

# HEARTLAND DISTRICT OR AMI AWARD WINNERS

## GOLD WINNERS:

### **Heart to Heart & Face to Face in Cincinnati – WRJ Heartland District**

Held November 7-10, 2024, this event was WRJ Heartland District's first gathering following the creation of the district at its inaugural convention in March 2023. Cincinnati was chosen for its central location and variety of attractions. The whirlwind tour of Cincinnati began with the magnificent Plum Street Temple. Additional venues and attractions included the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of American Jewish Archives, the Skirball Museum, and the library at HUC; Shabbat services at Valley Temple, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and the Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. Heartland sisters also enjoyed a "Hidden Treasures of Union Terminal" tour and HUC student and WRJ Board Member Rachael Houser's dramatic presentation of "The Life and Loves of Selma Bondi Wise." Playing late night games, sharing meals, and schmoozing during free time helped to form new relationships and rekindle established friendships.

### **In Memory's Kitchen – Women of Oak Park Temple**

Women of Oak Park Temple decided to do a project around the book "In Memory's Kitchen," which is a legacy from the women of Terezin. The event—significantly—took place on Yom HaShoah. Following a brief service, participants shared a simple meal prepared by several members. During the meal, there was a presentation explaining the purpose of the book and how it came into being, while featuring items based on the oral recipes of the women interned in Terezin. There was no charge for the event and both men and women of all generations attended this impactful event.

## SILVER WINNERS:

### **WMO Challah Bake and Post-Passover Challah Sale - Women of Mishkan Or**

The Women of Mishkan Or (WMO) Challah Bake and Post-Passover Challah Sale, from March 2 - April 25, 2025, involved an innovative and novel collaborative effort of their Fundraising and Membership Committees. Goals included (1) recruiting new members with a hands-on, inclusive, educational and multigenerational event and (2) kicking off their Post-Pesach fundraiser. They partnered with organizations within their community, including Breadlove.org, Project ACT, the Cleveland Sight Center, and Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital. This program intentionally addressed the three pillars of WRJ: Sisterhood, Spirituality, and Social Justice.

### **Indigenous Jews of our Community – WRJ Heartland District**

Minnesota/Dakotas area of Heartland District held an Area event on November 15-16, 2024, titled "Indigenous Jews of our Community." The District partnered with Edot Midwest, an organization located in Madison, WI, that focuses on affirming Jewish racial and ethnic diversity and invests in the leadership of Jewish People of Color. The event held at Minneapolis JCC included optional brunch and Shabbat dinner at local restaurants, as well as

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Shabbat services. The program featured several key speakers: Shahanna McKinney-Baldon, EDOT Founding Director, presented information about Edot and its mission. Lasha Tilsen, Indigenous Jewish Community Outreach Coordinator, mediated a panel of three local Indigenous Jewish women. They shared their experiences as women who are Jewish and Indigenous, and the challenges faced in both communities. Heartland's President, Rozan Anderson, welcomed everyone and discussed upcoming district events. Sherri Feuer, WRJ VP of Programs, followed with a presentation of diversity and inclusion resources available to WRJ sisterhoods/women's groups.

### BRONZE WINNER:

#### **WNSCI Reproductive Rights Shabbat - Women of North Shore Congregation Israel**

On Saturday, February 22, 2025, the Women of North Shore Congregation Israel led NSCI's morning minyan service. Following services, they provided a free lunch and learn program which was attended by over 50 members of the congregation. Rabbi Lisa Greene taught from Shofetim, in which there is text that is considered the prooftext for a fetus being like a limb of the mother, not as a life—which is the basis for Jewish perspective around abortion. They provided participants with actionable tools to advocate for reproductive rights, empowering their members to make a real impact on issues like abortion access, contraception rights, and maternal health. Each WNSCI event has a Tikkun Olam project, and for the Reproductive Rights Shabbat, participants were asked to donate personal care items and handwritten notes. These were assembled as part of Abortion Care Kits and delivered to The Women's Aid Clinic in Chicago the following month.