

# SNAPSHOTS OF 2020 AT TEMPLE BETH EL



LIBERTYteens

## LIBERTY Teens

*Kaya Nichols, LIBERTY Religious and Cultural Vice President*

Understandably, COVID-19 has affected the way that youth groups are operating. It has been difficult finding events that we can plan online, since so much of the magic that comes from these events is from the in-person interactions. However, the virtual programs I have attended and helped plan have proved beneficial in maintaining strong connections within LIBERTY (Life in Beth El Reform Temple Youth) and between the other youth groups in NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth).

Back in May, when we were all getting the hang of online events, LIBERTY and RALFTY (Temple Beth Or, Raleigh, NC) planned a joint *havdalah* and program. For the first time since I've been in NFTY, I got the chance to work with amazing teens from a different region than me, and I truly believe that COVID gave us this opportunity. Then, LIBERTY planned a joint *havdalah* and virtual co-event with KTTY (Kol Tikvah, Davidson, NC), the other North Carolina-based SAR (Southern Area Region) youth group. This was one of the only subregional events I've ever been to (or helped plan), and while we unfortunately had to do it online, the chance to work with friends from Lake Norman was a fantastic experience.

While we don't love the situation COVID has put us in, we've been able to participate in joint programs and expand our relationships with youth groups that we may not have had the opportunity to interact with. We hope to continue to forge relationships with these youth groups even after the pandemic is controlled.

### DID YOU KNOW...?

LIBERTY's High Holy Day hunger relief drive raised enough funds to provide over 100,000 pounds of food through Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina! Thank you to those who participated in this critical campaign!

## Zoom Mitzvah

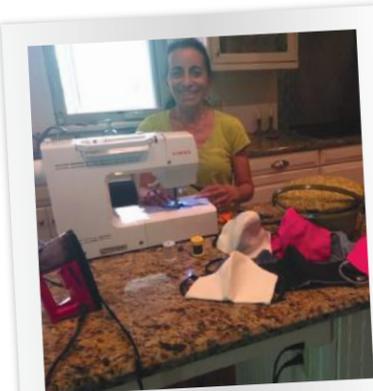
by Melanie Baron

A Zoom call from our couch is a long way from the rooftop Bat Mitzvah ceremony in Jerusalem we'd planned, and we did not react well at first. We pictured the three of us huddled around a laptop, faraway relatives struggling with technology and the day blurring together with so many others. We should have known Temple Beth El better.

We're one of three families who'd planned a Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the congregational Israel trip. We ultimately decided to celebrate together at one of the three homes (preceded by COVID tests, of course). In the end, we had a perfect day right here in Charlotte.

We were all able to focus on the meaning of the day without the distractions of a big reception and traveling guests, the kids were relaxed and comfortable, Rabbi Klass (Zooming into the service) seamlessly included extended family into the service, officiated with her signature humor and grace, and we shared the day with friends and relatives around the world.

Looking back, we're not as alone in Charlotte as we thought we were. Planning and executing a shared Zoom Mitzvah created a bond between our three families, and the whole experience deepened our connection to clergy and our Temple family.



## Mitzvah Day

*Karen Greenblatt, 2020 Mitzvah Day Chair*

Mitzvah Day 2020 (on May 17) was quite different due to COVID-19. We "re-imagined" Mitzvah Day as an online, at home event with safe, contactless projects. Congregants responded with enthusiasm and made the best of a difficult situation. Over 150 "family units" logged onto opening ceremonies. That translates to approximately 450 congregants, which is close to a "normal" Mitzvah Day crowd, even without the bagels!

Projects involved thank-you signs to essential workers, mask making, letter/cards to seniors, uplifting videos, food pantry donations, trash collection from our neighborhoods, social justice letters via the Reform Action Center website, math tutor training, letters urging elected officials to support our driver license restoration clinic, container garden planting, homemade meals for congregants, and so much more!

While it is difficult to measure our impact this year, we know (from reports and photos) that we collected, crafted, baked, planted, filmed, wrote, purchased, sewed, and cooked thousands of things! I am so inspired by the commitment of my TBE CLT friends and family to make TBE Mitzvah Day 2020 a fabulous event.



## The Porch

*Ginger Brock, Porch Co-Chair*

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of connection and community for all our well-being. The clergy have worked so hard to bring the spiritual life of Temple Beth El into our homes during the pandemic. The Porch events have supported this vital mission of upholding our community in these difficult times through reinforcing our connections, Jewish identity, and camaraderie.

The Porch has supported Young Adults and Families with Young Children through various online programs. We had a very successful online trivia night that was well attended by TBE members. The online Tot Shabbats have allowed the very smallest members to participate in services and continue to grow in their Jewish learning. The Porch also hosted a very successful event, welcoming our new Rabbi, Beth Nichols!

Throughout the long days and nights of 2020, The Porch has continued to foster community and support to the greater Temple Beth El population. We continue to look for opportunities to bring TBE together and look forward to when we can see each other in person!



The Porch

## Brotherhood

*Philip Schreiber, Brotherhood Board Member*

COVID hit our tight knit Jewish community hard. Our Brotherhood board continues to search for ways to engage our members and remind us all why we are members in the first place: hanging out with other Jewish men, joining together for food and fellowship, promoting learning and Jewish literacy, and service to our community. The call to action was clear: provide a safe place for people to join, connect with others, and deliver some sense of normalcy in abnormal times. Some recent highlights:

In August, we invited renowned Wells Fargo economic advisor and TBE member Mark Vitner to speak about the COVID, the Election, the Economy and Where We're Headed. Over 50 people joined our discussion.

In October, our Brotherhood hosted TBE member David Weinrib, MD, Infectious Diseases Specialist with Atrium Health, and Gibbie Harris, MSPH, BSN, RN, Mecklenburg County Public Health Director. We were thrilled to have such renowned experts in the field of disease at a time when so many Americans and congregants needed answers to questions about the Pandemic of our Lifetime.

In November, Jacob Diamond, Head Equipment Manager for the Orlando Magic, shared how a pro sports franchise operates in the midst of a pandemic.

Recordings of these programs are available on the Brotherhood page of TBE's website. As the pandemic persists, we'll keep trying to deliver the good and provide great educational programs for Brotherhood members. Hope to see you there.

Temple Beth El thanks you for your support!  
LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO...BECAUSE OF YOU.

