

the chronicle

TEMPLE BETH EL OF BOCA RATON

JUNE 2020 | SIVAN/TAMMUZ 5780

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Our Inner Life

BY **RABBI DAN LEVIN**
dlevin@tbeboca.org

Part of what I love about living in South Florida is how much time we get to spend outside. Our climate inspires a lifestyle that is all about getting out and being on the go.

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic has suddenly pushed us inside. The demands of social-distancing to mitigate the spread of the disease has altered so much of how we live.

Being inside can mean a lot of things.

For some of us, being inside can mean juggling an enormous array of responsibility: caring for children, guiding online lessons, working from home, tending to parents, preparing meals, doing housework.

For some, being inside means disappointment: canceled senior proms and graduations, canceled college semesters and summer camps, inability to be with loved ones during illness or grief.

For others, being inside can mean reduced employment, loss of business, and lower income.

For others, being inside can mean hours of solitude, separation, and loneliness.

But in the midst of the challenges we all face, being inside can also be spiritually transformative.

Hundreds of members have stepped up with passion, ingenuity, and creativity to help take care of our collective community.

Jewish practice directs us to *Pnimiyut* – a focus on our inner life. Our lives today constantly pull our attention to things that are outside of us – our professional responsibilities, the demands of our loved ones, our household chores. We often find ourselves so busy that we rarely go deeper into our spiritual selves.

We are so much more than what people see from the outside. The essence of who we really are lies within. When we push ourselves to go inside, we discover not only who we truly are, but we also discover what truly matters.

It is from that inner place that we hear God's commanding voice call out to us. And I have been so deeply inspired by how our community has responded to that commanding call.

In the last few weeks, our clergy team has delved deep to excavate our creative resources, turning our homes into recording studios, and finding ways to reach out to our congregation and community for worship, learning, and spiritual support and connection.

Our ELC team has endeavored to transform our pre-



Rabbi Dan Levin conducts Shabbat evening services from his living room.

school so that our youngest learners can still connect to their classes and their teachers. Our religious school team demonstrated enormous creativity so that our children could continue to learn and connect through redesigned online classes and youth group events. Our administrative team continues to master new technologies so that we can keep our community engaged and supported.

Hundreds of members have stepped up with passion, ingenuity, and creativity to help take care of our collective community. Our Chaverim Team has made thousands of phone calls so that every member of the congregation receives a regular connection. Our meal train has supported our front-line health care workers while helping local restaurants. Members have transformed their kitchen tables into factories producing masks to support local hospitals. We have organized the delivery of food to vulnerable families and supported local efforts to take care of the needy.

Moving forward, our Strategic Planning committee has formed a range of task forces to consider how Temple Beth El can best serve our community as we address the challenges of this pandemic. The collective wisdom of our incredible lay-leadership and our professional staff will ensure that Temple Beth El continues to be the invaluable source for spiritual engagement and support for each of us.

Let us use this time when we are forced to be inside to truly go deep inside. And once there, let us be inspired to extend ourselves outward for service, for connection, for inspiration, and for holiness.

The Birth of Virtual Beth El

BY SUSAN STALLONE, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AND
HELAYNE ROSENBLUM COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE

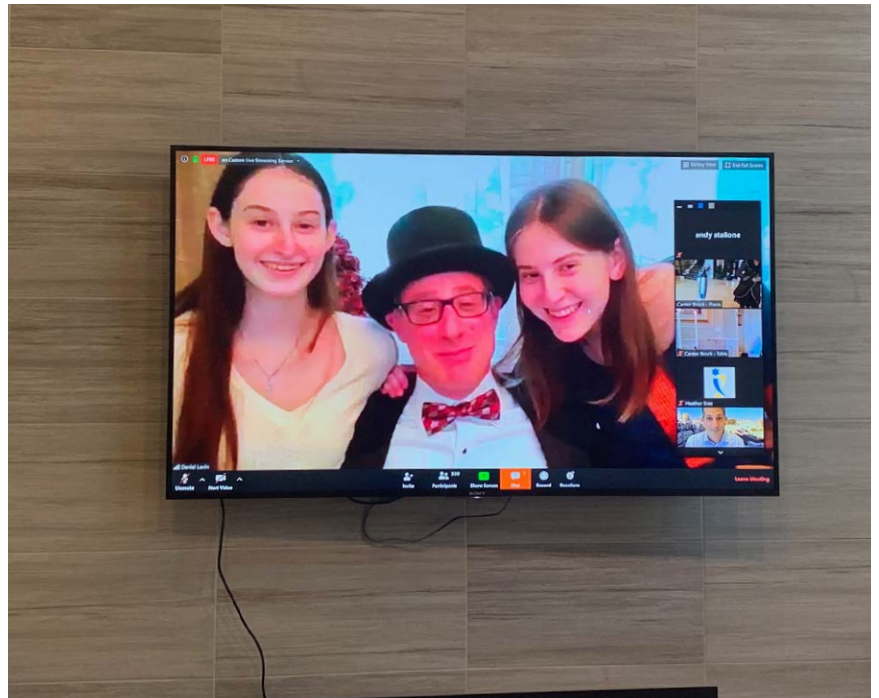
The ever-evolving efforts for all of us at Temple Beth El to remain connected to our Judaism and our Jewish community during COVID-19 have resulted in an amazing transformation from physical interaction to virtual interaction.

In mid-March when the decision was made for a “work from home” operation for everyone’s health and safety, our staff and clergy began the literally overnight task of building “Virtual Beth El”. This would become the essence of Temple Beth El going forward for the next couple of months.



