

CONGREGATION OLAM TIKVAH

# CONTEMPORARY

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2022



JOY IN OUR COMMUNITY

## **Training for the High Holidays**

Get Ready with Elul at OT

## **Spotlights:**

Men's Club/ABBA  
Meet the OT Green Initiative



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SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2022



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: RENEWAL AT OT

We constantly find renewal. The turning of the seasons and Jewish New Year provide this for our spirits. Some years it seems mundane, while other years it is a crucial lifeline. Sometimes renewal finds us.

Our dynamic and growing community is also constantly in a state of renewal. In the past year, we created a new Green initiative, giving us a new focus on our responsibility to our environment. The Farmer's Market Gleaning has nearly doubled its participants reflecting our community's desire for Tikkun Olam during this challenging economic time. And somehow there's time for joy — one of our members has written a children's book, inspired by finding joy in the holidays through

the children in our lives.

Is this your year to look for renewal? Perhaps you might engage with the groups highlighted in this issue or make new friends at OT this year. While this issue takes a look at a few of them, our website has the full list.

**Marnie Fienberg,**  
Communications Chair

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# TRAINING FOR THE 5783 HIGH HOLIDAYS

BY ERIN DREYFUSS



**D**id you know you're about to start a marathon? Rosh Hashanah begins Sunday evening, September 25, starting off the marathon month of Tishrei, with big holidays each week. Starting with Rosh Hashanah, we celebrate the New Year 5783, fast and reflect on the past year during Yom Kippur, dwell in our Sukkot under a starry sky, and in the home stretch, dance with the Torah on Simchat Torah.

Thankfully, our Jewish year has a built-in "warm-up" time: the month of Elul. Elul is the month preceding Rosh Hashanah. It serves to awaken us to

the possibilities of the New Year and shifts our thinking toward reflection and repentance. Elul allows us time to pause and take stock of where we are spiritually, so that we can enter the High Holidays truly prepared to meet the moment and approach the High Holidays, not as an exhausting exercise, but as a way to improve our overall spiritual health for the year.

Over the past two years, we have used the opportunities for reflection and connection that Elul presents in new ways at Olam Tikvah. The early days of the pandemic radically changed the ways we could engage with each other and with Jewish life, but we seized upon the first Elul

of the pandemic to reflect on the world around us and how we could move forward in our Jewish lives and spaces into a New Year. In 2020 and 2021, Elul at OT became a communal time of preparation.

We kneaded and braided apple cinnamon round challah outside, learning new skills for the New Year. We donated a record amount of food to ECHO, surpassing our previous donations in both 2020 and 2021, to help feed those in need in our community. We continued to host our bi-annual blood drives, ensuring donations at a time of critical need. We swapped recipes, took virtual wine tasting classes, and got creative





(Clockwise from far left) Rachel Tepp was one of 33 people over the past two years to blow shofar in daily emails throughout Elul. (PHOTO COURTESY TEPP FAMILY) Unloading 100 lbs. of clothing and 1100 lbs. of food at ECHO from our Elul Food Drive. (PHOTO BY LUCINDA MARVIN) Rachelle Palley led an outdoor challah bake ahead of Rosh Hashanah 2020. (PHOTO BY ERIN DREYFUSS) In August 2020, we hosted the INOVA Blood Mobile to help replenish the area blood supply. (PHOTO BY ERIN DREYFUSS)

at home with family activity boxes. We shared daily prayers with each other and shofar blasts, highlighting the extraordinary talents of our congregation. We started a virtual short story class that continues to meet and is always welcoming newcomers to learn. All this and more helped us not only recenter our Jewish lives and reconnected us with each other; it prepared us for each New Year in new ways.

So, exactly how will you “train” for the High Holidays at Olam Tikvah? Join us throughout Elul from August 27 to September 25 for social, educational and volunteer opportunities, and more. Elul at OT

prepares our minds, bodies, and spirits. This year, Elul will provide us the opportunity to connect with each other, whether sharing a meal at the Labor Day Picnic and Sisterhood brunch, kicking off a new year with our Youth groups, or welcoming our new shaliach (Israeli emissary) at Slichot. We enter the New Year with new skills and knowledge by singing the music of the High Holidays together, learning with our rabbis and our friends, and practicing our round challah braiding. We prepare our bodies by immersing ourselves in nature on the Men’s Club Elul Hike, stocking our kitchens for our pre-fast dinners, and getting our flu shots.

