



The Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

2007 / 5767

Irving J. Fain Social Action Awards

Models of Outstanding Synagogue Social Action Programs

Active commitment to social justice is a hallmark of Reform Judaism. That commitment has inspired Reform congregations across North America to develop and pursue a wide range of activities and programs designed *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 equality and justice and in countless other ways, the congregations of our Movement help realize the vision of the prophets and 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 of Reform Judaism. 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. We hope and expect that the 2007 Fain Award winners will inspire others to embark creatively and energetically on the road to justice.

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2007 Irving J. Fain Social Action Award Winners

Am Shalom Congregation

Barrie, Ontario, Canada

Prison Outreach Program

Am Shalom Congregation, with under 100 members, created a monthly prison visiting program for Jewish inmates of the Central North Correctional Centre. The volunteers visit with inmates, bring Jewish literature and, when possible, hold services.

Beth Hillel Temple

Kenosha, WI

The Shofar Calls, We CAN Make a Difference

Beth Hillel Temple created an intergenerational weekend retreat built around social justice and advocacy to put *tikkun olam* in the forefront of the congregation. The retreat included speakers and hands-on activities on topics ranging from stem cell research, homelessness, poverty, separation between church and state and Darfur. The weekend resulted in numerous initiatives and advocacy on a wide range of issues. Projects included collecting unused medical items for hospitals in poor and remote areas of the world and raising awareness about fair trade.

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

Albany, NY

Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care

The social action committee at B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation created a special Shabbat program on the need for universal health care. The program included text study and presentations led by people in the fields of clinical medicine, health policy, and public health. From this event, the congregation formed the Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care, a coalition to educate and advocate for a solution to the broken health care system.

Congregation Rodeph Sholom

New York, NY

One Voice to Save Choice

One Voice to Save Choice is Congregation Rodeph Sholom's reproductive rights task force. It established an interfaith coalition of more than forty synagogues, churches, and other faith-based institutions to address the need for reproductive rights. The group partnered with Riverside Church and Planned Parenthood of NYC to present "For the Sake of Our Children," a community-wide program supporting accessibility to sexuality education.

Congregation Schaarai Zedek

Tampa, FL

Limud Zedek: The Ethics of Stem Cell Research

The congregation kicked off its social justice advocacy group, Limud Zedek, with a forum on stem cell research featuring a rabbi, two state representatives, a scientist and a patient. The participants were educated on the science of stem cell research, heard the Jewish perspective and learned how they could directly affect the legislative process. They collected over 600 letters to mail to Florida representatives and senators and over 80 people signed a state petition for a Florida Constitutional Amendment supporting stem cell research.

Congregation Shir Hadash

Los Gatos, CA

Healthy Living Health Fair

Congregation Shir Hadash, in partnership with twenty other houses of worship and the Muslim community, provided health screening and information to a large, medically underserved population. They organized a Healthy Living Health Fair providing important health, nutritional, insurance and legal information. People were tested for high blood pressure, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Giveaways included 3000 dental kits, 100 bicycle helmets and over 75 home first aid, disaster, and earthquake kits.

Temple Beth Torah

Nyack, NY

Tax Assistance Program

Temple Beth Torah coordinated a group of volunteers who provided free tax assistance for the working poor of Rockland County who qualify for the Federal and State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Volunteers included site greeters, interpreters, tax experts, and technical assistants and 25 members trained to become certified tax preparers. Over \$100,000 was restored to the neediest families in their community through this assistance.

Temple Beth Torah

Ventura, CA

Hispanic-Jewish Relations Project

The social action committee at Temple Beth Torah actively promoted social and economic justice for immigrant workers by providing food and clothing and helping local mushroom workers obtain a labor contract. To educate themselves, they invited a member of the United Farm Workers Union to speak during Shabbat services. They also partnered in several projects with a primarily Hispanic church to provide a summer lunch program and assist victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Temple Emanuel

Cherry Hill, NJ

Teen Mitzvah Corps: Alternative Break

Temple Emanuel's youth program is modeled after the college Alternative Spring Break. Held in November when schools were closed for an annual teachers' convention, Temple Emanuel exposed students to the effects of poverty through a volunteer program in Baltimore, MD. Participants volunteered in three agencies including a soup kitchen, a food bank and a transitional homeless shelter. After returning, they dedicated themselves to educating others in the congregation about the shared responsibility to work for social and economic justice.

Temple Emanu-el

Westfield, NJ

I Have A Dream

Temple Emanu-el of Westfield established the "I Have a Dream Program — Plainfield Project" to help underserved children reach their education and career goals by providing educational, social, and cultural enrichment with an assured opportunity for higher education. In 2001, the congregation adopted a class of first graders and will support them until they graduate from high school in 2012, after which they will receive college tuition assistance from the congregation. The congregation has provided mental health programming, computers, shoes, supplies, tutoring, swimming lessons and many other activities and necessities.

