

STUDENT'S BAR/BAT MITZVAH HANDBOOK

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WCT STUDENTS' GUIDE TO BECOMING A BAR MITZVAH OR A BAT MITZVAH

Introduction

Okay, we admit it. It takes lots of hard work to become a *Bar Mitzvah* or a *Bat Mitzvah* at Woodlands. But we know that every single young person reading this paragraph can succeed. Not just because we know you've got it in you ... but also because we're going to help you every step along the way. We promise.

This handbook is one of the ways we can help. There's lots and lots of good information in here. Some of it will tell how to get things done. Other stuff will just help you relax about it.

We're glad you're looking at it.

Becoming A Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Its Meaning

We can't help ourselves, us adults. We love you. And we really mean it when we say we want you to grow up happy and strong. We also want you to be principled and ethical. And for that, we think Judaism can help ... a lot.

Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* means you've learned not just your Hebrew, but also a bit about Judaism's ideas on life. *Tzedakah* (doing the right thing), *tikkun olam* (fixing the world), and *gemilut hasadim* (acts of goodness and caring) are just a few of the ideas we've taught you about in religious school. Dropping food into the Tzedakah Cart, helping out with Project Ezra or the Midnight Run, are some of the ways we translate Jewish learning into real life.

These kinds of acts are so important – throughout our entire lives – that we definitely think you should stick around to continue your learning. So after the big celebration, we want to see you back for the WoodSY Academy on Monday evenings. With pizza, and hanging out with 11th and 12th graders, you're gonna love it.

What Is The Origin The Ceremony Of Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Okay, we're not really sure. It's not in the Torah. But somewhere along the way (maybe 2000-2500 years ago), age 13 became the time when young people became responsible for observing the *mitzvot*. No fanfare, no ceremony, no party or presents either. It was maybe 600 or 700 years when boys (sorry, ladies) were first called up to recognize his entry into adulthood. Not only would he read Torah and Haftarah, he'd also present a D'var Torah. A party did indeed follow – it was called a *seudat mitzvah* (the *mitzvah* meal). No party themes, though ... *mitzvah* was the only “theme” on their minds (maybe it's time to bring that one back?).

Oh, by the way, the first girl to become a *Bat Mitzvah* did so in 1921. Her name was Judith Kaplan, and she paved the way for all of us to enjoy welcoming the other 50% of our families into the journey to adulthood.

So Am I Becoming an Adult?

Well, yes and no. The ceremony of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* cannot magically turn you into a member of the adult community. In fact, we're pretty sure that's *not* something you want to do ... just yet, anyway. For example, do you really want to have a full-time job, start paying bills, buy insurance policies, or live on your own? In time, absolutely! But age thirteen probably isn't when you want it all to begin.

On the other hand, you *are* growing up. You're not the baby, or even the little kid, you were just a few years ago. You have more developed capabilities – physically, intellectually and emotionally – that help you accomplish more and more in your everyday life. Your family counts on you to be more and more responsible for yourself and for others. And your community (both in your synagogue and around town) is counting on you to be more responsible too.

So yes, you're growing up. No, you're not yet an adult. When you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, we will celebrate what you are right now (a terrific, “growing up” young person), as well as what you are becoming (a little way down the road): a grown-up who understands his/her responsibilities to Judaism and to the world around you.

GUIDELINES FOR BECOMING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH AT WOODLANDS

Yep, there's stuff you've *got* to do if you want this to happen:

- Stay in religious school. Your ability to learn about the deeper meanings of Jewish living is only just beginning. In 10th grade Confirmation, we'll really take on what it means to be a Jew. And in 11th and 12th grade, you'll dig even deeper.
- Our youth group program is your home at Woodlands Community Temple. It too is only just beginning. It's in youth group that you can form stronger friendships, as well as strengthen your emotional and spiritual bonds to Judaism. You get to travel too!
- Our synagogue as a whole really wants you to stick around too. From social action projects to Shabbat services, your presence and your participation mean the world to us!

Some temples are described as being “a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* mill,” meaning that kids go to religious school long enough to reach this milestone, and then are never seen or heard from again. Woodlands will never be a “mill.” You work on your mind and body elsewhere in your life. Don't you deserve to have a place where you go to work on your spirit and your integrity?

So stay with us through high school!

REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH AT WCT

1. Complete mastery of all assigned tefillot and berakhot, *prior to* beginning tutorial with the Cantor and staff.
2. Complete the five writing assignments outlined elsewhere in this handbook.
3. Attendance – with your parents – at five Shabbat morning services and five Shabbat evening service (at Woodlands Community Temple!) during the twelve months prior to your becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

The Shabbat morning services must all include a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony. These must be completed prior to the service during which you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

Be sure the Cantor's office knows which services you've attended!