Elul offers us the opportunity for Tikkun Olam, or repairing the world, by donating food to ECHO (let’s aim for another record-breaking year!), participating in a waterfront cleanup in conjunction with the international Repair the Sea movement, and delivering Rosh Hashanah baskets to Holocaust survivors in our area. All this and more is happening at OT for Elul.

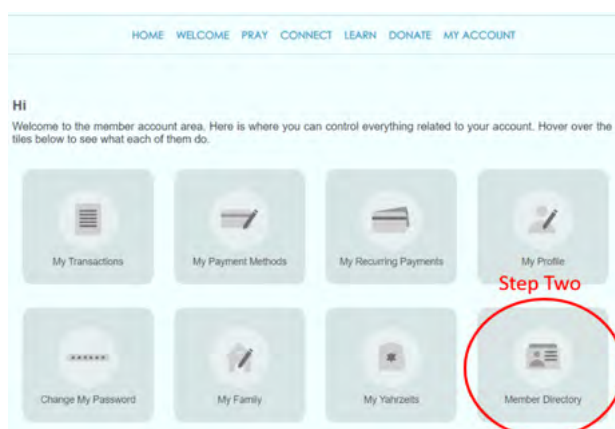
In your inbox each day throughout the month, we will offer a wake-up call to inspire us as we enter 5783. We look forward to running this marathon together!

*May we all have a Shana Tovah u’Metukah, a good and sweet New Year.*

## STEP ONE: LOGIN TO THE MEMBERS ONLY SECTION



## STEP TWO: GO TO THE MEMBER DIRECTORY



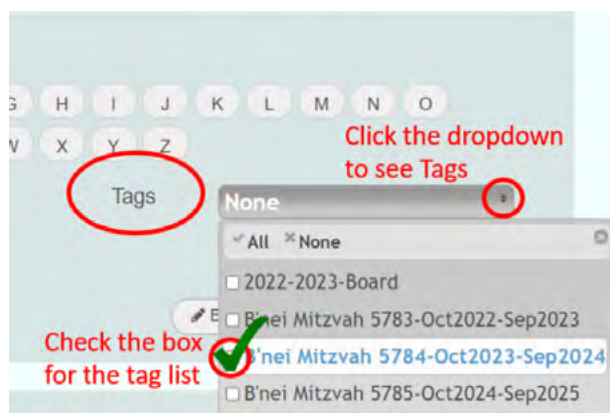
## STEP THREE: LOOKUP A MEMBER BY THEIR FIRST OR LAST NAME, THEN CLICK ON "UPDATE VIEW."



## STEP FOUR: \*NEW\* SEARCH BY TAGS.

1) Open the Tags list by clicking on the arrow on the right. 2) Check the box to the left of the desired list. 3) Click the "Update View" 4) All member listings with that tag will be listed below.

Note: Tags will show the family that includes the tagged OT member.



# LOOK ME UP IN OT'S ONLINE DIRECTORY!

BY MARNIE FIENBERG,  
COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Behind the secure login, the Members Only section of our website features an Online Directory of every member. The Directory allows you to see contact information on potential new friends, carpools, and that one person whose name you never quite get right. The Online Directory is available on any computer and your smartphone.

The Online Directory is part of your OT membership.

## INTRODUCING TAGS

New this year is the "Tags" feature. This feature allows the OT office to create useful lists to help you find what you need quickly. There are currently two types of tags:

- **Board Members.** All current OT Board members (including Committee Leads) are tagged so you can reach out as needed. This is especially great if you want to join a committee and volunteer!
- **B'nei Mitzvah Classes (2022-2025).** Many OT members have children in OTRS and we find that children get an additional boost if the parents are able to communicate - for carpools, social outings or just to get to know each other!