How could this possibly be our new reality with Passover just around the corner? Could we celebrate and maintain the tradition of Passover with everyone safely ensconced at home? Could we do a Broadway Seder online, bringing Rabbi Dan and Cantor Lori “together” while they were in their own homes? What about helping families with children learn and preserve the rituals of this important holiday?

Within moments, staff, clergy and lay leaders pulled together to learn new technological platforms, assemble a production team, write



detailed scripts and practice together to deliver a cohesive and meaningful Passover experience online.

This new virtual platform set off an explosion in creativity...re-envisioning Shabbat services; re-creating the Religious School and the Early Learning Center so there would be no slide in learning and our parents would feel supported by their synagogue community; developing ways to engage our youngest to oldest congregants online — baking Challah with Rabbi Jessica, cooking with Miss Ronni, music with Cantor Michelle, Hebrew with Cantor Lori, Torah study with Rabbi Dan, and a whole new Virtual Beth El website and communication plan to convey this new world.

Working together during this unprecedented time we were able to remain “open” even when our physical doors were closed, and we knew we could still thrive as a congregation.

Throughout this special edition of *The Chronicle*, you will learn about many of the people and stories of this transformation and evolution.

Scenes from a virtual Seder

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The Chronicle who
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Only when the tide goes out do we discover who is swimming naked.

—Warren Buffet

BY **MARK SUNSHINE**
TEMPLE BETH EL PRESIDENT
msunshine@masunshine.com

Warren Buffet has a way with words.

During the COVID-19 crisis we are learning which community organizations swim naked and which are clothed.

I have some good news; the lower the tide goes, the better Beth El looks.

Our Board, volunteers, Clergy, staff and community replied to the COVID-19 crisis with thoughtfulness, compassion and love. We have pulled together and remain an impactful synagogue.

Our ability to organize and unite is not accidental; it is the result of hard work and forethought.

When the crisis began our Board adopted several Beth El priorities to guide our fiscal, religious and programmatic decision making.

It is through these priorities that we articulated our values, i.e., “what Beth El stands for.”

I want to share with you a summary of Beth El's priorities.

Ensure that Beth El survives the crisis intact

Many synagogues may not survive COVID-19 without adverse radical change and many others will simply disappear. Our Board is dedicated to ensuring that not only is Beth El a survivor but that we are positioned to serve our community better than anyone could reasonably have expected.

Take care of the most vulnerable

Taking care of the most vulnerable members of the Beth El community is of paramount importance. Seniors, the newly unemployed, sick and handicapped and many of our staff are among the most vulnerable. We believe

that we “are our brother's keeper” and that during the crisis it is important to not only talk about these principles but to live them.

Be as fair as possible to as many people as possible

One of our greatest challenges is to be as fair as possible while protecting the synagogue and those most at risk.



Mark Sunshine, Temple Beth El President
at his home office

Make important decisions quickly and provide maximum transparency

One of the reasons that Beth El is doing well in the current environment is because of our ability to make decisions quickly and with maximum transparency.

We are realistic and spend a lot of time trying to anticipate future events during a period of incredible uncertainty and ambiguity.

In order to stay ahead of events, Beth El has formed more than 10 special task forces to analyze, advise and execute in the “new normal.”

Avoid layoffs for as long as possible and provide as much salary certainty as allowable

Every member of Beth El's staff is also a member of our congregation. We have always treated our staff like an extended family; it is one of the reasons Beth El is the special place that it is.

Now, more than ever, the people we rely upon to serve us, our Clergy and staff, need us to help protect them. We need to protect them from getting sick, becoming unemployed and indigent, and being emotionally and physically overwhelmed with trying to solve the problems and issues of the community.

I can't guarantee that all of the Board's decisions will work out perfectly. And, unfortunately, I am certain, sometimes we will make the wrong choice.

But, I can promise everyone that we will always try to do the “right thing” with the most creativity, sensitivity, compassion and love that we can muster.

Please join me in this journey. As a community we are stronger if we stand together rather than apart.

Opening Up Temple Beth El Again Plan

BACKGROUND

The Opening Up Temple Beth El Again Plan (the “Plan”) provides a roadmap for how we intend to reopen the Temple. The Plan is separated into four phases. The determination of when we transition from one phase to the next is guided by the principals released by the U.S. Federal Government known as the “Opening Up America Again” plan. We will look to relevant governmental agencies for guidance, but will exercise independent judgement in our decision making. What might make sense for other types of businesses might not make sense for Temple Beth El. We are willing to diverge from government guidance (but not laws or formal orders) if we believe it is in the best interests of our members, staff and students to do so.

Additionally, we will err on the side of caution when in doubt. As a Jewish institution, protecting the safety and health of our community is an extremely high priority. Our membership includes a high percentage of people who are at higher risk of severe symptoms than the general population because of their age and health conditions. As a result, if a decision must be made where there is no clear “right” or “wrong” answer, we will make the best decision we can weighing all of the pros and cons, but will generally lean towards being more conservative in terms of the health risks we are willing to take.

This Plan does not cover every detail of every segment of our Temple operations. Each department (i.e.

Religious Activities, Engagement & Programming, Facilities & Operations, Early Learning Center, Religious School, and Mausoleum) will develop its own, even more detailed set of policies and procedures for each phase of re-opening. The Plan provides high level guidance so that as an organization we are thoughtful, prudent and consistent in our approach. The complete Plan is a lengthy document that goes into rather specific details about what activities are, and are not, permitted in each Phase of reopening. This Executive Summary provides a very high level overview of the more detailed Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF EACH PHASE

Phase 0: Complete Shutdown

The Schaefer Family Campus (“SFC”) and Beck Family Campus (“BFC”) are closed. No members of the public or Temple members are allowed on either campus during this phase with the exception of very limited life-cycle events.

