



# Irving J. Fain Social Action 2011 5771 Awards

*Models of Outstanding Synagogue Social Action Programs*

[www.rac.org/fain](http://www.rac.org/fain)



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 those in need, by forming coalitions of concern across religious and racial lines, by advocating for equality and justice, 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 2011 Fain Award winners will inspire others to embark creatively and energetically on the road to justice.

*The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.*

**Religious  
50 Action  
Center  
of Reform Judaism**



*We are obligated to pursue tzedek, justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage.*

- A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, Pittsburgh, 1999 (CCAR)

# Award Winners

## **English as a Second Language Tutoring Program**

*Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester, Rye, NY*  
How do we best help our neighbors reach their full potential? Congregation Emanu-El recognizes that for many immigrants, the first step is "English as a Second Language" courses. Working with a local day laborers center, the synagogue provides twice-weekly English tutoring and helps participants build new skills.

## **Jewish Troops Program**

*Temple Israel, Columbus, GA*

For 10 years, Temple Israel volunteers have visited a local Army training base to lead services, host Jewish education classes and provide an *oneg* to soldiers stationed there. Volunteers have also coordinated Jewish holiday celebrations at the base and invited soldiers and their families to participate in synagogue activities free of charge. The program has helped the congregation build new relationships and engage our men and women in uniform.



## **Multi-Generational Jewish-Muslim Dialogue**

*Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, Chappaqua, NY*

With growing instances of both Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, the need to strengthen interfaith relations is more urgent than ever. Temple Beth El, in partnership with the community's local Muslim Society, created a two-part dialogue program for adults and youth to explore commonalities and differences.

## **Share a Shabbat**

*Temple Israel of Northern Westchester, Croton-on-Hudson, NY*

When a home for individuals with special needs opened nearby, Temple Israel volunteers began coordinating Shabbat dinners for its residents. Each month, congregation clergy and members come together for "Share a Shabbat," festive Friday night gatherings of food, prayer, stories and song.

## **Teens Making a World of Difference**

*Temple Emanuel, Greensboro, NC*

Over the last few years, the Gulf Coast has become a focal point for social justice activists. Temple Emanuel's coordinates an annual four-day teen trip to engage in hands-on *tikkun olam*, including hunger relief, rebuilding efforts and environmental restoration.

## **TEKIAH: Social Justice Organizing Initiative**

*Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland, MA*

Using community organizing tools, the synagogue launched three large-scale, multi-faceted social action initiatives: elder care, focusing on matching volunteers to service providers; the environment, inviting congregants to go on a "low-carbon diet" take other related actions; and raising healthy children through the building of sacred communities.



## **TRT Cares**

*Temple Rodeph Torah, Marlboro, NJ*

To support congregants and community members struggling with difficult job searches during this economic recession, Temple Rodeph Torah created "TRT Cares," an outreach initiative that includes a free online job bank, confidential hotline and workplace training classes.

## **Women's Storybook Project**

*Temple Beth Shalom, Austin, TX*

For many incarcerated mothers, maintaining a meaningful relationship with their children is challenging. Through the Women's Storybook Project, synagogue volunteers visit five area prisons monthly to help incarcerated mothers record tapes of themselves reading storybooks to their children, which are then sent to their families.



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## At-Risk Youth Initiatives

### **Backpack Buddies**

*Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah, GA*  
Hunger doesn't stop when school is out. Mickve Israel volunteers ensure that more than 100 school children – who would otherwise go hungry – are provided weekly with a bag full of nutritious weekend meals. In addition, the synagogue organized a used book fair, tutoring lessons and summer camp scholarships for the students.

### **Building Sustainable Futures: School Partnership**

*Touro Synagogue, New Orleans, LA*

After identifying two pressing local issues – education and crime – Touro Synagogue formed a synagogue-school partnership to take action. Activities include tutoring and mentoring programs, repairing the school building and winter coat drives. In turn, the school gives back, with students and the marching band joining the synagogue's annual Jazz Shabbat.