As a pilot program, we are tagging any family with a child who will be B'nei Mitzvah in the next three years. If you are a parent in this group, please let us know if these tags are useful and we will make this standard throughout OTRS next year.



# MEET THE OT GREEN INITIATIVE

BY MARK WEINER, OTGI COMMITTEE CHAIR

OT Green Initiative (OTGI) teams have been meeting since January 2022 to discuss and determine how to answer the call and think about how our kehilah can think and act more intentionally about how we care for every green herb and everything that moves upon the earth. To this end, the OTGI goals are:

- Reduce OT's carbon footprint.
- Educate and inspire people to take environmental action outside of OT.
- Empower people to contemplate the holiness of taking care of our planet.

To support these goals, we have four groups: Education, Energy,

Grounds, and Waste. We're looking across all activities at OT — clubs, religious school, the kitchen, office management, etc. — to find ways we can work together toward these goals.

## EDUCATION

Education begins with teaching the next generation. Beginning in the fall, OTRS will have a climate-related theme. As Rabbi Bedo works with each of the OTRS classes, this theme will be carried throughout. In addition, the 7th grade's year-long theme will be climate-related. We are



also educating ourselves. OTGI has connected with other congregations throughout the East Coast to share ideas and learn what others are doing to help decrease their carbon footprints.

## ENERGY

In spring 2022, OTGI invited vendors to perform three free energy audits. There are nearly 600 light fixtures in the synagogue that use inefficient incandescent or fluorescent bulbs. We are evaluating the costs and effort to replace the bulbs with more efficient LED lights and found that the most cost effective way to address this is to change the light bulbs with LEDs as they need to be replaced. There may also be grants that could offset the cost to replace some light fixtures. We also reviewed the HVAC system and plan to make repairs, upgrades, and/or future

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



The OT Green Initiative cleaned up the onsite garden for planting.  
(PHOTO BY RABBI BEDO)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

replacements with higher efficiency products as the need arises. We will also continue to research potential renewable energy sources. There are many renewable system configurations that might be acquired and installed through potential partnerships with energy companies and/or faith groups in the area.

## GROUNDS

Please go out and visit the community garden that we refreshed in the spring. OTGI member Rick Neifeld recently harvested a bumper crop of mint and basil. Bok choy, cucumbers, and asparagus are also on the list of items available. We could use a few volunteers to ensure the garden is watered, harvested, and seeded. We are working with the staff to be sure that the landscapers are staying away from the garden when laying any chemicals on our



OT Green Initiative volunteers help plant the garden next to the Social Hall. (PHOTO BY RABBI BEDO)

property and we hope to be using our harvested food and herbs soon. This is one of the big concerns that OTGI has identified – chemicals used for landscaping. In addition we are

concerned about the runoff to the stream behind the building, so we are working with the staff to find possible alternative methods to keep away pests while still beautifying the grounds.

## WASTE

What kind of trash do we generate during OT events and where does it go? In the spring we started ordering compostable forks, knives, spoons, etc. for the kitchen. As the current utensils are used up, we intend to begin composting as much waste as possible. This could also include napkins, fruits, vegetables, and rice, for example. However, this is going to require a composting plan. If you have experience composting, we invite you to help further develop this concept. If you don't know much about composting, but don't mind helping to move the compostables to the compost bin after an oneg, we'll be looking for volunteers.

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- \$1,300 Sponsors a Lone Soldier's flight home



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to learn more [Jennifer.scher@fidf.org](mailto:Jennifer.scher@fidf.org) | [www.fidf.org](http://www.fidf.org)

**MAKE  
A GIFT  
TODAY!**





# MISHPACHA

We are OT mishpacha (family) and we celebrate the good times and remember together. Here's where you can find out who from our congregation is celebrating over the next two months. Keep in touch with us on Facebook at [facebook.com/OlamTikvah](https://facebook.com/OlamTikvah).