As of publication, the Temple is in Phase 1 of the reopening.

Phase 1: Limited Return To Work

This corresponds to Phase 1 of the Opening Up America Again plan. No public is allowed on either campus during this phase with the exception of very limited life-cycle events.

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

We give special thanks to the members of our congregation on the Covid Task Force, who are guiding us as we make decisions regarding our building and school openings and closings.



Dr. Leonard G. Feld, MD, PhD, MMM, CPE



Rachel Guran, Registered Nurse and the Director of Epidemiology and Infection Prevention at the Memorial Healthcare System



Dr. Jason M. Goldman, MD



George Brown, Deputy City Manager of Boca Raton



Elise Ecoff, Lead Technology Officer, Nord Anglia Education

BOARD

Mark Sunshine, President
Wendy Walin, Exec. Vice President

STAFF

Rabbi Dan Levin
Steve Kaufman, Executive Director
Rita Diamond, Operations Director
Jason Reasor, Facilities Director
Heather Erez, Youth Education and Engagement Director
Ronni Graf, Beth El Early Learning Center Director
Susan Stallone, Marketing and Communications Director

There will be no in-person public participation in programs, events or worship services. Staff will be allowed to return to work with significant restrictions. The Early Learning Center (“ELC”) and Religious School remain closed for in-person learning.

Phase 2: Partial Return To Work

This corresponds to Phase 2 of the Opening Up America Again plan. Staff may return to work and restrictions on how many individuals may work on a given day will be relaxed. Limited public participation in lifecycle events, programs and worship services will be permitted but restricted in terms of number of people and physical proximity. The Early Learning Center and Religious School remain closed for in-person learning.

Phase 3: Full Return to Work

This corresponds to Phase 3 of the Opening Up America Again plan. All Staff may return to work. Measures will remain in place to limit large group interactions. Expanded (but still restricted) public participation in lifecycle events, programs and worship services will be permitted. Reopening of the Early Learning Center and Religious School will be allowed with restrictions on students and teachers, as well as restrictions on the movement of students and teachers between areas of the campus.

Phase 4: Resume Normal Operations

No further restrictions on staff, students or congregants. Unrestricted public participation in lifecycle events, programs and worship services will be allowed. Unrestricted reopening of Early Learning Center and Religious School.

DETERMINING WHEN TO TRANSITION FROM ONE PHASE TO THE NEXT PHASE

We will transition from one phase to the next phase when specific quantitative gating criteria set forth in the Federal Government’s “Opening Up America Again” plan have been satisfied. The determination as to whether the gating criteria have been met for each of the above phases will be made in consultation with the Temple’s Covid-19 Task Force, which meets on a weekly basis. The Covid-19 Task Force is comprised of senior members of the Temple’s staff and Board of Trustees. The Task Force also includes highly qualified medical professionals and local government officials.

CONCLUSION

Figuring out how to safely reopen two campuses with vastly different populations without undue delay is extraordinarily complicated. The risks, challenges and opportunities related to the Early Learning Center, where we care for children as young as a few months old, are vastly different from those we encounter when planning Shabbat Services at the Schaefer Family Campus. Our highly dedicated staff and impressive group of lay leaders are doing the best job we can to adapt to this evolving landscape and make the best decisions possible for our staff, members, guests and students. We appreciate your support and patience as continue to strive for excellence in all that we do.

Buildings May Be Closed but Our Staff is Still Hard at Work

BY **STEVE KAUFMAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
skaufman@tbeboca.org

It has been many weeks since the Temple offices were forced to close. But our incredible staff is still working as hard as ever to keep you connected to Temple Beth El. Using technologies like Zoom, Livestream and Facebook Live, we are finding new ways for our members and students to remain connected to the Temple and to one another. It has been a remarkable transformation in an incredibly short amount of time. If you have not yet tuned in, we encourage you to check out tbeboca.shulcloud.com/virtual for listings of programs we offer seven days a week.



We also want to remind you to please set up your ShulCloud account if you have not yet done so. Our ability to process paper checks is delayed because of the office closure so we are encouraging electronic payments and donations. With the ShulCloud on-line member portal, you can log into your account to:

- view and update personal information
- view account balances and make payments and donations on-line
- view and manage yahrzeits
- opt in or out of e-news subscriptions
- save a credit card on file to your secure account

Finally, we are no longer mailing paper statements unless you opt out of electronic billing. Monthly statements are sent only via e-mail unless you inform us that you still want paper invoices. To opt out of electronic billing and receive invoices via U.S. Mail, please notify Janice Odesnik, Database Manager, at jodesnik@tbeboca.org or 561-314-2814. Janice can also assist you with setting up your ShulCloud member portal account.

Stay healthy, stay well, stay connected to Temple Beth El.

