

URJ-SEC  
SOCIAL  
ACTION  
COMMITTEE

- We are always looking for ideas and suggestions

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# SEC Tirdof Tzedek

Editor: Ilene King  
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Chairperson: Mark Buchbinder



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## Regional Social Action News

Welcome to the second edition of the Southeast Region's Social Action e-mail newsletter for 2009.

I have just returned from Washington D.C. where I attended the 2009 Consultation of Conscience conducted by the Religious Action Center. Every two years the social action movement of the URJ puts on a conference which highlights current social justice political issues. This year the conference attendees heard remarks from speakers such as David Axelrod, Senior Advisor to the President, Larry Summers, Chief Economic Advisor to the President, Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark, NJ, and Senators Russell Feingold (WI) and Susan Collins (ME). Please go to [www.rac.org/conc09](http://www.rac.org/conc09) for a full report including copies of speeches and supplementary materials.

The 2009/5769 Irving J. Fain Social Action Awards have been announced. Congratulations to Temple Beth El from Hollywood, FL who won an award for their Hollywood Cares program! In this copy of our newsletter there is a brief description of their program and I'm sure they will be happy to discuss how it

can be replicated in other congregations. Please go once again to [www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org) for a description of all Fain awardees.

I know that many of you have heard about the URJ's restructuring of regional offices. Although the Southeast region's office in Fort Lauderdale has been closed, the regional structure will continue for at least another year. We will get our staff support from an office which will be temporarily (for approximately one year) located in Dallas, TX, but which will ultimately be situated in Atlanta, GA. In addition, Naomi Abelson, who has worked with us this year in setting up our webinars, will continue to be a resource person for congregational social action. I, together with our state social action liaisons, will continue to be available as local resources for you. The state resource contacts are listed below:

Regional Social Action Chairperson:  
Mark Buchbinder – [buchbim@gmail.com](mailto:buchbim@gmail.com)

FLORIDA:  
South Florida (Palm Beach County South) – Madi Hoesten [xnymadi@bellsouth.net](mailto:xnymadi@bellsouth.net)  
Central Florida – Sharon Silver [stmossil@aol.com](mailto:stmossil@aol.com)  
North Florida – (Alachua County North and the Panhandle) – Cantor Tanya Tamarkin [tisraelcantor@comcast.net](mailto:tisraelcantor@comcast.net)

GEORGIA:  
Chuck Taylor [ctaylor@htgroup.com](mailto:ctaylor@htgroup.com)

ALABAMA:  
Linda Cohn [lindacohn@bellsouth.net](mailto:lindacohn@bellsouth.net)

SOUTH CAROLINA:  
Ilene King [iking@turnipseed.net](mailto:iking@turnipseed.net)

TENNESSEE:  
Beverly Coulter [beverlycoulter@hotmail.com](mailto:beverlycoulter@hotmail.com)

The ECONOMY– ASSISTING THOSE IN NEED is our regional social action topic this year. As always, we are looking for suggestion and ideas. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 305-669-1350 or [buchbim@gmail.com](mailto:buchbim@gmail.com).  
Mark Buchbinder, Southeast Regional Social Action Chairperson



# Angels in the Sanctuary

Every December, the families of Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, Alabama, go shopping - and in a big way. For many years, we have arranged to provide Christmas presents for underprivileged families in the Birmingham area with our "Feeling Gelty" program. Temple members sign up to "adopt" a family that they have never met, and never will meet. We are given the ages, first names and the gifts that these people would like for themselves and for their children. And then we go shopping.

This past year, we outdid ourselves! Even though economic times are tough, we did more this year than ever before. We had 108 big boxes set up throughout Temple Emanu-El's historic sanctuary, and we filled them with clothes, Nintendos, bicycles, and Barbie dolls. And then the collected gifts were distributed to the families to wrap and place under their Christmas trees. Our total for gifts given was up over last year by 10%.

