

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

2005/5765

Irving J. Fain Social Action Awards

**FAIN
2005**

Models of Outstanding Synagogue Social Action Programs

Active commitment to social justice is a hallmark of the Reform Jewish community. That commitment has inspired Reform congregations across North America to develop and pursue a wide range of activities and programs that help *l'taken et ha'olam*, to mend the world. By reaching out to the needy and the downtrodden, by forming coalitions of concern across religious and racial lines, by advocating for equity and justice, and in countless other ways, the congregations of our Movement stand on the front line of the long, hard struggle to realize the vision of the prophets and to create communities informed by that vision.

Irving J. Fain was a passionate proponent of social justice and served for a decade as Chair of the Commission on Social Action. The Fain Awards, established in 1983 in his honor and memory, are awarded every two years to congregations whose work in the area of social justice is exemplary. Specifically, awards are presented to congregations that have successfully involved large numbers of congregants in their social action programs or that have developed genuinely innovative and/or particularly effective projects.

The 2005 Fain Award winners fully meet the high standard the awards are meant to advance. We hope and expect they will inspire others to embark creatively and energetically on the road to justice.

2005 Fain Award Winners

Congregation Beth El, Sudbury, MA

Congregational Health Action Initiative (CHAI) and Metrowest Free Medical Program

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley created the Congregational Health Action Initiative to help improve access to health care for those who lack health insurance. They host the weekly Metrowest Free Medical Program, where volunteers from the congregation provide free health services, medications and advice to those lacking affordable health insurance.

Reform Jewish Voice of New York State

126 New York congregations engaged in statewide advocacy

Volunteers from Reform synagogues throughout New York State formed the Reform Jewish Voice network to advocate for New York State legislation and governmental actions that embody the principles of the Reform Jewish Movement. This group helps educate synagogue members about critical issues facing New Yorkers and encourages individuals to take active roles in their state legislative districts.

Goldman Union Camp Institute, Zionsville, IN

Tikkun Olam Program

The Goldman Union Camp Institute's *Tikkun Olam* Program provided campers with a summer-long, hands-on introduction to opportunity, community, and social justice. More than 700 campers and staff participated in this program, in which they worked in three different neighborhoods doing clean-up and building projects.



Students at the Milken Community High School of Stephen S. Wise Temple in LA made MIA Slave Bracelets as part of their curriculum.

Stephen S. Wise Temple, Los Angeles, CA

Milken Community High School, Dream Freedom Anti-Slavery Curriculum

The Middle School students of Milken Community High School of Stephen Wise Temple studied issues of contemporary slavery, particularly in Sudan, through a curriculum immersion program. The program included a slavery teach-in that boasted many creative workshops and a student rally. The students collectively raised \$23,000 to assist in the redemption of slaves in Southern Sudan and aid the long overdue resettlement and rehabilitation process.

Temple Shaaray Tefila of Northern Westchester, Bedford, NY

Interfaith Nicaragua Work Trip

Teenagers from Temple Shaaray Tefila traveled with youth from Bedford Presbyterian Church to Nicaragua for a work trip. They learned how to bend metal, mix cement, and lay blocks, culminating in the building of five homes. When they were not building, the students read, sang, and played with the local Nicaraguan children.

Temple Israel, Columbus, OH

Mentoring at Main Street Elementary

Temple Israel congregants, along with members of the First AME Zion Church, work with 4th graders at Main Street Elementary, an inner city school, by helping the students improve their reading and critical thinking skills, which are needed to pass state-required proficiency tests. The Temple Israel volunteers also mentor the students, play educational games with them, and provide them with safe activities.

Temple Beth Am, Seattle, WA

Repairing the Covenant: Economic Justice Programming 2003-2004

Through this project, Temple Beth Am members made commitments to social and economic justice while building connections with the broader faith community. The synagogue hosted Tent City (a self-governed group of about 100 homeless adults who move throughout the year), held four major educational forums that addressed poverty, hunger, and homelessness, and created a Homeless to Renter program.

Temple Shaaray Tefila, New York, NY

University of the Streets

Members of Temple Shaaray Tefila serve as faculty for their "University of the Streets" program at area shelters. They provide homeless adults with speakers and programs on varying topics with the hope of allowing these individuals to "learn for the sake of learning." Congregants have donated over a thousand books to their library for the homeless, and they volunteer as literacy tutors.