Virtual Beth El Mausoleum

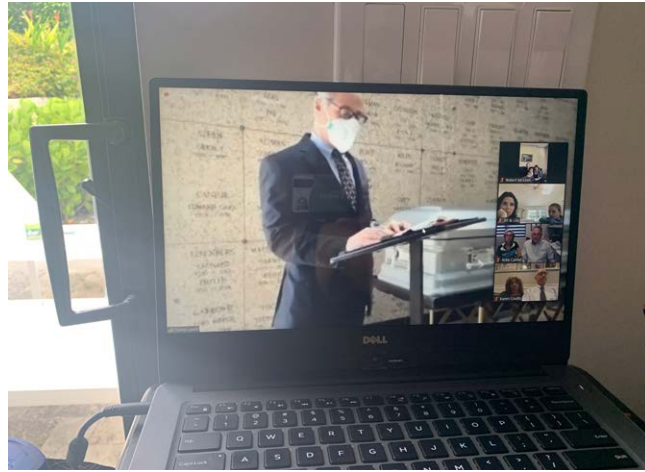
Never in our lifetime could we have imagined interacting with grieving families or families who want to make pre-need arrangements via Zoom video conferencing. However, since we enacted precautions to ensure everyone's safety

during the Covid-19 pandemic, technology has helped open the doors to all.

We created the "Virtual Beth El Mausoleum" to continue to provide the compassionate services our community has come to expect of us, without our clients having to get on a plane or leave the house if they are not comfortable doing so.

We can use Zoom to meet with individuals, couples and families to make pre-need arrangements or plan funerals. We can conduct funerals using interactive Zoom video features to connect those in attendance with those who are unable to attend in person.

When it comes to those who contact us to learn more about the Beth El Mausoleum, Zoom video conference technology provides the opportunity to see Mausoleum Director, Mike Sirowitz on their screen and speak with



Rabbi Dan Levin
conducted a funeral
via Zoom

CLERGY CHAT

People Zoomed in daily to talk with our clergy and each other while our buildings were closed.

I like Torah Study. I stretch my mind and the connection with the people with the different programs I'm part of – It's great! I'm meeting new people and seeing a lot of old friendly faces. —Susan

"I'm so grateful for you Rabbi Dan and all the members of the Temple and the clergy and all the classes. I feel like I'm just getting closer and closer to the Temple. It's brought so much meaning and fulfillment into my life. I don't know what I would have done with out it." — Andrea

My wife and I are making the best of it. We go out and walk 5 miles a day, morning and evening. The community is becoming a community of walkers... Never seen so many people walking and riding their bikes. Real challenge is finding creative things to do. Judy is still making her blankets and donating them to Cancer Oncology units for patients who still are under chemotherapy treatments. I've been working with Leukemia patients remotely. And I have become a real advocate for Zoom as a way of communicating. — Mike

him face-to-face as if they were in the same room. He can show photos/videos and give a virtual tour of our beautiful Mausoleum. It's so much more personal than if it was just via a telephone call. If family members out of the area wish to participate in this most important decision, they too can join in.

Families have been very appreciative. It is a great comfort for them to be able to make their plans, without waiting for our physical doors to open. We are equally grateful for this technology that allows us to interact with each person in real-time, and provide the warm, personal experience people have come to expect from the Beth El Mausoleum.

If you are interested in a virtual appointment or tour, a starting conversation, or an in-person meeting, contact Mike Sirowitz at msirowitz@tbeboca.org or 561-391-8901. Learn more at bethelmausoleum.org/virtual-beth-el-mausoleum

“Thanks to Temple we were able to host our first Parkinson’s Virtual Zoom Choir. Elinor was kind enough to have someone from the Temple help us navigate that whole system which was very needed.” —Judith

“I too love all the programs. Rabbi thank you! I think it’s ingenious from the singing to the cooking – it’s lots of fun. I even like to listen to the Storytime. SOMETIMES – I’m a big kid.” — Maddie

“I was having a bad day and Liliana and Elinor came to the rescue and that’s what the Temple is about. How I’m surviving — I walk 5 miles a day on A1A, I do my exercise class on Zoom 3 times a week and I do a lot of Temple stuff, which is really good. On Friday night I watch Temple services. And that helps my Shabbat a lot. — Phil

Virtual Annual Meeting

This year has brought its share of challenges but we came together virtually to celebrate our accomplishments, review and pass our 2020-2021 budget, and honor our incoming Board and award winners!



The John Rogers Staff Award for Exemplary Professional Service, which is voted on by all administrative staff and the Board of Trustees will be shared by two deserving individuals: [Susan Stallone](#) and [Humberto Morales](#).



The Joseph Q Kline award which recognizes the significant contribution of our volunteers is awarded this year to [Allen Lev](#).



The Robin L. Eisenberg Jewish Learning & Living Award for outstanding contribution to education at Temple Beth El is awarded this year to [Karen Levine](#).



Combating Covid Through Community

BY DEREK HURWITCH,
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
dhurwitch@tbeoca.org

One month ago, I delivered food to insecure and vulnerable families in our congregation. After dropping off groceries to nearly 15 families, I made my way back to my home office to finish my workday. The next day, we received a call from one of the recipients. A single mother of three, who, choked up on the phone, said, “my kids came home and saw that we had chicken, and couldn’t believe it. They kept asking me where it came from and how we were able to get it. They said, ‘we finally have meat to eat.’”

I can assure you that one thing remains the same. We are a strong, united, Temple Beth El community.

After dinner, they did their homework and went to bed, and for the first time in a while, didn’t complain of being hungry.”

It seems as if just yesterday we were living

in what now feels like a different world.

We find ourselves looking to draw parallels to a former time in our lives when things were similar... a point of reference to give us perspective and guide us through these uncharted waters. For some, that perspective might be most helpful. For others, the mentality is that “this has changed everything.”

I can assure you that one thing remains the same. We are a strong, united, Temple Beth El community. As a development director, I witness humanity at its finest, both on the brightest of days and during the darkest of storms. I am consistently amazed by the individual generosity of hands and hearts and reminded why I chose this career. I chose it because of you.