Our Rabbi spoke about the angels ascending and descending Jacob's ladder. He reminded the congregation that angels have blessed us all in the course of our lives. Some of these angels we know by name. Others come into our lives, even without our knowledge, and bless us. And we have been given the opportunity to be angels for people who look to the heavens for joy and relief.

Even with our net worth greatly diminished - amid times of true economic hardship - we were able to feel "gelty" and be somebody's angel.  
Linda Cohn, Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, AL

## H.O.P.E - Help Other People Eat

*“They call their project HOPE- Help Other People Eat . The kids are excited to be doing a real mitzvah ”.*

Temple Beth Orr,  
Coral Springs,  
FL

Temple Beth Orr has been an active participant in feeding the needy in our community for over 23 years through our Food Closet. This year, our 6<sup>th</sup> grade Religious School classes have recognized the importance of this project and have taken the initiative by creating a program to support and enhance the Temple's ability to supply food to needy families. The classes of



Miriam Lomnitzer and her 6th grade class

Mrs. Lomnitzer and Mrs. Randolph created this program to collect cans and other non perishable foods to help fill TBO's food closet. They call their project HOPE-Help Other People

Eat .The kids are excited to be doing a real mitzvah - making posters and flyers, collecting items in the car pool line, sorting and bagging the food, and most importantly, discussing this issue amongst themselves. We are very proud of our students for having had the motivation to put their efforts into implementing a Mitzvah project that directly affects the needy. Fran Kraft  
Co-chair Social Action Committee  
Temple Beth Orr  
[fkraft1@comcast.net](mailto:fkraft1@comcast.net)

# Your Mitzvah in the Making

.When tourists visit Naples, Florida, they see twinkling white lights wrapped around swaying palm trees. They sunbathe on beautiful beaches gazing out at the tranquil waters of the Gulf of Mexico. But Naples is so much more! We are a community with heart and soul! And our Jewish community proves it, for *tikkun olam*, helping to heal the world, is who we are and what we do.

with fellow congregants in Naples, Florida, they knew that they had an obligation to remember those who could very well have been themselves if their families had not left the "old country".

Rabbi Alex Dukhovny was working with meager funds and more than three dozen congregations. What could be done

lopes addressed back to Temple. One of the most popular gifts was \$25 to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat to honor the memory of one of our loved ones.

We planned simple gifts that were easily affordable: yahrzeit and Shabbat candles, yarmulkes, mezuzahs, and donations if one wished. Our Federation has a link to get money transferred there quickly, safely and efficiently. When someone purchases a gift, we call the person and thank them. We e-mail Rabbi Dukhovny and he acknowledges each gift with a thank you e-mail. When supplies run low, we reorder from the money we have charged so that there is a built-in reserve.

We have identified these items below and the prices we charge: What a wonderful gift from a grandparent to a grandchild, one Bar or Bat Mitzvah child to another, one more fortunate to one less.

To get additional information:  
Judi Palay [Judipalay@aol.com](mailto:Judipalay@aol.com)

**We  
planned  
simple  
gifts that  
were  
easily  
affordable**



We recently initiated a new opportunity for Temple Shalom and greater Jewish community members that was so successful that we wish to share it with other congregations in our URJ family. We want you and them to be a part of this Mitzvah.

It all started in the summer of 2007 when three of our members went to Ukraine to trace family roots. It was a hard trip - emotionally and physically. Anti-Semitism still exists. Peoples' salaries are low. Prices are high - and some items are literally unavailable. These members spent Shabbat with the Progressive Reform Congregation. As they hugged each other goodbye, the Ukrainians said, "Please do not forget us!", and our members promised that they would not. Sharing this story

and how could we do it? We spoke with our Temple Board and assured them that whatever we did would be self-supporting. We spoke to people who still had family in Ukraine to learn how they got packages safely to an area where pilfering occurs and UPS Air wants \$900 for 25 pounds. We learned of companies that work directly with other companies in Ukraine to get packages over safely and hand deliver them.