4. Join your parents in ushering for two Shabbat Morning services during which we celebrate a student becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Your parents know which dates you need to do this.

OUR 3-PART BAR/BAT MITZVAH PLAN FOR A "PAINLESS" CEREMONY

1. Agree in full to the requirements up above. And don't fall behind!
2. Be excited!
3. Once your tutorial begins:
 - a. Commit yourself to 30 minutes of work a day;
 - b. Complete each and every weekly assignment as set by the rabbi and cantor; and,
 - c. Don't panic or worry. We're here to help you. Tell us if you can't get to something, or if it's too hard for you.

Family Class

While you've got a lot of work to do, so do parents. So during 6th and 7th grade, we're going to have a bunch of family sessions. We'll do important work together then.

Family Torah Class

During the 7th grade, you're going to participate in a fun and challenging Torah learning seminary with Rabbi Billy. Parents will come too, but get this: they're not allowed to speak! This is conversation between you, your friends, and the rabbi. Don't miss any of it!

Advance Advice for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebrations

Some of your friends will be planning huge extravaganzas. Maybe you will too. But maybe your family spends money differently, lives differently, and an enormously expensive party doesn't have your name on it. Speak with your parents about what's right for you and them. And do your very, very best *not* to expect to do something just because your friends are doing it. Part of growing up is becoming strong enough to say no when necessary, and to do what's right for you.

FOR THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENT

YOUR FIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Here is a clear, concise explanation of the pieces you will need to write in the months preceding your becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Don't work on these until after you meet with the Rabbi.

1. Your Name Statement

Toward the middle of the service, just prior to the beginning of the reading of the Torah, we will invite your family to stand with you in front of the Ark. In the Chain of Tradition ceremony, the Torah will be symbolically passed “from generation to generation” until it finally arrives into your hands. At this point – Torah in your arms – you will read this small “introduction” of yourself ... to explain a bit of your own personal connection to your family’s ongoing “chain of tradition.”

Before you can write your Name Statement, discuss with your parents or grandparents (or other family members who might know) how you got your name (English, Hebrew and/or Yiddish). The more information you can get, the better. If you want to tell stories – even funny ones – about your name or the person/persons for whom you are named, feel free to do so. One way or the other, the idea is for everyone present to gain some insight into who you are and to understand that this ceremony marks continuing of legacies and traditions that are generations upon generations old ... and are now being passed on to Y-O-U!

Please write one or two well-constructed, typewritten (double-spaced) paragraphs.

2. Introduction to The Parashah (Torah Portion)

This is presented just before you begin reading your Torah verses. Write a brief “mini-book report” about your Torah *parashah*. How do you do this? Easy. Review the English translation of your entire *parashah* (not just the part that you’ll read – the whole thing!). You might want to do this with your parents. Think about what’s going on in the story. Who’s involved? Where is the action taking place? When is it occurring? Keep in mind that you are explaining all of this to the congregation, so it needs to be said in a very clear, easy to understand manner.

Please write one well-constructed, typewritten (double-spaced) paragraph.

3. Introduction to The Haftarah (Reading from The Prophets)

This is exactly the same as the introduction to your *parashah*, except this one’s about your *Haftarah* (the additional Shabbat reading from the books of the Prophets). Read through your verses, but also read through the brief article on your particular Prophet (that is, the one who wrote the book from which you are reading your *Haftarah*). For example, if your *Haftarah* portion is from the book of Jeremiah, then you need to know who Jeremiah is. Follow the same style as the Introduction to the *Parashah*.

Please write one well-constructed, typewritten (double-spaced) paragraph.

4. Your Tzedakah Statement

Woodlands (in fact, Jewish communities everywhere and for all time) has a tradition of giving *tzedakah* (gifts of money or time) to different organizations. As part of your becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, you need to become a part of this longstanding Jewish custom. It is, when all is said and done, one of our most important *mitzvot*.

How do you write your *Tzedakah* Statement? Read through the section of this handbook called “*Tzedakah and You*.” In it, you will learn about lots and lots of *tzedakah* organizations that are doing some wonderful stuff to reach out and help others.

Then, decide on two organizations to which you will give *tzedakah*. One of them should specifically reach out to members of the Jewish community, while the other should reach out to the specifically non-Jewish, *general* community. If you or your family has a cause or organization important to you, feel free to include that in your project.