### **Sinai Schools Initiative**

*Chicago Sinai Congregation, Chicago, IL*

Sinai Schools Initiative is a synagogue-school partnership that meets the needs of a local low-income elementary school. The program provides classroom support; funds field trips, uniforms and school supplies; assists with the enrichment program; supplies a weekend's worth of food for the students most in need; and coordinates a Thanksgiving turkey give-away for families.



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## Environment & Food Justice Initiatives



### **Food Justice and Sustainability Program**

*KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation, Chicago, IL*  
Weaving together a commitment to food justice and sustainable land usage,

KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation created a garden that provides more than 1,000 pounds of food each season to a local interfaith food pantry and worked to educate the local community about issues of food justice.

### **Preserving our Planet**

*Congregation Beth HaTephila, Asheville, NC*  
Preserving Our Planet enhances the synagogue's connection to the environment. Work was coordinated through four subcommittees: Energy, Sustainable Agriculture, Transportation and "The 3 R's" (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). The synagogue installed energy-efficient building materials, established an interfaith community supported agriculture (CSA) program, began a composting initiative and partnered with local officials to improve public transportation.

### **Responsibly Recycling Electronic Waste**

*Temple Emanu-El, San Jose, CA*

After listening to congregants' interests and concerns, Temple Emanu-El organized an action night to promote responsible recycling of electronic waste. The evening culminated with congregants engaging with local elected officials, and included agreements by city council and county board members to support responsible recycling of electronic waste policies, which are moving forward.

### **Temple Emanuel Environmental Movement (TEEM)**

*Temple Emanuel, Winston-Salem, NC*

It's not just another night at the theater with Temple Emanuel's monthly environmental movie night and speaker series. TEEM utilizes engaging films to inspire participation in environmental workshops and city-wide green events such as Earth Day celebrations and sustainability fairs, as well as to change personal behaviors to positively impact the environment.

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## Hunger Initiatives

### **Hunger and Homeless Coalition**

*Congregation Beth Yam, Hilton Head Island, SC*  
How do you effectively tackle the problem of homelessness in your own

backyard? Congregation Beth Yam created the Hunger and Homeless Coalition, a local interfaith network that includes a Backpack Buddies program, soup kitchen and a directory of social service resources.



### **Take and Eat**

*Congregation Beth Israel, North Adams, MA*

Supplementing the Meals on Wheels program, synagogue volunteers plan, purchase, cook, package and deliver 125 hot and nutritious meals to local homebound seniors one Sunday each month.



# Honorable Mentions

## **Congregational Director of Advocacy and *Tikkun Olam* Projects**

*Central Reform Congregation, St. Louis, MO*

Realizing that their social action efforts were becoming fragmented, Central Reform Congregation hired a full-time staff person to successfully reinvigorate and refocus congregational activism.

## **Empowering the Girls of Kenya through Education**

*Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto, Ontario*

Holy Blossom Temple coordinated an African Marketplace, Water Walk and other programs to raise \$35,000 for Free the Children and help build the first girls high school in Kenya.



## **Environmental Expo**

*Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, CA*

Beth Israel's annual environmental expo includes a documentary screening, panel discussion, farmers market, green fair and free electronic waste recycling.

## ***Gan Tikvah* - Garden of Hope**

*Temple Shalom of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, NJ*

*Gan Tikvah* is an interfaith partnership to create a community garden and donate the garden's produce to a local food pantry.

## **Garden of Justice**

*University Synagogue, Los Angeles, CA*

With help from the religious school students and congregational volunteers, University Synagogue planted a food-producing organic garden and donated produce to the local food bank.

## **Hope for Haiti: A Community Benefit Concert**

*Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA*

Just two weeks after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel coordinated and hosted a community benefit concert, raising more than \$10,000 for the American Red Cross.



## **Instilling a Culture of Social Action in Religious School**

*Temple Adath B'nai Israel, Evansville, IN*

Temple Adath B'nai Israel implemented a comprehensive social action curriculum in its religious school, culminating in a large Social Action Day at the end of the school year.

**For more information on these and other programs, visit [www.rac.org/fain](http://www.rac.org/fain).**

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