The effects of COVID-19 are widespread. This pandemic does not discriminate; it hits people of all ages and economic means. Temple Beth El and so many religious institutions and nonprofit organizations are not immune because our members are not immune. If you hurt, we hurt. If you are in pain, we are in pain.

The recent pandemic has presented us with a whole new wave of vulnerable congregants for whom we have begun to provide assistance.

What if I told you that before the impact of this pandemic, these were the statistics right here in our backyard:

- **17%** of our Jewish community describe themselves as just getting along, nearly poor or poor
- **29%** of Jewish households include someone with a chronic health issue, disability or special need
- **19%** of older adults suffered economic hardships over the course of the past year

These were some of the dire obstacles we were facing during the most prosperous time in our nation's history. We know this because last year alone, we provided aid to over 400 congregants at Temple Beth El.

The recent pandemic has not only exacerbated the statistics above, but has presented us with a whole new wave of vulnerable congregants for whom we have begun to provide assistance.

Make a Difference

Every Tuesday, volunteers from our congregation put on their gloves and masks make deliveries to members who are now food insecure. In addition, staff and volunteers are delivering medicines, so vulnerable congregants do not have to leave their homes. How do we learn about those in need? Each week volunteers serving on our Chaverim Team make calls to every household to check in, to inquire about their health and their needs, to find out how their caring congregation can be of assistance.

The new grim reality is that we are no longer talking just about scholarship, dues or subsidy: we are talking about Temple Beth El members who are going hungry. Many members of our congregation are facing job loss, diminished income, and a massive downturn in business. We have congregants making the difficult choices as to whether they should purchase groceries or medicine, clothing for their children or baby formula, pay rent or utility bills.



LEFT Derek Hurwitch
BELOW Derek (right) and congregants delivered groceries to food insecure members of Temple Beth El.

A community isn't worth anything if it is only there for you in the good times. The measure of a community is how it supports each other in moments of crisis. We CANNOT, and we WILL NOT, let individuals and families lose their spiritual home and their connection to community.

Our Temple Beth El community is strong. Just



as we have done in other difficult times, we will come through this challenge as a stronger community, united like never before.

Your generosity makes this possible.

Thank you for all you have always done and will continue to do.

Our Clergy and entire staff thank you.

Our members thank you.



To donate to support members of our community in their time of need, please donate at

tbeboca.org/virtual-general-fund or contact Derek at

dhurwitch@tbeboca.org or 561-701-6217

Social Action Committee During COVID-19

BY **LOTTIE NILSEN**
VICE PRESIDENT, SOCIAL ACTION

Just as South Florida and much of the country took to their homes to stay well and prevent the spread of COVID-19, members of the Temple Beth El community sprang into action, finding ways to feed, protect and care for those in our community who need assistance.

After reading stories about healthcare professionals in New York who were separating themselves from their homes and families, and working long shifts without food, **Trish Schaum** had an idea that our community could ease that burden for hospital workers in Boca Raton.

"I felt these health care workers were making huge sacrifices to care for others and I wanted them to know we, their community, appreciated all they were doing by giving them one less thing to worry about – finding meals to keep them going," said Schaum. She set up a meal train that provided more than 3800 meals to employees at West Boca Medical Center and Boca Regional Hospital. Donors called the participating restaurants and for each \$25 contribution, the restaurant provided eight meal servings to hospital staff.

"I also felt that other people would want to help, and the meal train was a way for them to take matters into their own hands, by calling and ordering from the restaurants directly. This had the added benefit of increasing business for these local restaurants. Not only were they getting the hospital orders, but once people started calling



TOP RIGHT
AND OPPOSITE
Members making
masks
ABOVE AND LEFT
Beth El Meal train
delivered meals to
staff at West Boca
Medical Center

them, they would order for themselves as well," Schaum said.

Lynda Frost was looking for a way to pitch in when she was asked to head up the Temple's mask making project. A brigade of more than 60 volunteers of all ages created 721 masks. Partnering with Temple member Rachel Guran, Director of Epidemiology and Infection

Keep an eye out for new social action efforts as Temple Beth El continues to fill needs in the community. To get involved, or to make a contribution, please contact Rabbi Greg Weisman at gweisman@tbeboca.org or 561-391-8900.

Engagement & Programming

The Engagement and Programming team has been hard at work providing much needed support and outreach to our congregation

Prevention for Memorial Healthcare Systems, the masks were distributed to mothers who were giving birth, COVID+ mothers, birthing center partners, cancer patients who are undergoing treatment, and employees who do not work directly with patients.

Frost's son Benny, a junior at North Broward Prep, played a leading role in the productivity by engaging fellow National Honor Society members in all stages of mask making. In addition, Frost connected with Anthony Mule, owner of West Boca Dry Cleaners, who made more than 200 masks.

"I really felt the strong drive of people wanting to help others for no reason, no agenda, just pure desire to help," Frost said.

Jim Sokolove, a new member of the Beth El community, read about the Temple projects and mobilized the other residents of his condo building. Together, the 40 units of his building contributed \$28,000.

"We're fortunate because we're healthy and we have all that we need, so we asked ourselves how we could assist others," Sokolove said. "I think there's an unmet need and the Temple can help funnel resources to where they're needed."

In addition to extending the meal train and providing Publix gift cards to Temple families who are food insecure, the funds that Sokolove and his neighbors contributed have helped ease the burden of community partner Wayne Barton, who has been providing up to 5,000 free hot meals each week from his Study Center.



Elinor Josephson and Melissa Abell delivering produce.