Please write two well-constructed, typewritten (double-spaced) paragraphs. Your words should describe your two choices along with your reasons. Try and make them as personal as you can. For example, if you decide to contribute to the American Cancer Society because a member of your family survived a fight against cancer, then say that. Help the congregation to understand your reasons. They’ll appreciate you and your gift all the more so.

5. Your D’var Torah

D’var Torah is a Hebrew phrase meaning, “explanation of the Torah reading.” You might think of it as your own “mini-sermon.” This is your opportunity to really reflect upon the message in your Torah reading, and what you feel it means to become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. But how to do it?

Simple, actually. Just make sure mom or dad has scheduled your appointments with Rabbi Billy. About six weeks before the ceremony, you will meet once with him to discuss and outline your *D’var Torah*. Two weeks later, you’ll bring him your best work which the two of you will edit together. All you’ll need to do then is go home and make the necessary changes and your final version will be complete.

VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE:

*Throughout the entire preparation process, your rabbis, cantor,
and youth director are all available for questions or assistance.
Call (592-7070) or email (wct@wct.org) the temple anytime for an appointment.*

BAR/BAT MITZVAH PROGRAM – THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT CHOOSING YOUR TORAH READING

The Torah is composed of the five Biblical books of Genesis (*Bereshit* in Hebrew), Exodus (*Shemot*), Leviticus (*Vayikra*), Numbers (*Bemidbar*) and Deuteronomy (*Devarim*). Taken together, these five are called by many names: Torah, the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, and *Khumash* (from the Hebrew word *khamesh*, “five”). Each of these five books is divided into many “portions,” each called a *parashah*. Every *parashah* has its own name. One *parashah* is read each week through the year until the Torah reading is complete (*Simkhat Torah*, just after *Sukkot*, is our annual celebration of the completion of this reading cycle).

Here’s an example of how it works. Consider *Bereshit*, the Book of Genesis. It is made up of many *parshiyot* (plural of *parashah*) each containing a number of chapters and verses (which vary in length from *parashah* to *parashah*). Chapters and verses are separated by colons; therefore, Genesis 1:1 - 6:8 means “Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1, through Genesis, chapter 6, verse 8.” Here are the first 3 *parshiyot* for Genesis:

<i>Bereshit</i>	Genesis 1:1 - 6:8
<i>Noakh</i>	Genesis 6:9 - 11:26
<i>Lekh Lekha</i>	Genesis 11:27 - 17:27

In order for all *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebrations to become “family” events, we want you – *as a family* – to select the Torah verses you will read at the Shabbat service during which you become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You can’t select just any Torah verses, because the *parashah* from which you will read is determined by your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date. As the weeks and months pass, so do the *parshiyot*. And it’s almost always the same – from Woodlands to Jerusalem!

By the way, in “Jewish time” we refer to each Shabbat by the name of its *parashah*. So the Friday/Saturday during which the Jewish community reads the *parashah* called *Lekh Lekha* is known as *Shabbat Lekh Lekha*.

Now, together as a family, follow these guidelines to select the Torah section you will study to become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

- a. Read these instructions carefully.
- b. Your *parashah*, according to the date on which you will become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, is noted on the front cover of this booklet as well as on the bookplate inside your copy of *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*.
- c. Consult the “Contents” pages in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* to find your *parashah* and its corresponding page numbers.
- d. As a family, read through the entire Torah portion in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. For now, you need not read every word on every page. Instead, on the pages that contain Hebrew Torah text, read the translation located to the left of the Hebrew.

As you read through this English translation, you'll find a lot of other material. Because the Torah is over 3000 years old, students of Torah use "commentaries" (that is, notes written by rabbis in earlier generations) to help us understand. The notes directly beneath the English translation can help you understand individual words and phrases. The short articles found elsewhere throughout these pages will help you understand some of the larger themes and messages. If, rather than clarifying, this only confuses you more, please don't hesitate to give us a call.

- e. You're looking for 12 consecutive verses that you find interesting and would like to read during the service in which you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* (Note: You can identify a single verse in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* by finding the number and single bracket that always precedes it). In your search, try to select verses that are of interest to you, and that present a coherent section of Torah (in other words, try to stay within a complete story or subject area).
- f. Complete the form, "TORAH READING SELECTION & JEWISH NAME," and send it to the temple office 10 months before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date (*at the latest, please*).

Now, your next assignment...

As a family, read through the entire section in this handbook, "Student Guide to Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah" and let the rabbis, cantor, or youth director know if you have any questions.

TZEDAKAH AND YOU

HOW BECOMING BAR/BAT MITZVAH BECOMES EVEN MORE MEANINGFUL

Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* doesn't mean you're an adult. But it does mean you can begin acting more responsibly in the world. *Tzedakah* is one way to do that.

