

ELLIOT BERNSTEIN

Candidate for: Director

How have you been involved in the shul past and present?

I have been a member of Shaare Tefillah for the past four and a half years. If elected, this will be my first official position of leadership for the shul.

How will you be an asset for the Board?

Leadership has always been a part of my life. In college, I served as a Vice President for the Rutgers University Hillel, which served a religiously diverse community of thousands of Jewish students. Upon moving to Teaneck, I served for two years on the board of Congregation Ahavat Shalom, the shul of the Teaneck apartments, first as head of the Ritual Committee and then as Treasurer. In my professional life, I serve as a Director in a healthcare procurement company, responsible for leading a group of associates to help our clients improve financial outcomes.

I believe that in order to be a good leader, one must be willing to listen carefully to the people s/he is serving and always be sure that the community's interests are first and foremost beyond oneself. One must also be willing to get his/her hands dirty and be willing to do all the work necessary, no matter how small the details may be. I have always prided myself as a good listener, as someone who is even tempered, and as someone who is always willing to work hard, both in my professional and personal life. I will bring these traits to the Board and will ensure that all the work needed to enhance our community is seen through to completion.

What challenges do you see ahead for the shul and how will you help face them?

I have witnessed firsthand the tremendous chesed this shul brings to the community. The shul and the community welcomed my family and me with open arms and has always been there for us in times of good and bad. It is important to ensure that the shul is able to continue to provide for the community as it has for my family and, therefore, we must make sure the shul maintains financial stability. The shul recently lost its weekday tenant, and I understand this has created an issue in terms of revenue. The challenge I foresee is ensuring the shul is able to maintain its budget while, at the same time, not completely burdening the membership to make up for any revenue shortfalls. This is going to require creativity in coming up with new ideas of how to earn revenue and making smart spending choices. I look forward to collaborating with the members of the Board and greater community to ensure we are able to maintain our status as one of the most welcoming shuls in Bergen County.

Where do you see the shul five years from now and how do we get there?

I want Shaare Tefillah and the Phelps Park neighborhood to be the shul and community of choice for families looking to move to Teaneck and the greater North Jersey area. When a family is thinking of where they want to settle, I want them to visit our shul and neighborhood first before investigating any other community, because that family knows of the tremendous reputation Shaare Tefillah has. I would love to see our membership expand to even greater percentages than since we joined the shul four and a half years ago. To get there, we must build upon the already-impressive reputation we have by enhancing the services we offer to the community, ensuring that we continue to be a warm and heimish shul for all, and making sure that all who attend shul, both young and old, are comfortable and happy coming to shul each week.