Congregation Beth El, Tyler, TX

The Abraham House Interfaith Build

The Abraham House is a partnership between Congregation Beth El and the Muslim community of East Texas. Together, these communities will build a Habitat for Humanity house for a needy Christian family. In addition to helping those in need, this project will allow Muslims and Jews to work side-by-side, tearing down the stereotypes, building up friendships, and establishing a common ground from which future dialogue may occur.

Congregation Scharai Zedek, Tampa, FL

Yad B' Yad... Hand in Hand/Scharai Zedek and Wimauma (Farmworker outreach)

Congregation Scharai Zedek has involved its entire membership in an ongoing obligation to provide relief and support to Wimauma, a nearby migrant farm worker community. They initiated a Mitzvah of the Month program that targeted a different need of this community every month, including: collecting school supplies, distributing baby formula and diapers, picking produce for a food pantry, and serving as "Reading Buddies" for elementary school students.

Congregation Emanu El, Houston, TX

Military Packages for Operation Iraqi Freedom

Congregation Emanu El "adopted" a military unit comprised of 1,000 soldiers serving abroad in Iraq and Afghanistan. Members of the congregation donated \$6,000 and procured donations of various goods for over 600 care packages. Congregation Emanu El also sent food, coffee, and magazines to Military Headquarters, Rosh HaShana cards and CDs from a synagogue concert to Jewish troops for the New Year, and special care packages for female military personnel.

Temple Oheb Shalom, Baltimore, MD
Gan Chiaie Community Garden

Temple Oheb Shalom has a community garden, the Gan Chiaie (Garden of Life), located on its grounds. In partnership with St. Gregory's the Great Roman Catholic Church, an inner city African-American congregation, members of Temple Oheb Shalom harvest at least 4,000 pounds of fresh produce each year for a soup kitchen at a local church.



Members of Temple Oheb Shalom in Baltimore tend to the Temple's Community Garden.

Temple Beth El, Aptos, CA
Out in Our Faith (GLBT Inclusion)

Temple Beth El members worked with leaders of the GLBT community as well as other religious leaders to develop a multi-faith worship and workshop experience that celebrated and promoted the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the life of Santa Cruz County area churches and synagogues. In addition, Temple Beth El clergy, members, and friends marched in the Santa Cruz County Pride Parade.

KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation, Chicago, IL
Church-State Committee

KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation established a Church-State Committee to educate the congregation and the broader community about the dangers of the current assault on the separation of church and state. The Committee has drafted testimony, hosted an event where Senator Richard Durbin spoke, and conducted a scholar-in-residence weekend.

Shared Award: Community-Wide Mitzvah Day

Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, Staten Island, NY
Staten Island Community Days

Temple Israel created the concept of "Staten Island Community Days" – a community-wide Mitzvah Day involving over 50 houses of worship. To kick off the event, an interfaith dialogue was held involving Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim leaders. One of the special projects included a musical performance for mentally ill group home residents, and mothers and children from a local homeless shelter.

Temple Israel of Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA
Big Sunday

Temple Israel's Mitzvah Day has grown so much that they renamed it Big Sunday. This large-scale *tikkun olam* project gathers its volunteers from houses of worship of many religions, public and private schools, fraternities, and other organizations. For Big Sunday 2004, more than 5,000 people from more than 100 different groups volunteered to do nearly 150 different activities that focused on topics such as homelessness, the environment, literacy, seniors, and animals.

Shared Award: Support of Jewish Communities in Africa

Temple Jeremiah, Northfield, IL
We Can Make a Difference: NACOEJ

Temple Jeremiah's Religious School engaged in a full-year social action project to support Ethiopian Jewry. Through sales of Ethiopian embroidery and an Ethiopian themed Shabbat, both children and their parents raised money to "adopt" and feed Ethiopian Jewish children. The synagogue hosted a national photo exhibit that featured photographs taken in Ethiopia, and sold prints of these photographs to raise additional funds.

Woodlands Community Temple, White Plains, NY
Abayudaya Moses Synagogue Associate Membership Project

By donating \$50 annually to the Moses Synagogue Associate Membership program, Woodlands Community Temple families and friends raise money to provide water and electricity to the Abayudaya – a Jewish community in Uganda. Woodlands Community Temple also educates its congregants about the Abayudaya and provides assistance to the Abayudaya to meet their ritual needs.