What Is *Tzedakah*?

Although it is often translated (incorrectly) as “charity,” *tzedakah* means “doing the right or just thing.” We don't do *tzedakah* just because it makes us feel good (even though it usually does); we do it because it's the right thing to do. It is an extremely important *mitzvah* (religious responsibility). *Tzedakah* is usually given in one of two ways: either as a donation of money or as a donation of time (that is, volunteering).

When Do We Give *Tzedakah*?

In Jewish tradition, we're always looking for opportunities to “do *tzedakah*.” We'll do it when something wonderful happens (like a baby cousin being born, an uncle's wedding or a grandparent's birthday). We'll also do it when something *sad* happens (in memory of someone who dies or when their *yahrzeit* occurs). Judaism says, “do *tzedakah*” for just about any reason at all! At Woodlands, all of our *B'nai Mitzvah* (plural for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*) do *tzedakah*, too – in honor of the *simkha* (the fantastic celebration) of your becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

How Much Should You Give?

Our rabbis taught that it was appropriate to give a certain percentage of our earnings to *tzedakah*, so you may want to give a percentage of your cash gifts, too. Others like to give multiples of \$18 because that number translates to *khai* (the Hebrew letters *khet* and *yud*, which means “life”). If you've decided you'd like to donate time instead, think about contributing *chai* – eighteen – hours to some cause or organization that's really important to you.

Where Should You Give?

Our Woodlands tradition is to choose two organizations, one specifically Jewish and one which is specifically not Jewish. This reflects our understanding that: a) Jews must take care of other Jews; and, b) Jews must take care of others, as well. Attached is a list of possibilities for you to consider. Obviously, you are not limited to this list, but it will give you some ideas. It's up to you!

Some *Tzedakah* Projects You Might Consider

Please note: Checks should be made payable directly to the organization.

Some that are specifically Jewish ...
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Israel

Jordan River Village

One of the famous Hole in the Wall Camps but this one's located in Israel! It's designed especially for Jewish, Moslem and Christian children with life-threatening, chronic or genetic diseases to come together and have fun. The camp welcomes children not only from Israel but from all its neighboring countries too. Visit www.jordanrivervillage.org for more info.

The Miraculous *Mitzvah* Horses of Israel

Incredible riding programs for the disabled, people recovering from severe trauma, elderly residents of old age homes, soldiers and civilians injured in war and terrorist acts. Adopt a horse, or adopt a rider! Visit their website at www.trci.org.il.

North American Conference On Ethiopian Jewry

In 1985, thousands of Ethiopian Jews were secretly flown out of Ethiopia to safety in Israel. Thousands of their relatives still remain in Ethiopia. Many are old. All are oppressed. And all are hungry. They need to get to Israel, and this organization saves their lives and brings them into freedom. Once in Israel, NACOEJ helps to house them, educate them, teach them job skills, and get them on their feet as they learn to live in a new land. NACOEJ has an astonishing selection of items made by Ethiopian Jews: challah and matzoh covers, tallit bags, and more. Buying and using their products allows Ethiopian craftspersons to become self-supporting (the very *highest* level of *tzedakah!*). Visit them on the internet at www.nacoej.org.

The Women of the Wall

Women of the Wall is a multi-denominational feminist organization based in Israel whose goal is to secure the rights of women to pray at the Western Wall, also called the Kotel, in a fashion that includes singing, reading aloud from the Torah and wearing religious garments. Visit www.womenofthewall.org.il for more info.

Seeds of Peace

Seeds of Peace brings Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian teenagers together (as well as young leaders from South Asia, Cyprus and the Balkans) in a camp environment, allowing participants to develop empathy, respect, and confidence as well as leadership, communication and negotiation skills – all critical components that will facilitate peaceful coexistence for the next generation. Visit www.seedsofpeace.org for more information.

Magen David Adom

This is the “Red Cross” of Israel (they call it Magen David Adom, the “Red Star of David”). Magen David Adom handles blood donation and distribution, as well as emergency medical services and response to terrorist acts for all Israelis. You may visit their website at www.afmda.org.

The Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind

The Israel Guide Dog Center offers blind Israelis the opportunity to lead full, normal lives through the assistance of a guide dog. Their kennels are filled with the most beautiful puppies, waiting to be trained for their holy work. For more information, email Noach Braun at igdcb@netvision.net.il. Visit their website at www.israelguidedog.org.

Jewish National Fund

The Jewish National Fund remains dedicated to the development of land in Israel and promoting environmentalism there. They do so by planting trees, irrigation projects (also done in cooperation with Israel’s Arab neighbors) and keeping Israel beautiful. For more information, visit www.jnf.org.