We borrowed \$400 from our Rabbi's Good Works Fund so that we could put in an initial order for life-cycle event gifts: a Kiddush cup for a Bar Mitzvah, candlesticks for a Bat Mitzvah etc. We set up a table in Temple's lobby with samples of the items we would send. We had flyers on the table with enve-

Suggested Items	
Sponsorship of an Oneg Shabbat	\$25.00
Havdalah set for a Congregation	\$50.00
Stuffed toy for Baby naming	\$15.00
One dozen Yarmulkes	\$10.00
One pair Candle sticks for Bat Mitzvah	\$15.00
One Kiddush cup for a Bar Mitzvah	\$18.00
One Mezzuzah for wedding with scroll	\$10.00
One knit Kippah for Bnai Mitzvahs	\$5.00
One Havdalah Candle	\$6.00
One box of 72 Shabbat candles	\$10.00
Yahrzeit Candle	\$2.50



*“Our goal will be to develop two or three formal initiatives”*

Temple Ahavat Shalom  
Palm Harbor, FL



## Beth David Volunteers Work for Others on Christmas Day

The Social Action Committee of Temple Ahavat Shalom in Palm Harbor, Florida has had a very busy year.

Our ongoing programs include supplying mentors to the Pinellas County Schools, providing rides for Friday night services to those who request them and a very active “Mitzvah Central”. This combination of programs includes: preparing and serving a dinner to 275 homeless men and women at Pinellas Hope (done in conjunction with Emmanuel Community Church), collecting medications for a clinic in Clearwater, and of course, our annual Mitzvah Day. This year at least 350 adults and students were involved. The students (in grades K-7) all participated in some kind of activity outside the Temple (e.g.

planting at a neighborhood library and art center, sharing with residents of Menorah Manor, baking for the local fire and police departments) and collected items for different local charities. All students met for lunch afterwards and shared their experiences. In addition, at this time, they watched as several of their classmates (and parents) participated in Locks of Love. The older student youth groups recorded books for young blind children and created story boxes appropriate for each book.

In February the Social Action Committee led a Friday night service using their own material, with a sermon provided by the Prevention Specialist from the Pinellas County Schools. Earlier in the year she had presented two infor-

mative and important programs, one to parents and one to the pre-Confirmation and Confirmation classes.

We are now beginning a brand new project: TASHI (the Temple Ahavat Shalom Health Initiative). This group is composed of members of the Social Action Committee and Temple members from a variety of health care professions. At our first meeting on April 30<sup>th</sup> we will discuss health care challenges and on which ones the group would like to concentrate. Our goal will be to develop two or three formal initiatives and pursue the most appropriate methods of advocating improvement in those areas. We'll keep you updated!

Contact: Ellen Woll,  
[ewoll@verizon.net](mailto:ewoll@verizon.net)

## Hollywood Cares

Hollywood CARES, a partnership between Temple Beth El and First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, Florida, was created to help children in Haiti whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

We began with a trip to Haiti in March 2007, to see it for ourselves. Project Papillon, directed by John Dieubon, a Haitian man who grew up in the streets, had three rented houses in Port-au-Prince, in which groups of 8-10 children lived with a paid “mother” and “father” in each house. The children all came from the streets or were referred by the hospital where they got their medical treatment. Most were

orphaned because of AIDS or had family too ill to care for them any longer. Some were HIV-positive themselves.

The first goal for Hollywood CARES was to raise money to establish and support a fourth house, specifically for children with HIV/AIDS. We dedicated that house in January 2008, with a ceremony that included the hanging of a mezuzah on the doorpost.