## MAZAL TOV!

Mellie Black, on receiving her Yad Award

Florence & Robert Brodkey, on the birth of their grandson, Eyal Yosef, son of Naomi Brodkey & Eran Sharon

Laura Conover, on the marriage of her son, Jeremy, to Iris Krandel

Lynne & Elliott Dubin, on the birth of their granddaughter, Eliana Rose, daughter of Shama Khan & Jeremy Dubin

Andrea & Matt Fink, on the naming of their daughter, Parker

Rabbi Viki Bedo & Jonah Fisher, on the birth of their daughter, Laila Rut Phylcia & Marc Fisher, on the naming of their daughter, Whitney

Amanda & Max Hyman, on the birth and naming of their daughter, Zelda

Eve & Aron Rubinoff, on the bat mitzvah of their daughter, Olivia

Annie & Alan Schwartz, on the

marriage of their son, Michael, to Vanessa Villarreal

Lisa & Tony Simon, on the engagement of their son, Steven to Nataly Estrin

Amy & Gregory Smolen, on the birth of their son, Nathan Levi

Steven David Stone on the birth of his grandson, Cameron Rex Stone

Marie & Glenn Taubman and Helen Taubman, on the birth of their granddaughter and niece, the daughter of Marla & Joel

Dana & Robert Wolfson, on the naming of their daughter, Charlotte

## IN BLESSED MEMORY

Goldie Cohen, mother of Eileen Billinson

Norman Dolgoff, father of Karen Hasson

Marlene Felder

Howard Newman, husband of Karen Newman and father of Kirby Newman

Elaine Taubman, mother of Glenn Taubman and grandmother of Helen Taubman

## ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversary donations support Shabbat Kiddush lunch at Olam Tikvah. The following people made donations in honor of their anniversaries:

### June Anniversaries

June 1-2: Sara & Paul Astrow; Rimma & Semyon Reznick;

June 3-9: Erin & Marc Dreyfuss (10); Lisa & Joel Friedman; Stacey & Marc Herwitz (35); Ellen & Josh Oppenheim (40); Andrea & Gil Rozner (35); Patricia & Stanley Schneider; Maxine & Ron Sherwin; Bonnie & Jeff Siegel

June 10-16: Mindy & Warren Cohen; Carol & Louis Connor; Karen &

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**Get a Mitzvah Shoutout!** Would you like to include your own Mazel Tov for a mitzvah? Thank someone who went above and beyond? Donate \$18 for a 2-line announcement in the Contemporary! Contact Melissa Benson at [Mbenson@olamtikvah.org](mailto:Mbenson@olamtikvah.org) to get started.

Eliana, Your beautiful smile will light up the day adding warm heart to the prayers you say!  
Ever so proud! *Love, Grandma Judy and Grandpa Bob*

Dearest Eliana, We are so proud of the extraordinary young lady you are!!!  
We love you TH.....IS MUCH!!! *Grammy Beth and Papa Cary*

Learn more about b'nei  
mitzvah projects and how  
you can support them at:



SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 Parshat: Ki Teitzei

## EMMA GOROWITZ

Emma Shira Gorowitz, daughter of Alan and Jennifer and sister to Aaron, is an eighth grader at Geshar Jewish Day School. She loves reading, gymnastics, cooking, art, card-making, and Camp Ramah. Emma is looking forward to celebrating this milestone with her friends and family and to continuing to be an integral part of the Olam Tikvah community.

**Bat Mitzvah Project:** Emma's project is selling her homemade cards and donating the proceeds to Mobile Hope for a new program to create community fridges, or "freedges," which help to provide free food to those in need. She also plans to help stock the "freedges." Learn more at [mobile-hope.org/freedges](http://mobile-hope.org/freedges).



OCTOBER 8, 2022 Parshat: Deuteronomy 32:48-32:52

## ERIC MILLER WEINER

Son of Mishelle Miller and David Weiner and brother to Amy Elinor Weiner along with beloved black cat Chilly, Eric is a rising eighth-grader at Thoreau Middle School. He enjoys video games, reading, bike riding, and history, and has been a member of the Olam Tikvah family for 10 years. He is thrilled to have his family and friends here, especially grandparents from Kentucky, Florida, and New Jersey, first cousins from New York and Washington DC, and family from Texas, Massachusetts, Vermont, Florida, Michigan, and New York.