Around the World

Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda

When we learned there were 600 African Jews living in Uganda, struggling to survive, we decided to help bring electricity and water to their village. Now, we're helping improve their schools and other aspects of their lives. Learn about the Abayudaya and other emerging Jewish communities at www.kulanu.org.

In the USA

Project Ezra

This organization is located on the Lower East Side of New York City. It helps older Jewish people who want to stay in their own apartments but may not be able to shop for themselves or get to important appointments with doctors, dentists and others. This is the group that comes to visit Woodlands once or twice each year for an afternoon of food, music and friendship. Visit their website at www.projectezra.org.

Second Wind Dreams

Ask an elderly nursing-home resident what his/her dream is, and then make it come true! "Dreamweavers" have provided this service for more than ten thousand old people. And you can help support this beautiful, loving work! A ride in a hot air balloon, a personal back-stage meeting with symphony conductor, a ride on a motorcycle, dancing to a live orchestra in formal gown or tux, a reunion with faraway relatives or friends. Visit www.secondwind.org for more info.

DOROT

DOROT's goal is to alleviate social isolation and provide concrete services to older adults. For more than four decades, DOROT has been an innovative leader in the fields of aging services and volunteerism. DOROT's diverse set of programs, as well as our focus on providing intergenerational connections to seniors, has ensured that DOROT's clients have access to the resources they need to age with dignity, independence, and grace. www.dorotusa.org

The Jonah Maccabee Fund

Dedicated to the memory of Jonah Maccabee Dreskin, contributions to this fund support an annual concert at Woodlands of contemporary Jewish music, the proceeds of which are used to fund scholarships for children of temple members to attend URJ summer programs. Donate online at wct.org/donate.

Hazon

Hazon creates healthier and more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. They do this through cross-country bike rides in the US and Israel, food conferences, environmental education. www.hazon.org.

Matan

Matan educates Jewish leaders, educators and communities, empowering them to create learning environments supportive of children with special needs, through training Institutes and consultations across North America. By advocating for the inclusion of diverse learners, Matan enables the Jewish community to realize the gift of every individual and fulfill its obligation to embrace all children regardless of learning challenges in every Jewish educational setting.

www.matankids.org.

United Jewish Appeal

UJA is a catch-all; do-everything, good-guy organization. They help Jewish families in trouble, help find jobs and homes for those who can't seem to do it on their own, help immigrants and refugees all over the world, recently settling millions of Russian and Ethiopian Jews in Israel and in America. They even collect holiday gifts from you and me to distribute to kids who wouldn't get any at Christmas and Chanukah time. More information is available at

www.ujafedny.org.

The Jewish Braille Institute of America

The Jewish Braille Institute creates Jewish learning materials for the blind in braille and on cassettes. Believing that everyone should be entitled to a quality Jewish education, the Jewish Braille Institute does everything it can to put quality Jewish learning into the lives of those who might otherwise not have any. For more information, visit www.jewishbraille.org.

Keshet

Keshet is a national organization that works for full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life. Led and supported by LGBTQ Jews and straight allies, Keshet cultivates the spirit and practice of inclusion in all parts of the Jewish community. www.keshetonline.org

And some that are specifically <i>not</i> Jewish ...

Heifer International

One little goat. That's all it sometimes takes to help a family get out of poverty. And for very little money, you can make that happen! Heifer International helps to end world hunger and poverty by training people in sustainable farming and empowering women. If you'd like more information, visit www.heifer.org.

Locks of Love

Locks of Love provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children under age 18 who have lost their hair due to a medical condition or treatment. These hairpieces help to restore to these kids their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers.

Visit www.locksoflove.org for information on how to donate money or ten inches of your own hair.

Educate The Children

Very simple. Educate the Children collects and distributes books, school supplies, computers and other educational material to poor school districts across the country. With the involvement of concerned individuals, along with the resources of businesses and corporations, Educate the Children helps to give as many children as possible the same educational possibilities we take for granted each day. Visit their website at www.educatethechildren.net.

WCT Disaster Relief Fund

A temple fund that supports work to help rebuild areas that are devastated by earthquakes, floods, etc. Donate online at wct.org/donate.

Wilderness Inquiry

Wilderness Inquiry provides exciting outdoor adventures for both disabled and able-bodied people. Their awesome trips challenge the participants no matter what their abilities. Contributions provide scholarships to eligible folks who might not otherwise be able to participate. For more information, visit www.wildernessinquiry.org.