Shared Award: Overall Program

Temple Judea, Tarzana, CA
Year of Tikkun Olam: Be a Piece of the Puzzle

Temple Judea dedicated a year to social action and asked all of its members to commit themselves to 18 hours of community service. Each congregant was given a piece to a 4,000 piece puzzle and was asked to return their pieces to the temple at the conclusion of their 18 hours of *tikkun olam*. On the temple website members log their *tikkun olam* hours and activities.

Temple Beth Torah, Melville, NY
Wyandanch Camp; Mitzvah Chavurot; Gleaning

In partnership with a local church, Temple Beth Torah supports Wyandanch Camp, a summer day camp program that provides underprivileged children with fun and interesting activities and field trips. The congregation also hosts a Mitzvah Chavurah program that engages its sixth graders and their families in a variety of mitzvah projects of their own design and implementation. Each October synagogue members volunteer to pick fresh vegetables from local farms that are then donated to non-profit food agencies.

Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Los Angeles, CA
Tikkun Olam: Social Action at Wilshire Boulevard Temple

Wilshire Boulevard Temple revamped its social action program and in doing so, motivated congregants to make commitments and contributions to social action at new, unprecedented levels. To accomplish this, the synagogue created a "Guide to Uplifting Life," published a "*Tikkun Olam Times*," launched a greening project, and incorporated volunteer time into their *b'nei mitzvah* curriculum.

Beth David Reform Congregation, Gladwyne, PA
Integrated Social Action Program

Beth David Reform Congregation maintains the concept of active social action throughout the year, and accomplishes this in a number of ways, including: a Mitzvah of the Month column in the temple bulletin and on the website, a yearly social action Shabbat, housing the homeless through the Interfaith Hospitality Network, donations of meals and foods, and upkeep of a Jewish cemetery.

Honorable Mentions

Westchester Reform Temple, Scarsdale, NY

Edward Williams Elementary School Afternoon Advantage Program

Westchester Reform Temple formed an ongoing partnership with the supplemental after-school program at the Edward Williams Elementary School. Over sixty congregants volunteer their time to provide academic tutoring, skills instruction, and mentoring to the students in the program, many of whom have serious socio-economic issues and learning disabilities. Congregants also donate funds and materials to support the program.

Shared Award: Interfaith Programming

Temple Beth Emeth, Ann Arbor, MI

Gate to Humanity Arab-Jewish Cultural Center

Vassar Temple, Poughkeepsie, NY

Salaam-Shalom

Temple Sinai of Roslyn, Roslyn Heights, NY

Muslim/Jewish Dialogue

Congregation B'nai Israel, Sacramento, CA

The Children of Abraham Initiative

Temple Beth Emeth, Vassar Temple, Temple Sinai of Roslyn, and Congregation B'nai Israel have helped bridge the gap between people of different faiths by implementing creative projects. These projects included a Muslim, Jewish, and Episcopal effort to support an Arab-Jewish Cultural Center in the Galilee, a Muslim-Jewish cultural and education project, an interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Jews, and an interfaith coalition of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim clergy and lay leaders.



GUCI Campers at work in the community.

Shared Award: Feeding the Hungry

Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, CA

San Diego Hunger Project

Temple Beth David of the South Shore, Canton, MA

United Homes Soup Kitchen

Members of Congregation Beth Israel and Temple Beth David have volunteered to cook and serve meals to help feed hungry children and adults in the inner cities of San Diego and Boston. Synagogue members also provided financial support for these programs, and collected items of need for the homeless participants.

Shared Award: Housing the Homeless

Temple Sinai, Rochester, NY

RAIHN (Rochester Area Interfaith Housing Network)

Congregation Beth Israel, Austin, TX

Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)

Temple Emanu-El, Westfield, NJ

Housing the Homeless

Temple Sinai, Congregation Beth Israel, and Temple Emanu-El all worked with the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) to provide shelter for homeless individuals. These synagogues offer warm, safe, and healthy environments to the homeless. Synagogue members volunteer their time for this mitzvah in a variety of ways such as cooking and serving meals, purchasing supplies, playing with the children, providing recreational activities, and transporting guests.



Congregation Beth El, Sudbury, MA runs its Free Medical Program.

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