OCTOBER 22, 2022 Parshat: Bereishit

## ELIANA LAKENBACH

Daughter of Lara Novack and Matthew Lakenbach and sister to Gabrielle, Louie (cat) and Minnie (cat) and is an eighth grader at Frost MS. She enjoys ballroom dancing, summer camp, bracelet making and hanging out with friends. Eliana has been a member of the Olam Tikvah family for 3 years.

**Bat Mitzvah Project:** Eliana's project is to become certified in first aid and babysitting through the Red Cross. She will be donating hours of her time as a mother's helper to families with young children. She is also donating to L.J. Murphy Children's Hospital which is the Children's hospital of INOVA Fairfax. Please donate at [www.inovachildrens.org/donate](http://www.inovachildrens.org/donate).



OCTOBER 29, 2022 Parshat: Noach

## ALEXA SKYLAR KATZ

Alexa Skylar Katz, daughter of Joshua Katz and Marcy Levine, and sister of Samantha Katz, is a seventh grader at Robinson Secondary School. She enjoys dancing, hanging with her friends, binge-watching Netflix, and playing lacrosse and softball. Alexa has been a member of the Olam Tikvah family since she was in kindergarten.

**Bat Mitzvah Project:** The specifics of Alexa's Bat Mitzvah project are undecided at this time, but will involve giving back to those that are less fortunate than she, and will most likely center on food security.



## OT Mitzvah Shoutouts

Mazel Tov to Eric Weiner on his Bar Mitzvah!  
*Grandma Susan and Pop (Susan and Peter Haik)*

Mazel Tov to Eric Weiner on his bar mitzvah, 40 years after your dad's!  
*Much love, Peepa and Grandpa Shelly (Joyce and Shelly Weiner)*

It's my privilege to be your uncle, Eliana, as you become a woman in the Jewish tradition. I love you with everything I've got! - *Uncle Jerry*

Mazel Tov, Eliana Margalit, on your Bat Mitzvah! I am so proud of the young woman you have become. *Love, Auntie Cobie*

Mazel Tov Eliana! You have strength and courage to conquer the world and follow your dreams!  
*Love, Uncle Corey, Aunt Korey, Tyler and Emma*

## MAZAL TOV ELIANA!

May you always go through life with grace, confidence and a loving heart.

### Helping Haim

Sarah (Teacher)—So, Eliana, what were you doing over there?

Eliana — Helping Haim.

Sarah—With what?

Eliana — Well, the block fell off the shelf and you gave him an icepack.

Sarah—Right, but it looked like you were holding it.

Eliana — I was. Because he couldn't hold it and keep stitching and he wanted to keep stitching. So I held it for him so he could.

Sarah—That was a nice thing to do.

Eliana — Well, he's my friend.



May life always be as kind to you as you have always been to others and as much fun as dancing the Jive.

*Love,  
Mom, Dad, and Gabrielle*

# Congratulations to Eric

for the first bar mitzvah  
on the Miller side!

*Love, Granddad Drew and Grandma Kathryn; Cecilia, Simon, and Paul Miller; Elinor, James, Scott, Elizabeth Munger, and Doug Engle; Kelly and Mark Munger; Jocelyn Duffy and Craig Munger; and Sara Munger*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Sheldon Danto; Meredith & Edward Finn; Beth Liebmann & Peter Friedman; Amanda & Maxwell Hyman (5); Hannah & Joshua Kraushaar; Sandra & Benjamin Levy; Simone Bielsker & Dale Rolfe; Rachel & Eric Rothberg; Donna & Richard Rubino (30); Carol & Paul Shaman

June 17-23: Florence & Robert Brodkey; Sue & Ken Cohn; Deedy & Ed Eisenson; Stacie & James Kaplan; Kristel & Charles Stern; Leslie & Irvin Varkonyi; Lori & Allen Zabler

June 24 - 30: Heidi & Benjamin Freeman; Sandy & Al Gabriel; Deborah & David Howard; Elissa & Marvin Kon; Betsy & John MacCarthy; Maurine Simon & Mark Rubinstein; Rivka & Paul Safferson (35); Carol & Abe Schneier; Rho & Rich Silberglitt; Hannah & Jeffrey Skovronsky (55); Sandy & Robert Tiemann