Food Distribution

Some of our very own Temple Beth El families are struggling to put food on the table. Hineini, we are here for them. Several of our members have donated their money and time to make sure these families were helped by delivering boxes of vegetables from Mecca Farms and Publix gift cards, as well as restaurant meals from Stallone's. If you are able to volunteer to bring food and joy to the tables of many families in our congregation, please contact Elinor Josephson, Director of Engagement and Programming at ejosephson@tbeboca.org.

Technology Help

Life has certainly changed in many ways in these last couple of months. Who knew we would be using Zoom, Livestream, Microsoft Teams and FaceTime throughout the day, let alone for services, Torah study and Lunch and Learn? When these technological systems present a challenge for you, have no fear, Temple Beth El is here! Congregants and staff members are on call to help you learn the ropes. Email [Elinor Josephson](mailto:Elinor.Josephson@tbeboca.org) or call her at 561-320-2060 for technological assistance. Or look for one of our Wednesday "Tech Check" classes on our temple website tbeboca.shulcloud.com/virtual

Chaverim Team

Who is that voice on the other end of the telephone? It is your friendly Chaverim Team member, a fellow congregant from Temple Beth El! The Chaverim Team members have been calling YOU and all the members of Temple Beth El to say hello, see how things are going and to see if anyone needs anything. These amazing volunteers reach out one by one to help us all stay connected. The team consists of over 60 members who each call about 25 families. Even more incredible, the Chaverim Team members tell us how wonderful they feel by being a part of this mitzvah. The Chaverim Team also calls for the High Holy Days and Passover. If you want to be a part of this wonderful mitzvah, please email Julie Guzy at jguzy@tbeboca.org to join the team.

Virtual Creativity

BY **RABBI JESSICA SPITALNIC MATES**
jmates@tbeboca.org

Poetry

Israeli Poetry Professor Rachel Korazim sheds tears on a regular basis during the online poetry classes she has been teaching daily. She is not crying over the pandemic. She is a tough Israeli born sabra, her mother traveled pregnant with her to Israel out of the ashes of the Holocaust. As she puts it, "I was born in the state before the state was born." Even being zoom-bombed a few weeks ago did not fluster this strong woman.

What brings tears to her eyes are the poems she teaches in her daily, free poetry classes on Zoom. Poetry in Israel is accessible and appreciated almost universally, with some of the most popular top 40 Israeli songs having started out as poems. The learning and love of poems transcends generations. Through her teachings now made available online and transcending borders as a result of the global pandemic, she offers beauty and hope to us all.

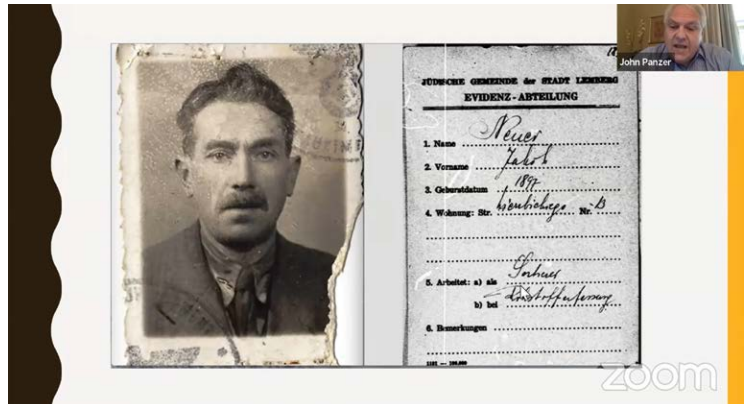
I looked for hope from the very first week of

Eretz Israel

After several weeks learning about Israeli poetry, we journeyed to Israel virtually, with two Israeli tour guides. One "trip" included a tour of Kibbutz Tsora, which was also experiencing shut-downs brought about by the coronavirus. Across the miles, we shared the common experience of silent school rooms and shuttered dining halls in this beautiful, idyllic kibbutz scenery that our own Heather Erez once called home.

Art

Lunch and Learn has addressed the ultimate irony that we have finished the construction and renovation of our Beck and Schaefer Family Campuses, but are unable to enjoy them in person. Sharing the stunning art installations made possible by the incredible generosity of our members, Susan Podolsky, Chair of the Art Task Force, has taken us on



Lunch and Learn online, and found it, in all places, in the book of Job. This dark book of the Hebrew Bible talks of the extreme suffering God brings on the biblical character Job, and how he responds. As life was changing at lightning speed, in the same way it changed for Job, the hope Job found in questioning God formed a lens to view the questions we have asked during this time of the pandemic.

a virtual tour of the art at our campuses with the very artists who created them. For many of us, staying at home has allowed us the unique opportunity to have in-depth conversations with the artists without the rush of daily life.

These artist sessions will enhance the enjoyment of that art when we can be back together in front of it. In preparing for these Art Sessions, we

**"Lunch and Learn" and "Creativity in the Time of Covid" are archived
on the Temple's [facebook page](#) and on [tbeboca.org/livestream](#)**



discovered that Ascalon Studios has temporarily changed its day-to-day creation of art to the creation of COVID-19 Intubation Safety Boxes. These acrylic, cube-shaped forms positioned over an infected patient's head and upper torso minimize the risk of droplets from patients' lungs spreading infection. Ascalon felt a moral obligation to help and did. We would have never known this without this opportunity for a deeper understanding of the art and artists that enhance the meaning and beauty of the Temple Beth El campuses.