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking

The Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking established a four-day series to bring awareness of human trafficking to the congregation, Jewish community, general public, and youth. As a part of the program, authorities on the subject provided information at a Montreal high school as well as during Shabbat services at the congregation. The program closed with a powerful film about traffickers and their victims.

Temple Sinai

Atlanta, GA

Second Helpings

Temple Sinai created Second Helpings, a food rescue program, in which volunteers pick up prepared foods that would otherwise be discarded from local restaurants, schools and groceries and deliver the items to various agencies and community organizations that reach out to some of the neediest members of the community. Second Helpings has collected over 125 tons of food to date.

Temple Sinai of North Dade

Miami Beach, FL

Initiative for Independent Living: A Commitment to Miami-Dade Foster Kids

Temple Sinai's commitment to children in foster care encourages self esteem and successful independent living. The "Mitzvah Shoes" project allows foster care children to select new sneakers rather than hand-me-downs. "Bicycles Mitzvah Project" presents a new bicycle, helmet and lock for those who have "aged out" of the system and cannot afford a car. Finally, "The Initiative for Independent Living" supplies household items for former foster care children who are living in their first apartment and do not have a family support system to help them get started.

Union Temple

Brooklyn, NY

Partnership with HOPE

Union Temple partnered with The HOPE Program, a Brooklyn-based non-profit that teaches unemployed or under-employed adults the job skills necessary to move out of poverty. The congregation collected gently used business clothing, taught workshops, provided one-on-one mentoring and literacy tutoring and hired HOPE students as both interns and full time employees.

SHARED AWARD: PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Central Synagogue

New York, NY

PS 84

Central Synagogue formed a partnership with PS 84, a public school with primarily Hispanic children of single parents who work full time. Members helped create a lending library, established tutoring and enrichment programs, created a Parents Association and cultivated a mentor relationship between the congregation's older students and the students of PS 84.

Congregation Gates of Heaven

Schenectady, NY

Schenectady Day Nursery Project

The social action committee adopted the Schenectady Day Nursery, which serves low income families with medical needs and provides day care for pre-K children as well as before and after school care for older children. The congregation's teens have served as summer interns and volunteers painted, cleaned, and otherwise assisted at the nursery. A permanent collection box allows congregants to contribute clothes, toys, supplies, and books. Two congregants knit hats, scarves, and gloves for the children at the nursery school.

Temple Adath Israel

Lexington, KY

A Helping Hand to our Community: We're All in this Together

Through the Lexington African American Coalition's Adopt-A-School program, Temple Adath Israel has adopted Ashland Elementary School. Temple volunteers support the school through tutoring programs, after school activities, the Annual Science Fair, a 5th grade field trip, and the Fall Festival. They also assisted in developing a PTA.

Temple Brith Kodesh

Rochester, NY

School 52 Partnership

Temple Brith Kodesh gives educational support for students, teachers and administrators of a local elementary school by providing classroom volunteers, book donations, clothing and school supplies, a summer reading program, student mentoring and extra-curricular field trips in order to enhance students' education.

Temple Sinai

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Fighting Child Poverty in Our Community

Temple Sinai provides funding for a breakfast program at a local public school, which feeds approximately 80 children from an economically depressed area. Many of the mothers and siblings join the students for breakfast. Temple volunteers greet the children, help organize and serve the morning meal and provide supervision during playtime.

SHARED AWARD:

DARFUR AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Barnert Temple

Franklin Lakes, NJ

Walk/Run/Ride/Jump for Darfur

Barnert Temple held a one day event to raise awareness of the genocide in Darfur and raised over sixty thousand dollars for humanitarian aid. Congregants and other community members obtained sponsors and signed up for fifteen minute intervals on various pieces of exercise equipment to walk, run, ride, or jump for Darfur. "Stop the Genocide" t-shirts and "Not on My Watch" bracelets were sold and all proceeds went directly to support humanitarian aid in Darfur.

Congregation Bet Haverim

Davis, CA

Dear Sudan, Love, Davis/Woodland

"Dear Sudan" is an organization that raises funds to feed the equivalent of a community's population for one day in Darfur or in refugee camps in Chad. The goal of "Dear Sudan, Love, Davis/Woodland" was to raise \$17,500 - enough to feed 110,000 Darfuri refugees for a day, equal to the combined populations of the two California cities, Davis and Woodland. Through numerous programs, including a Fair for Darfur, a concert, a table at the local Farmer's Market and a Dinner for Darfur, the congregation raised \$21,000.

Temple Beth-El,

Monroe Temple of Liberal Judaism

Monroe, NY

March for Darfur

Temple Beth-El designated the month of March, "March for Darfur." They set up a permanent educational and photo exhibit and a lobby display that included information about the genocide, a Dolls for Darfur project, green awareness bracelets and copies of a petition to the President advocating for action in Darfur. A communal interfaith service was held at the congregation and "Save Darfur" signs and banners were displayed outside the building.