Greenpeace

Greenpeace works to protect our environment. They are involved in conservation and animal protection. Recent projects include the protection of dolphins, seals, and the entire continent of Antarctica! Visit them at www.greenpeace.org/international.

The Shoe Woman of Denver

Since Ranya Kelly found 500 pairs of brand new shoes in a dumpster behind a shoe store in 1991, she has gathered more than 600,000 pairs and given every one of them to a person in need. She's also working with people everywhere to gather and redistribute more than 21 million dollars' worth of food, clothing, baby strollers and building materials to the same crowd. Wow! Learn more at www.redistributioncenter.org.

American Jewish World Service

AJWS is a group of very caring Jews who help poverty-stricken people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They also have emergency relief programs that help in the case of natural disaster anywhere in the world. Learn how you can join them at www.ajws.org.

The American Cancer Society

(Westchester Division, 30 Glenn Street, White Plains, NY 10603)

This organization is devoted to research to find the cure for cancer that would save millions and millions of lives. You can donate to the Westchester Division at 30 Glenn Street, White Plains, NY 10603. Visit them online at www.cancer.org.

The Potato People

Since 1984, the Potato Project (in Big Island, Vermont) has sent 20 million (!) pounds of potatoes each year to needy families across America. You can help them out. Learn more at <https://endhunger.org/ppp>.

The Woodlands Hunger Fund

Our own Temple has a fund that allows you to help fight hunger throughout the world. The Hunger Fund has given money to soup kitchens and food pantries right here in the New York area, and to organizations which feed people in poorer nations and teach them how to grow food to feed themselves in the future. *Donate online at wct.org/donate.*

Shore: Sheltering The Homeless Is Our Responsibility

SHORE is a local shelter program in White Plains for individuals and families who would otherwise have no place to live was established with the help and inspiration of our own Woodlands Community Temple. You can visit them on the internet at www.shelteringthehomeless.org.

Southern Poverty Law Center

The Southern Poverty Law Center is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy, the SPLC works toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality. They monitor hate groups and teach tolerance. www.splcenter.org

Gigi's Playhouse

Gigi's Playhouse aims to change the way the world views Down syndrome and send a global message of acceptance for all. They change lives through consistent delivery of free educational, therapeutic-based and career development programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the community, through a replicable playhouse model. gigisplayhouse.org

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Want to feed hungry people? So does everyone else who contributes to this incredible organization. Jewish individuals, families and organizations – in honor of some significant moment in their lives (like becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*) – make a gift to MAZON. MAZON, in turn, finds the organizations around the country (and the world) who are doing the very best job of getting food into needy people's hands and stomachs ... and in this way, turns our dollars into life-saving food. Learn more at www.mazon.org.

Canine Companions for Independence

CCI trains dogs to work with people who use wheelchairs or are hearing-impaired, providing these individuals with newfound ease of movement within their communities. They have matched more than 2500 "companions" with human partners. Find out more at www.cci.org.

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

They risked their lives during the Holocaust years of World War II to hide, feed and protect Jewish men, women and children. Now, many of these "righteous Gentiles" have themselves fallen upon hard times. This foundation has located and currently assists 1400 rescuers, and our contributions go to direct support of these noble human beings. Learn how to help at www.jfr.org.

Songs of Love

Here's a group of professional musicians, composers and studio engineers who donate their time and creative energies to compose and produce individually personalized songs for children who are chronically or terminally ill. Receiving the *Songs of Love* cassette never fails to have an incredible effect on the child, family, friends and hospital staff. *Songs of Love* brings happiness and joy, sometimes at the very last minute. In addition to your monetary contribution, you can also spread the word about *Songs of Love* to doctors, nurses and friends who might need to take advantage of this "mitzvah music." Visit them on the web at www.songslove.org.

God's Love We Deliver

God's Love We Deliver prepares and delivers hundreds of meals each day to people living in New York City with AIDS who are unable to prepare their own food. And the person delivering the food provides the all-important human touch. Learn more at www.godslovewedeliver.org.

GLSN

GLSN is a leading national education organization that works to transform K-12 schools into safe and affirming environments and ensure that LGBTQ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment. www.glsen.org

IsraAID

IsraAID is an Israel-based international organization that provides disaster response and reduction around the world. They've helped respond to the physical and psychological needs of millions of people struggling to rebuild in the wake of several severe natural disasters. www.israaid.org

HIAS

HIAS works around the world to protect refugees who have been forced to flee their homelands because of who they are, including ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. For more than 130 years, HIAS has been helping refugees rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, HIAS has touched the life of nearly every Jewish family in America and now welcomes all who have fled persecution. www.hias.org.

