

Incorporating Advocacy into Your Mitzvah Day



www.rac.org/50

Mitzvah Day is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen your congregation's commitment to social action, participate in hands-on volunteer work *and* advocate for social change. The following suggestions can help your congregation easily incorporate an advocacy component into your Mitzvah Day celebration:

- **Educate:** Research your selected topic (e.g. environment, child nutrition, housing, Darfur) to identify pressing issues. Invite a local expert, show a film, set up a booth or prepare a hand-out to inform fellow congregants about the "ins-and-outs" of the issue. Visit www.rac.org to get started!
- **Advocate:** Once you've identified a specific legislative ask, start a letter-writing campaign, collect petition signatures, coordinate a call-in day or organize a lobby visit.
- **Tell the Story!** Reach out to local media and/or post an article in your congregation's bulletin highlighting your efforts and sharing your success.

Economic Justice Issues

If your Mitzvah Day includes a canned food drive, serving food in a soup kitchen or building low-income housing, consider the following:

- **Paper Plate Campaign:** Ask for the restoration of money cut from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by having participants write letters to their Members of Congress on paper plates to further underscore the need for programs that address hunger.
- **Sign-On:** Sign your congregation onto the SAVE for All Statement of Principles, a campaign to oppose severe cuts in federal funding for vital programs that aid low- and moderate-income people. Visit <http://action.rac.org>.

Environmental & Energy Issues

When cleaning up a local park or waterway, planting a synagogue garden or making your building more energy-efficient, consider the following:

- **Meet with Local Officials:** Discuss plans to green your community by expanding public transportation, recycling and expanding urban green space.
- **Make a Green Pledge:** Encourage your synagogue, congregants and local businesses to switch from disposable to reusable or environmentally-friendly service items.

Health & Aging Issues

If your congregation is volunteering in a local hospital, visiting residents in a nursing home or delivering Meals-on-Wheels, consider the following:

- **Collect Signatures:** Sign the RAC's e-petition in support of health care reform by visiting <http://action.rac.org>.
- **Congregate Meal Program:** Find out if your city offers seniors regular hot, nutritious meals and opportunities to socialize. If not, perhaps you can be a meal site!

Children's Issues

Are you renovating a school building, volunteering at a day care or packaging weekend meals for students from families in need? Then consider the following:

- **Summer Food Program:** Consider starting a program to provide children with healthy meals during the summer months. Visit www.summerfood.usda.gov to learn more.
- **Panel Presentation:** Invite local education experts and school professionals to speak on a panel discussing education reform.

Women's Issues

If your Mitzvah Day includes volunteering at a women's shelter or women's health clinic, consider the following:

- **Where's My Cell?:** Organize a call-in campaign to your Members of Congress to oppose drastic cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- **Interfaith Lobbying on Reproductive Rights:** Plan a community lobbying day to urge your elected officials to oppose state legislation that would ban abortion service coverage in health plans sold in new insurance exchanges.



Visit the RAC's Chai Impact Action Center at <http://action.rac.org> or contact Naomi Abelson at nabelson@rac.org to learn more about pressing issues and how your congregation can take action!