers), which is quite remarkable during such an unusual school year. The Madrichim especially played vital roles in the classroom this year, as they were perfect technological support staff to help guide our teachers in the virtual classroom throughout parts of the year.

While the school year was definitely different, the amount of learning that went on in the classroom stayed the same. Rabbi Linzer and Heather Satin did an amazing job of pivoting the structure of Religious School given the global pandemic, and they did so with the help of the Religious School COVID Task force, which was a new initiative. The task force met virtually several times throughout the course of the year, and during these meetings we were a sounding board for Rabbi Linzer and Heather to help them strategize and receive parent opinions regarding their ideas. In order to keep our students safe, the Religious School adopted a hybrid learning model, which was well received and highly effective. When the weather was warm enough in the fall, the Religious School adopted a 'camp model' and held class in person, however, it was all outside and in tents. Throughout the cold winter months, we pivoted seamlessly to the virtual classroom. For the older grades, the Seesaw platform was used as a way to submit school work, and our teachers went through various training sessions throughout the year to support them through the changes and challenges that this school year brought with it. The students seemed to adapt well to this new way of learning, and enjoyed the classroom experience whether it was in person or virtual.

The Religious School Committee met virtually approximately five times throughout the year. The committee is also broken down further into subcommittees. The Fundraising Committee was led by Meryl Lefkowitz, and she organized yet another hugely successful Mishloach Manot Purim Fundraiser. Not only did we raise over \$14,800, our largest amount to date, but we performed a mitzvah of bringing the community together by sending each other 'gifts'. It helped lift spirits during a very difficult year. The

Publicity subcommittee, led by Alex Potashner, submitted articles for each issue of the Ladder, showcasing all the special events and fundraisers that the Religious School students participated in over the course of the year, even if those events were virtual. Lastly, the Social Committee was busy planning four different 'Shabbat To Go' dinners for our congregation as a way to support local businesses while strengthening our community engagement. The various Shabbat dinners were prepared by Falafel Taco, Le Jardin Du Roi and Ben's Kosher Deli. They were all hugely successful, and a big hit among many congregants. And while dinner was being enjoyed, Shabbat services were virtually attended. This was a fun and different way to bring community members together while supporting local restaurants who are suffering because of the Pandemic. And as an added bonus, many enjoyed not having to cook their Shabbat meal!

Lastly, despite not being able to physically be together to celebrate Jewish holidays like we have in the past, the Religious School was creative and pivoted many of those celebrations to a virtual platform, along with help from the parents who gathered the various materials or foods needed for the celebration. Some examples were the Tu B'shevat seder (a fruit seder), our virtual Chanukah lighting, and the chocolate Passover Seder, which was especially very well received by our students. Who doesn't love marshmallows dipped in chocolate at 10 o'clock in the morning?! It was wonderful to keep the celebrations and community spirit alive, even virtually.

### **Tikkun Olam Committee:**

Submitted by: Diane Thaler

The Tikkun Olam committee continued to hold mitzvah programs each month this year; due to Covid, many of these events were collection drives. Thankfully our congregation has been very receptive and generous and all our programs have been very successful.

To meet the needs of the greater community that had lost their jobs and now needed food, we held food drives on several months for the Northern Westchester Community Center in Katonah.

When possible, we had programs to benefit the same groups we had in the past, although the programs looked different:

- We collected Thanksgiving and Passover food to donate.
- We had our traditional Souper Bowl Sunday where people made soup kits for home bound seniors in the Bronx. Instead of gathering in person to do this, we had a zoom so people could make their kits together while also answering super bowl trivia.
- We also had a Zoom for people to make no-sew blankets to donate to the Linus Project. Everyone played Name That Tune while cutting and tying their blanket.
- Congregants also made and donated bagged lunches to a food bank in Yonkers,
- We helped clean up New Castle on the town clean-up day and
- We planted flowers at the temple to bring a bit of color to the parking lot.

Come June we will again hold another food drive and begin working on our plans for the upcoming year.