Neighbors Link

Neighbors Link is a beacon of hope for immigrant individuals and families in Westchester County. We keep our doors open wide to everyone in our community, providing vital legal assistance, English language education, family support services, workforce development, community education and more. For more information, contact www.neighborslink.org.

SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMS FOR YOU! COLLECTIONS, DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERING

There are many ways to add mitzvot to the preparation, service or celebration of becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Often Woodlands families find a personal connection to an organization or activity that enhances their journey to becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Some choose to volunteer as a family; others work individually on a project. Your guests can also participate in a collection of items by including an explanation within your invitation, or you can organize a collection drive at the temple. Centerpieces can be created with baskets of items to be donated. We encourage you to participate in any of the Social Action Committee programs offered at Woodlands.

Bima Baskets: This new program enables you to “rent” decorative food oriented baskets for the bima and for centerpieces as a way of generating funds to support local food pantries. Contact Nicole Lesser at socialaction@wct.org.

Breakfast Run: Through Midnight Run in Dobbs Ferry, we serve breakfast and distribute personal care items and clothing to working poor and homeless in NYC on Sunday morning. In addition to providing food, we provide conversation, understanding and caring. Whether you go on the Run or not, we depend on donations for the items we bring. Collections of new t-shirts, socks and underwear, as well as breakfast food items, such as granola bars, juice boxes, fruit cups, small toiletries and clothing. Reusable shopping bags are also needed. Before the run, volunteers are needed to sort toiletries and clothing. Contributions can be made to the Midnight Run Fund. Contact Michael Silverman and Julie Fischer at MidnightRunBreakfasts@wct.org.

Project Ezra: Assists elderly living on the Lower East Side. At the winter luncheon at WCT, congregants host a dairy lunch to share along with conversation and companionship. We also provide Passover food boxes for this community. Contributions can be made to the Project Ezra Fund. Contact Harriet Kohn, Elise Wagner Ballan and Janet Weinstein at projectezra@wct.org.

Domestic Abuse Task Force: Helps women and children who have been victims of domestic abuse. Volunteers are needed to run one-time or ongoing programs at Hope's Door, a shelter for women or children. Teens must be accompanied by an adult. You can donate household supplies for families moving out of the shelter or make a monetary donation to DATF. Contact Judy Stiefel, Bill Woolis and Jennifer Trevor Hochman for specifics at domesticabuse@wct.org.

The High Holy Days Food Van: On Yom Kippur, there's a lot to do to support our largest food collection of the year. Donate nonperishable food, help sort food at the van, deliver food to the pantries afterward, or make a monetary donation. Contact Sandi Lieb at Sandi.LG@gmail.com.

Food Cart: Ongoing nonperishable food drives to benefit Hudson Valley Community Services and a local Greenburgh pantry. Food insecurity remains a critical issue in our area in every season. Contact Val Fox and Sandi Lieb at socialaction@wct.org.

The Sanctuary: Join with friends or family and cook a Sunday dinner for a teen shelter, schedule organized by the Greenburgh Interfaith Caring Community. Contact Val Fox and Allison Pray at shelterdinner@wct.org. Or provide desserts for a week. Contact Jeanne Bodin and Natalie Werner at desserts@wct.org.

Blood Drive: Assist during our blood drives in March and November. Contact Margie Berman, Jill Garland and Steve Sagner at blood@wct.org.

Knitting and Crocheting: Join this group in making blanket squares for Hope's Door families or chemotherapy caps for patients. Contact Angela Adler at knitting@wct.org.

Children's Village: A residential facility in Dobbs Ferry that provides a safe, structured, family-style environment for children and teens whose families are unable to take care of them. The largest group is older teen boys. We provide holiday gifts from a wish list for specific boys. Contact Jeanne Bodin and Natalie Werner at socialaction@wct.org. Also, a Books for Boys Collection, contact Joanne Levine at joanne.doron@verizon.net.

Lois Bronz Children's Center Backpack Collection: Donate backpacks and school supplies for the incoming Kindergartners (including pencils, markers, notebooks, composition books, erasers, crayons, folders, glue, glue sticks, rulers, and pencil cases). These children are from

low-income families and really need our help! Bin outside temple office. Contact Lisa Izes with any questions at socialaction@wct.org.

Disaster Relief: The bad news is that disasters keep happening – the good news is that Woodlands is always ready to lend a hand. To learn about current projects and needs, contact socialaction@wct.org.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

AFYA: With an inspiring idea to reuse surplus medical supplies from the US, volunteers organize and repack items to be shipped overseas. Donation drives for medical supplies and equipment are needed. Contact afyafoundation.org or 920-5081.