To date, we've made a total of four trips, with another planned for July 2009. We go with suitcases full of clothing, toys, and school supplies – all donated by congregants of our temple and the church. We include the children of the other three

houses in everything we do in addition to their medical care. All of the children are now receiving dental care for the first time in their lives, and last summer we built a playground for them. We've bought school shoes, backpacks, and food. We've paid school tuition, and now we're helping support the school Project Papillon has started. We've developed personal relationships with the children and adults of Project Papillon and these continue to grow. For more information contact Sharon Tanenhaus [dani-asha@aol.com](mailto:dani-asha@aol.com)

## "Mitzvah Crew" serves at I Am HOPE Café

In 2007, Congregation Beth Shalom was contacted by a local group that had been providing services to the needy, and asked to join in setting up a facility to feed the area's homeless and hungry. We sent a representative to that initial meeting and eventually joined with 6 other church, social service, and counseling groups, to form a group that opened a "soup kitchen" in the community. Two temple members currently serve on the Board of Directors of this organization and are active members. Congregation Beth Shalom's Mitzvah Crew runs the I Am HOPE Cafe on a quarterly basis, where we serve dinner to 60 – 70 adults and children. Temple members as young as 12 can volunteer which means this can be included in their Mitzvah Project. The food is prepared by a local faith-based community group. We also prepare "To Go" bags for the guests so they'll have something to eat before the next dinner is available. The I Am HOPE Café is different from other "soup kitchens" in that guests are seated and then served their meal. The Mitzvah Crew cleans up, too. Additional services are also available. Guests can take free showers, wash their clothes, speak with a social worker, get clothes from the Clothes Closet, and receive medical treatment and haircuts. We hope to have a small computer lab open soon, along with access to free phone calls. Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon, Florida, is proud to be involved with this tremendous community effort.

Congregation Beth Shalom  
706 Bryan Road, Brandon, FL 33511  
[www.bethshalom-brandon.org](http://www.bethshalom-brandon.org)

Contact: Dale Kahn, Social Action Chairperson: [dalekahn@hotmail.com](mailto:dalekahn@hotmail.com) (813) 571-0784





If you would like more information about our SEC Social Action Committee or have any ideas, please feel free to contact Mark Buchbinder, SE Region Social Action Chairperson at [buchbim@peoplepc.com](mailto:buchbim@peoplepc.com)

## Commission on Social Action Presents: Social Action Resources Webinar 101

### Contact Information:

Naomi Abelson  
Manager of Congregational Relations,  
Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism  
[nabelson@urj.org](mailto:nabelson@urj.org)  
212.650.4160

Mark Buchbinder  
Regional Social Action Chair,  
Union for Reform Judaism Southeast Region  
[buchbim@gmail.com](mailto:buchbim@gmail.com)



ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך  
העולם אשר קדשנו  
במצותיו וצונו לרדוף צדק.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam, asher kdashanu  
b'vizvotav v'civvanu l'itzvat tzedek.*

Praised are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with Your mitzvot and commands us to pursue justice.

### Why Social Action?

"The world is sustained by three things: by the Torah (study), by *avodah* (worship) and by *gimilut chasadim* (acts of righteousness)." – *Pirkei Avot* 1:2

### Direct Action Programmatic Resources

\*These materials can be found on [www.urj.org/csa](http://www.urj.org/csa) under "Quick Links."

- [Social Action Program Bank](#)
- [Social Action Calendar](#)
- Holiday Guides (see below)  
[Kehilat Tzedek: Creating a Community of Justice](#)

### Educational Programming Materials

- [Social Action Blessing Cards](#)
- [Holiday Guides](#)

### Advocacy Tools

\*These materials can be found on [www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org) under "Advocacy Resources" and "Publications."

- [Issues Pages](#)
- [Issues Packets](#)
- [RAC News](#)

### What's going on at the Commission on Social Action and the Religious Action Center

### Websites:

Commission on Social Action  
[www.urj.org/csa](http://www.urj.org/csa)

Religious Action Center  
[www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org)

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- [Issues Pages](#)
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### [RAC News](#)

### What's going on at the Commission on Social Action and the Religious Action Center

- [Conferences, Seminars and Volunteer Opportunities \(including Consultation on Conscience and L'Taken\)](#)
- Special Projects
- [Nothing But Nets](#)
- [Economic Justice Muslim – Jewish Dialogue](#)