Creativity in the Time of Covid

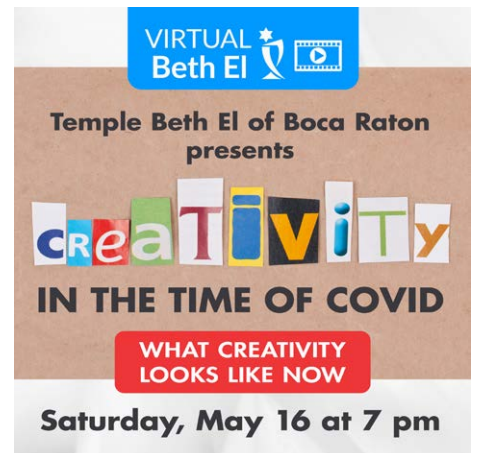
It became very clear by the second or third week into quarantine that we were not going to go back to normal any time soon. Creativity as we knew it was changing right before our eyes and adapting to our new normal. Bringing together two dear friends of mine, New York-based marketing executive and Temple Beth El kid, Brandon Schuster and Oscar winner, Elinor Burkett to discuss a possible virtual

program got the creative juices flowing.

Within an hour, we reached out to and had film producer Jess Weiss, Tony Award winning producer Jonathan Demar, and James Beard Award winning chef Michael Solomonov (Zahav) come on board for the broadcast! And within a few days, Emmy winner and comedian Judy Gold was on board too!

Brandon reflected on the program, "This time has forced us all to be creative in new ways. And during tough times, it's the arts that most people turn to – yet it's most at risk for being put on the chopping block first. These worlds have already been so deeply affected over the past two months. If anything, I really hope people will walk away realizing just how much we need all art and content in our lives, especially during a time like this."

We have learned in the time of Covid that in our inability to leave our homes, we can dig deep to nourish our hearts and minds. That we have so much to learn, and can learn "virtually" even when we can't be together, not just from books and texts but from one another.



OPPOSITE PAGE Julian Resnick from Kibbutz Tsora in Israel, and Jacob Panzer, Rabbi Jessica's great great great uncle who perished in the holocaust, and who she only recently learned about during a previous Lunch and Learn.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE Cantor Lori Brock and Cantorial Soloist Michelle Auslander Cohen; Rabbi Jessica Spitalnic Mates; Panel discussion screenshot for Creativity in the Time of Covid, which brought together artists of various disciplines, from comedy to cuisine, to discuss how to remain imaginative and productive during the pandemic.

Beyond The Classroom

BY **RONNI GRAF**

BETH EL EARLY LEARNING CENTER DIRECTOR
rgraf@tbeboca.org

On Wednesday, March 18th as I walked to my car at the far end of the Beck Family Campus parking lot, I had tears in my eyes. I was overwhelmed with emotion. Over the two weeks prior I had witnessed the world melting down. In that time, we had frantically tried to figure



out how to move our early learning center, with its philosophy of hands on learning, onto virtual platforms, said good-bye to our students, said good-bye to our teachers and staff, and finally prepared for working remotely and closing our building. As I walked through our beautiful facility one last time that last evening there were so many thoughts racing through my head, but one over-shadowed them all...when would our courtyard and classrooms be filled with the sounds of children again?

The weeks since have been filled with lessons, learning, disappointment, hope, gratitude, and



*Hi Ronni,
During this very difficult time I wanted to take a minute to thank you for helping keep our babies safe and calm during this pandemic. We are in uncharted territory and it's difficult to be away from the temple and school which have always been like a second home to our family. I wish you and your family good health and should you need anything the Ullman family is always here for you and for our community.*

*Much love,
Tabitha*

love. We have used the mission of Temple Beth El and the Beth El Early Learning Center as our guide. To engage students and families with our school, with our staff, with our larger synagogue community, and with each other. I have witnessed our teachers not only rise to the occasion, but supersede all expectations. From Zoom to Classroom Facebook pages, to videos and more, in all of these weeks, not a negative word. I can honestly say that I have the best administrative team any school director could wish for. I haven't suggested anything that they haven't moved heaven and earth to make happen.

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE
 The children enjoy imitating the Temple's online experiences! Filming "Story Time" for Facebook Live and leading Tot Shabbat and Song Session with Cantor Michelle.

In addition to the programs to connect with our students, we have created programming to connect with our parents. Our ELC parents have been the true dynamos of this pandemic. Many are working full time, taking care of young children, homeschooling older siblings, and still trying to care for themselves. Not easy. We have offered parent workshops to help offer guidance and create forums for them to express their concerns, ask questions, and receive support. To maintain social connections, our "Parents' Night Ins" with games and just "hanging out" have been a popular distraction on Saturday night after the kids are in bed and they can finally take a deep breath.

Our Parenthood Committee has remained active. Of course our April meeting was via Zoom and we actually had the highest attendance of the year! Nothing like attending a meeting in your pajamas! This incredible group of parents have not let this crisis slow them down. They continued to plan and execute our Staff



Young children are so adaptable and they are learning to navigate this new world, too. Of course Zoom meetings can be very entertaining. There has been lots of dancing in underwear, introductions to family pets, wanting tours of our homes, and other silliness. Seeing their smiles is still the highlight of my days.

Appreciation Week to be sure that our teachers know how much they are loved even though we can't be together right now. They are hard at work putting together next year's Board and planning for the future.

These past weeks have been filled with lots

of uncertainty, but there has also been lots of laughter and joy. Young children are so adaptable and they are learning to navigate this new world, too. Of course Zoom meetings can be very entertaining. There has been lots of dancing in underwear, introductions to family pets, wanting tours of our homes, and other silliness. Seeing their smiles is still the highlight of my days.