#### July Anniversaries

July 1-7: Rachel & Elijah Alper; Jane & Bill Behrmann; Tessa & Glenn Fuchs; Sheila & Steven Klein; Cindy Rosen & Robert Schwartz; Sharon & Lance Sherry; Yvonne Fujimoto & David Shurberg; Laurie & Shawn Vergott

July 8-14: Beth & Fabian Rivelis

July 22-28: Maria & Lester Koransky; Lisa & Robert Maher; Diane & Joel Miller

July 29-30: Tamara & Jeffrey Cohen

#### August Anniversaries

August 1-4: Linda Halle & Richard Bopp; Ellen & Rafe Katkin; Janice & Eric Litt; Debby & Joe Marzouk (20); Martha & Mark Pohl; Nechama & Richard Retting; Jennifer & Michael Scher; Jordana Schmier & David Kane (20); Sheryl & Harold Tudor (45)

August 5-11: Michele & Stuart Endick; Marilyn & David Friedman; Rebecca Behrmann & Joshua Rubin; Leslie & Mack Sigman (35)

August 12-18: Sally Amster & Augie

Arnstein; Elisabeth & Neil Epstein (15); Jane & William Froehlich; Lorraine Fischer & Mark Kremer; Tamara & Rick Neifeld (25); Milly & Michael Rose; Francine & Robert Staiman; Laura & Daniel Strouse  
August 19-25: Zenia & Barry Bielsker; Ilka Shore Cooper & Fred Cooper (50); Judy & John Dietrick; Talya & Rabbi David Kalender; Rona & Alan Moshell; Beverly & Barry Redler; Merle & Michael Toobin (45)

August 26-31: Mimi & Len Levine; Marcy & Michael Marcus; Rachelle & Joel Palley (50); Naomi & Yoni Saad; BJ & Allon Shiff (30); Shana & Fred Singerman; Elizabeth & Martin Weiner; Alice & Michael Weinreb; Roberta & Henry Wulf

#### September Anniversaries

September 1-2: Jennifer & Alan Gorowitz; Erica Silverstein & Adam Black (15)

September 3-9: Clare & Herb Bachner; Amy & Michael Friedman; Wendy & Stuart Hoffman (25); Margery & Stephen Kraus; Constance & Lawrence Leibowitz; Sara & Mitchell Schuler; Sara & Edward Silverman; Brittanie & Dan Werbel

September 10-16: Caroline & Jacob Kramer; Athene & Daniel Shoemaker; Ilese & Roger Vorcheimer

September 17-23: Patricia & Jeffrey Freilich; Karen & Mike Sultan

September 24-30: Nikki & Jonathan Greenberg

**Celebrate with us! Help us expand the Mishpacha section for a variety of simchas—all ages, all experiences. Send your ideas or announcements to [communications@olamtikvah.org](mailto:communications@olamtikvah.org).**

Mazel Tov to our  
B'nei Mitzvah!

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

**Emma Gorowitz Sept 10**

**Eric Miller Weiner Oct 8**

**Eliana Lakenbach Oct 22**

**Alexa Skylar Katz Oct 29**

**FROM THE 5783 OLAM TIKVAH  
B'NEI MITZVAH CLASS**





Men's Club packs and delivers a Yom HaShoah Yellow Candle to every congregant. (PHOTO BY JORDAN BAKER)

## MEN'S CLUB & ABBA – JEWISH MEN ENGAGED IN JEWISH LIFE

BY IRV VARKONYI, PAST OTMC PRESIDENT  
AND PAST SEABOARD FJMC PRESIDENT

Engaging Jewish men in Jewish life through Olam Tikvah Men's Club (OTMC) and its ABBA committee, enables many congregants to enjoy camaraderie and contribute their time and resources to enhance our synagogue. OTMC is one of 250 clubs of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs (FJMC) throughout North America encouraging men to grow together in all aspects of Jewish life, build friendships and foster a strong Jewish community through volunteerism. An executive board, led by Barry Hemmerdinger, is charged with organizing its annual programs. Past presidents such as Marvin Kon, Bob Watts and Jordan Baker are charged with communicating with our members through social media and the OT website.

