

HEBREW SCHOOL

Wow, here comes the year anniversary of being sent home, of being socially distant and remote learning. Hard to believe. Despite our 'apartness' I am amazed at how connected our OZHS community remains. Attendance at classes has been great. Our all school gatherings on Zoom have opened the virtual door to family members across the US to join in our festivities. Somehow those little boxes on the screen with everyone's faces lend a sense of closeness we don't usually get from a large, in-person audience. An odd plus to all of this.

Another bonus that the pandemic has offered us is highlighting the importance of reaching out to others. I just recently started volunteering in Burlington, delivering food to New Americans each week. The smile on their faces when they open the door to greet me makes the risk of slipping on the ice with a big, heavy box well worth it. This week, at OZ, we launched a reach out initiative that involved many of our synagogue constituents. Our Intergenerational Letter Writing Project started out as an idea from one of our preschool families. Cantor Steve jumped in and then brought me and the chairs of the G'MaCH Committee into the conversation where we discussed plans. I, in turn, arranged for one of our NADAV teen interns to help facilitate the project. The Hebrew School Committee chairs posted a request for participants in the OZ Family FaceBook group and students from the Full Circle Preschool and Hebrew School all wrote letters or drew pictures to send to our synagogue community elders to connect and brighten their day. More smiles all around.

NADAV has launched a second endeavor to bring our generations together – the OZ Legacy Project. Teen interns will be interviewing a number of our synagogue members to learn about their lives and connection to OZ and then share with all of us through myriad media options – PowerPoint presentation, collage, audio recording or written report. Look for these legacy projects on our OZ website later this spring.

Our Kitah Zayin students have also been connecting and supporting others through their mitzvah projects. Making masks for UVM healthcare workers, playing music to share, collecting supplies for a women's shelter, making blankets for refugees, gathering books and toys for a preschool and so much more all while dealing with the pandemic. Look for an article about this in KidsVT Magazine in April! So impressive and so wonderful for everyone to experience the good feelings we get from helping others, connection and community.

~ Naomi Barell
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