



TZEDAKAH/TIKKUN OLAM PROJECTS

*You are not required to complete the work,
but neither are you free to desist from it.*

— Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot

We know there are myriad organizations that do incredible work and are always looking for volunteers. Students are free to work with whatever organization they choose for their *tzedakah/tikkun olam* project.

Below are some ideas to get you started. (Please note that sometimes contact information changes.)

Chicken Soupers: One Sunday a month the Chicken Soupers meet at Beth Am to cook meals to deliver to homebound elderly and others in need. Volunteers are always needed to help with both cooking and delivery. No cooking skills are needed. A great project for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and a parent.

Contact: Celeste, chickensoupers@betham.org

Computer Buddies: A great project for the computer savvy Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child. We are partnering with Senior Residents of the Moldaw Senior Residence to help Senior Citizens use computers. Training in skype, email, photo sharing, video chat, and more. Allow a senior to stay in better contact with his/her family.

Contact: Terry Sand, tsand@moldaw.org

Ecumenical Hunger Project: Beth Am has a long running partnership with the Ecumenical Hunger Project (EHP) in East Palo Alto. Volunteers offer a range of services, from packing food boxes, interviewing clients, sorting food and clothing, and data entry. EHP also has a garden that is in need of love and support for those who like to get their hands dirty. Finally, EHP is always looking for donations of food items and toiletries for those wanting to do a drive around the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Contact: Wendy, innvision@betham.org

Support our Jewish Troops: A Bar and Bat Mitzvah Project for Our Jewish Troops has been launched by JWB Jewish Chaplains Council. It is designed to create awareness among members of the Jewish community about the 10,000 Jews who are on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces often serving far away in dangerous places. Jews in the military face religious isolation and with your help the JWB supplies them with what they need to observe *Shabbat*, Jewish holidays and more.

Contact: www.jcca.org/jwb

Letter Writing/Advocacy: Write to (or organize a campaign) to advocate for an important social or political issue. The Religious Action Center has a list of various issues with connections to Jewish Values.

Contact: www.rac.org

B'nei Mitzvah Partnerships: For students who choose, Beth Am participates in two worthwhile and meaningful partnership projects.

- (1) Remember Us Holocaust Project:** A Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is “paired” with one of the 1.5 million children who perished during the *Shoah*. During the B'nei Mitzvah process, the student learns about that child and participates in acts of remembrance, such as doing mitzvot b'shem (in the name of the child) and saying *Kaddish*.

Contact: Mike Kalb, michael.kalb@sbcglobal.net

- (2) Beth Am of Poltava Ukraine:** We support our sister Congregation, Beth Am Poltava, a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, financially and spiritually. The B'nei Mitzvah project partners the Beth Am (California) student with a student in the Ukraine. We pair individuals and use Webcams and Skype to facilitate communication opportunities, allowing our students to share the skills and knowledge that helps the young person in Poltava embrace their Jewish life with gusto. There is a small financial commitment for this project that goes to support the Poltava congregation.

Contact: Cherie Half, cghalf@att.net

A note on giving *tzedakah* and gift cards: Jewish sources promote the idea of financial contributions to *tzedakah*. We encourage every B'nei Mitzvah family to discuss the responsibility of giving a fixed percentage (usually around 10%) of monetary B'nei Mitzvah gifts to *tzedakah*. We find these are wonderful conversations to have as a family. Furthermore, many organizations find gift cards (Best Buy, REI, Macys, Movie Theaters, etc.) to be the perfect gifts for needy teens for birthdays and holidays. EHP is an organization that provides these holiday gifts to numerous teens and families in need.