Men's Club/ABBA is inclusive. Everyone is welcome to participate in our many activities. The fall season brings the High Holidays as well as civic interest in the coming elections. An annual candidates' brunch, organized by Irv Varkonyi and Gary Aiken, provides an opportunity for candidates to respond to

congregants' questions. Dennis Staten and crew diligently work in the kitchen. Other activities include:

- Our Yom HaShoah Yellow Candle project reaches every congregant through personal deliveries by club members to every member of OT. This project raises thousands of dollars annually for JSSA to help Holocaust survivors manage their daily needs.
- Encouraging all congregants to lay tefillin is the goal of Worldwide Wrap (WWW), coinciding annually with the Super Bowl. All members of OT are invited. If you want to learn to wrap tefillin, a session takes place before the WWW minyan.
- The annual steak night, spirits and study evenings led by Aaron Sterling, have tasted vodka, scotch, rum, and Rabbi Bedo's favorite, Hungarian Palinka.
- Together with Sisterhood, OTMC contributes to the kiddush cup and Shabbat candlesticks given to our B'nai Mitzvah.
- The annual recycling event, led by Howard Sloan and Rick Neifeld,

encourages OT members to donate electronic items of all types which are delivered to community recycling facilities.

- "Hearing Men's Voices" is a unique program of the FJMC that engages Jewish men in Jewish life, enabling deeper connections and better relationships among our members. Trained leaders such as Bruce Gordon and Eric Rothberg, facilitate sessions encouraging men to talk and engage in a rich and meaningful dialogue about common issues.
- OTMC is very active in FJMC including Seaboard Region events such as the Blue Yarmulke Person of the Year annual gala. Members such as Bob Watts are active at the International Level, guiding and training members in North America.

It's easy to join online on the OTMC website. Regular membership is \$36. Be a Mensch for only \$54. Or be a Super Mensch for \$72 so we can donate even more to OT. Come and enjoy OTMC. We have many flavors to experience.



## THE JOY OF SUKKOT

BY JEN HALPERN, AUTHOR OF *THE STARS WILL BE MY NIGHTLIGHT*

In the children's book *The Stars Will Be My Nightlight*, a little boy asks his mom if they can read his bedtime story in the sukkah. Of course, she says yes. But when he asks her if they can sleep in the sukkah, she says nothing, because she doesn't want to.

That mom was me, about 15 years ago. And I really, really didn't want to sleep in my backyard that night. So, just like the mom in the story, I tried talking my son out of it. I pulled the oldest parenting trick in the book and tried to make the fun idea sound not so fun.

I said, "You know, we couldn't keep the lights on all night," not so subtly implying that it would be dark outside and maybe a little scary. But my son was onto me. Just like the boy in the story, he said, "But the stars will be my nightlight." Not surprisingly, we went inside to get the blankets and pillows. When it started to rain a little while later and my son started to cry, I explained that the sukkah

would protect us just like it had our ancestors, we said the Sh'ma ... and the rain stopped.

It was magical.

My son had reminded me of something I'd forgotten. I'd been too distracted by the thought that I might be physically uncomfortable to remember that for a four-year old, there is no greater joy than sleeping out in the backyard. He didn't need modern conveniences to feel happy and content. He just needed me, and the shelter of our sukkah.

The sukkah, for all its temporary-ness, is meant to reflect our home. It is where, for one week every autumn, we make a special effort to eat and play and rejoice, with friends and family, in a shelter we have built and decorated just for the occasion. It is both time and place. It is parents saying to their children, "Yes. Let's do all these things together. Because we love each other. And it is Sukkot. And this is what the Jewish people do."



Had it been any other night, I probably would've said, "No, we can't sleep outside tonight" and given all sorts of reasons why. But it was Sukkot. And to live a Jewish life is to live life joyfully. And so I said yes.

*Jen is an OT Associate member. This is her first book.*



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