All these weeks later I still cannot answer the question of when our building will again be filled with the sounds of students. There are some very difficult decisions ahead and the path is still unclear, but one thing I know for sure is that I will not face this future alone. I have the support of an incredible Early Learning Center Staff and the Temple Beth El Community to lean on. I am truly blessed!

The Hidden Blessings of Virtual Religious School

BY **HEATHER EREZ**
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH EDUCATION
AND ENGAGEMENT
herez@tbeboca.org

Through all the chaos of switching to a virtual school, we quickly identified many blessings.

Our attendance soared. We know our families are typically busy, but without having to run to soccer games and dance rehearsals, our students were able to easily attend online.

Students stayed engaged in class. Shorter class times didn't allow us to cover all that we usually teach while in person at the Beck Family Campus, but keeping students engaged was easier when together for just an hour.

Later Sunday start time worked well. Starting classes later online allowed for students to sleep in. We didn't have any sleepyheads wandering late onto campus and students were ready to learn when they logged onto class.

Family participation grew. Parents were able to "attend" from the background, and were able to continue the conversations at home after

continued on page 20



Virtual Beth El Religious School and Engagement: By the Numbers

7

WEEKS OF
PROGRAMMING
(SO FAR!)

63

CLASS SESSIONS
FOR K-12

326

STUDENTS ATTENDED
VIRTUAL RELIGIOUS
SCHOOL CLASSES

86

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR OUR K-12 STUDENTS

227

HEBREW AND BAR MITZVAH
TUTORING SESSIONS

36

KIDS MADE ISRAELI FLAGS
FOR YOM HAATZMAUT

53

STUDENTS CREATED OMER
COUNTERS FOR THE FIRST TIME



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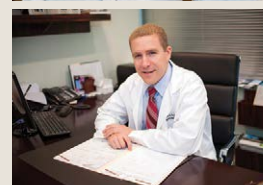


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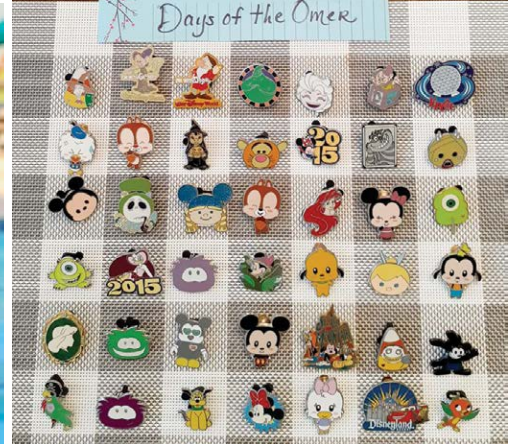
Virtual Religious School

continued from page 18

school. They appreciated and enjoyed the glimpse into our program. We received more participation from families doing projects at home than ever before.

Although we miss seeing our students face to face on Sunday mornings and feeling the energy of everyone in the building together, we are encouraged by these silver linings. Although we don't know exactly what Religious School will look like next year, we know we have the tools and the congregational support to keep our students more engaged and better educated than ever before.

To join us next year, please register for our 2020-2021 school year now! Contact me at herez@tbeboca.org or go to tbeboca.org/religious-school for rates and registration.



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B'Nai Mitzvah



Jessica Berger



Donovan Seguin



America Wisot

Jessica Berger
Daughter of Jill and Ian Berger
5/23/2020 at 11:30 am

Donovan Seguin
Son of Nancy Seguin
6/6/2020 at 10:45 am

America Wisot
Daughter of Victoria
and Jeff Wisot
6/13/2020 at 6:00 pm

Mia Blumenthal
Daughter of Jennifer and Scott
Blumenthal
06/18/2020 at 10:45 am

Josh Blumenthal
Son of Jennifer and Scott
Blumenthal
06/18/2020 at 10:45 am

Alex Schiller
Son of Robyn
and Neil Schiller
06/20/2020 at 10:45 am

Jonathan Lazar
Son of Sara and Eric Lazar
6/27/2020 at 10:45 am



Mia Blumenthal



Josh Blumenthal



Alex Schiller



Jonathan Lazar



JONATHAN KISLEV
Dreaming of Jerusalem
2013, Oil on Canvas

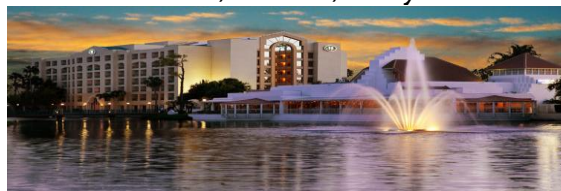
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Temple Beth El of Boca Raton seeks to be a deeply compelling center of Reform Judaism, integrating the wisdom of Torah and tradition with the modern world in which we live. Our congregation will:

Welcome, involve and inspire all who enter, embracing the unique contributions of every individual.

Reach out to the larger community to encourage participation in synagogue life.

Celebrate, grieve, heal and grow together through all seasons of life.

Strive to be a learned community that questions, studies, and honors the gift of Torah and the covenant with God.

Engage in inspiring worship and transformative experiences of Jewish spirituality.

Share a love and responsibility for each other, our community and country, for Israel, and for the future of the Jewish people.

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Throughout his career, Dr. Norton has had a strong interest in academic medicine and has been actively involved in teaching and research. He has authored multiple publications on a variety of topics related to spine surgery in numerous peer-reviewed journals and textbooks. He has received several research grants and has presented his research at both national and international conferences.

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