Temple Dor Dorim

Weston, FL

Yad B'Yad: Joining Together to Heal the World

Temple Dor Dorim cultivated a relationship with two local churches and collaborated on a series of events to address the suffering of Darfur. Their powerful "Faces of Hunger" program with dramatic presentations by youth, choirs and clergy raised over \$22,000 and demonstrated the power of collaboration with those of different faiths, but a shared commitment to *iikkun olam*. Through their "Mitzvah Mall" and a congregational "Save Darfur Rally" they continued to raise awareness about the suffering in Darfur.

SHARED AWARD:

CONGREGATION BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim

Glenview, IL

Panim el Panim: Face to Face

Panim el Panim is a congregation based community organizing initiative engaging hundreds of members in relational meetings to identify areas of shared values and concerns. Initially, the congregation is focusing on healthcare and education equity, joining other houses of worship and local organizations through United Power for Action and Justice in Chicago. The congregation now serves as a mentor to other congregations in the area seeking to organize for the common good.

Temple Isaiah

Lexington, MA

Temple Isaiah Organizing Project

Temple Isaiah along with three other synagogues came together and formed the Greater Boston Synagogue Organizing Project to transform their social justice work by applying community organizing principles. They developed three action teams: Health Care, focusing on elder care; Economic Pressures on Massachusetts Families, focusing on affordable housing and quality childcare; and Interfaith Action promoting religious dialogue and collaborative social justice work.

**SHARED AWARD:
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON CONSCIENCE**

Congregation Emanuel Denver, CO

Colorado Consultation on Conscience

Congregation Emanuel modeled the Colorado Consultation on Conscience after the national Religious Action Center Consultation on Conscience. The weekend included presentations by elected officials and workshops on many social justice issues including stem cell research, climate change, socially responsible investment, affordable housing and hunger.

Congregation Shaare Emeth St. Louis, MO

Life, Learning, Legislation

"Life, Learning, Legislation" was designed to teach the community about current issues through the lens of Jewish values. There were four components to the program: education about social justice issues and Jewish values; the legislative impact we can make; how to develop activists; and building and broadening the sense of community.

Temple Sinai Oakland, CA

Consultation on Social Justice

Temple Sinai along with seven other East Bay congregations organized and launched the Consultation on Social Justice, modeled after the Religious Action Center's Consultation on Conscience. The event drew over 250 participants discussing legislative and policy issues including alleviation of hunger, improving public education, advocating for economic justice and access to health care and affordable housing.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

B'nai Israel, Hattiesburg, MS
Hattiesburg Cluster Meeting

B'nai Israel, Sacramento, CA
Social Justice Shabbaton

Central Synagogue of Nassau County, Rockville Centre, NY
Battle of the Bands

Long Island Social Action Committee of the Greater New York Council, NY
Mitzvah Project Kick-Off

**SHARED AWARD:
OVERALL SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAM**

Congregation Emanu-El San Francisco, CA

Project H.E.L.P.

Congregation Emanu-El has been involved with many projects involving hunger and poverty, the environment, literacy, Darfur and disaster relief. The congregation oversees three food distribution programs, providing fresh produce to low-income schools and a summer pantry, supplementing meals for hundreds of seniors and producing thousands of pounds of vegetables to the local food bank from its congregational garden. The congregation's greening program earned them a "Conservation Champion Award". Other projects include literacy volunteers, interfaith initiatives, advocacy and community organizing.

Temple Beth Shalom Santa Fe, NM

Healing the World: Jewish Values, Social Justice and the Community

Temple Beth Shalom has an on-going multifaceted program of education, action and advocacy. Projects include a Habitat for Humanity build, Mitzvah Week, Social Action Month, CROP Walk, Issues and Advocacy Weekend, support of a local Peace Camp for Israeli and Palestinian teenagers and an interfaith Ramadan "Break the Fast." Their coalitional and advocacy issues include repeal of the death penalty, opposition to the Iraq War, reproductive choice, fighting anti-Semitism and environmental stewardship.

Temple Beth El, Boca Raton, FL
Cookies for Caregivers

Temple Beth El, Muncie, IN
Moslem-Jewish Interfaith Peace Service

Temple Beth Shalom, Needham, MA
The Abraham Project: Fulfilling the Mitzvah of Helping the Homeless

Temple Emanuel of South Hills, Pittsburgh, PA
Seek Justice, Relieve the Oppressed: The Prospect Park Refugee Project

HURRICANE RELIEF

In the summer of 2005, hurricanes ravaged communities along the Gulf Coast, causing devastation throughout the region, uprooting hundreds of thousands and causing unimaginable suffering. In the midst of that crisis, hundreds of Reform congregations and individuals throughout North America did extraordinary work to bring hope and healing by sheltering

and resettling victims, raising desperately needed funds, sending supplies to affected areas and volunteering in the region. That relief work continues to this day. We proudly acknowledge of all these efforts by our members, and offer gratitude on behalf of the thousands who benefited from them.

For more information on these and other programs go to www.rac.org/programbank.

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