Bead for Life: Throw a bead party to help Ugandan women create sustainable businesses making beautiful bead jewelry. For information beadforlife.org.

Birthday Boxes: Help a child in a local shelter celebrate their birthday by creating a party-in-a-box. Collect party supplies such as paper plates, cake mix, frosting, goody bags, and a small present. Contact family-to-family.org.

Cabrini Immigration Services of Dobbs Ferry: This organization offers immigrants a haven of support, empowerment, and service. Contact 914.674.1937 to volunteer to help with afterschool homework sessions.

Coachman Family Center: Organize a special youth program or help with homework at this family shelter in White Plains. Various collections are needed for school supplies, winter gloves, baby items, gift cards. Contact socialaction@wct.org for current needs.

Family-To-Family: A Dobbs Ferry based organization helping with food, clothing and education locally and across the country. Contact family-to-family.org.

Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry: Works with our neighbors who are food insecure. You can organize a food drive or volunteer at South Presbyterian Church to sort or repack food donations. Contact dobbsferrypantry.org for more information.

Green Faith: This multi-faith organization provides ideas for environmental action projects based on religious values. Contact greenfaith.org.

Hazon: Works to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community and world. Outdoor programs and New York Bike Ride. Contact hazon.org.

Hudson Valley Community Services: Dedicated to providing services to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. They need healthy food collections, cleaning supply collections, and turkey collections at Thanksgiving. Contact socialaction@wct.org.

Kids Kloset: A WJCS agency providing clothing for children in need. You can volunteer at their White Plains office to sort clothing and match outfits, or run a children's clothing drive. Contact kidskloset@wjcs.com or 831-7616.

Neighbors Link: Their mission is to strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants. Volunteer to play with immigrant children or serve a family meal. Contact Lesli Cattan and Steve Glusker at immigrantfriends@wct.org.

Open Book Program: Collect gently used children's books for distribution at the Westchester Medical Center Clinic that hands out thousands of books to children sitting in the waiting room. Contact Suellen Havsy at sgh103@aol.com.

Ronald McDonald House: Cook a meal for families staying at the Westchester Medical Center complex in Valhalla. For details and current schedule: rmh-ghv.org or call 493-6455.

Sandy Hook Promise

Sandy Hook Promise is a national non-profit organization founded and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. Based in Newtown, Connecticut, our intent is to honor all victims of gun violence by turning our tragedy into a moment of transformation by providing programs and practices that protect children and prevent the senseless, tragic loss of life. For more information, sandyhookpromise.org.

Save The Children: Global organization fighting for children's rights and providing humanitarian aid during crises. Donations of animals, such as goats and chicks for families to raise, sports equipment, educational supplies for girls, clean water and health can be used as themes or project ideas. Contact savethechildren.org.

ZERO WASTE

Led by our Environmental Task Force, our temple has begun a "zero waste" project – an attempt to reduce the amount of waste we create. For information on how you and your celebration can be part of this effort, contact Kirsten Kleinman at environmental@wct.org.

COLLECTIONS

We love collections at Woodlands and are constantly running a collection. Many of our collections support the organizations above. So if you're interested in sports, books, cooking, toys, educational review books, animals, clothes... the list is endless - start a collection of your own. But please let us know before you do! We need to coordinate collections to eliminate any conflicts. Contact Rabbi Joan Glazer Farber and Roberta Roos at socialaction@wct.org to talk about your plan and timeframe.

CENTERPIECES

Creating centerpiece baskets of items as an alternative to floral arrangements is a beautiful addition to a celebration. You can choose a theme based on your interests or relate them to an organization you care about. Baskets of pet toys and food for an animal shelter, art supplies for Hope's Door, sports balls for Afya, reusable decorations to brighten a nursing home... or any interest or theme. Please talk to the specific organization about their needs before making the baskets and make a plan to deliver the items to the organization.

ONEG

Following services, the oneg is a perfect time to do a service project. Talk to us about supplying food for Midnight Run food bags and a sandwich making oneg, snack bags for children in local after school programs, or other service projects you would like to organize. Please check with the temple office about specific dates and availability.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

How about using this important life cycle ritual as an opportunity to try to change the world? You might want to get involved in a voter registration drive or advocate for sensible gun safety laws or work for immigrant rights. If this is your passion, the Social Action Committee will help you develop a project.

<p>The Social Action committee can help you with any program you'd like to develop. Contact Rabbi Joan Glazer Farber and Roberta Roos at socialaction@wct.org to talk about your ideas. Please note that you must contact us prior to any collection in the temple. We will also help to advertise your collection in the temple emails prior to your service date.</p>

Revised 2/11/2020