

May 2019

Annual Report for Community Affairs (Justice)

As we are reminded every time we step into our Sanctuary and see the words engraved above our ark: Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof - Justice, justice, you shall pursue, the pursuit of justice in all its forms is built into the very fabric of who we are as a congregation and as a people. Through the concept of T'ikkun Olam we are encouraged to repair the world and as you will see below this work is found throughout our temple community from our Pre-School families on through to our ChaiVillageLA members.

I am continually amazed by the work that is undertaken every day by our various justice groups and for the tireless leadership of Rabbi Dara. I will highlight some of the work below as well as list the email addresses of various leaders to shine a light on what amazing work is supported by our Temple and carried out by our community.

One of my goals as the Vice President of Community Affairs is to strengthen the relationships between the justice communities and find ways for us to support one another as we work to make our city a place that works for everyone.

Here is a summary of work being done by Justice groups at Temple Isaiah:

Am Tzedek: Isaians Pursuing Justice - our community organizing group has been working to ensure a relationship exists between all the justice groups at our Temple. They hold 3-4 meetings a year to allow justice leaders the space they need to convene, report back, be involved in one another's work, and develop an institutional approach to the work we do as leaders in our community.

Through our relationship with One LA (IAF) we are currently focusing on the issues of housing and homelessness, increasing access to mental health services for mild to moderate cases, and ways our city and county can help asylum seekers upon release from Adelanto Detention Center. Am Tzedek will be working on a 2020 Vision campaign centered around local elections as a way to continue to engage our community around the concept of "voting is a mitzvah" by providing opportunities for people to engage with their elected representatives and ensure that they are held accountable to our agenda of issues.

Temple Isaiah will be hosting a Housing Innovation Summit in mid-September to share with, and learn from, one another some exciting initiatives around increasing housing in Los Angeles County. Although the issues of chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness are starting to be addressed, the lack of affordable housing continues to be a root cause of people falling into homelessness at an alarmingly fast rate. janethirsch59@gmail.com if you are interested

We continue to be strong supporters of RAC-CA and its advocacy work. Until June when the budget in Sacramento is finalized, we will be encouraging our congregants to contact Governor Newsom to include \$39M in his budget for CAL-VIP local programs focused on gun violence prevention. After that the group will decide on legislative priority before travelling to Sacramento for the RAC-CA Lobby Day on August 20th 2019 - janethirsch59@gmail.com if you are interested in joining us on that day.

PATH (People Assisting The Homeless) continues to find a strong partner in Temple Isaiah, or Welcome Home events sponsored by members of ChaiVillageLA. A group of committed leaders headed by Debra Silverman will be planting a community garden before the fall and is partnering with the Los Angeles School District to support local school children who are experiencing homelessness - debrasilverman@gmail.com if you are interested.

Temple Isaiah - Coalition Against Trafficking (TI-CAT) headed by Gail Solo has formed a vibrant and meaningful relationship with Fashion and Freedom and is currently collecting costume jewelry from our congregation that will be auctioned to support our new allies. The relationship with CAST that so many people are familiar with is on hiatus at the moment. One LA (IAF) of which Temple Isaiah is a dues-paying member is also deeply invested in the local work of ensuring that foster youth can avoid the traffickers that wait for them to age out of the foster care system and a meaningful collaboration exists among the two groups - gailsololaw@gmail.com

Green Team headed by Steve Fox continues to focus on its mission to establish awareness of our Jewish responsibility in regard to maintaining and healing our planet. Earth-justice requires lifestyle changes for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and all those with whom we share and bequeath this planet. The Green Team focuses on education and advocating for solutions to environmental issues, green activism, and creating green initiatives at Temple Isaiah and in the larger community. We are reminded that the most meaningful things we can do as individual temple members are to install solar panels on our home and to buy electric vehicles - minusksf@aol.com

ChaiVillageLA has many programs that focus on making Los Angeles a kinder city. Members are deeply moved by the experiences of helping formerly homeless families move into their new homes through the on-going relationship with PATH. They have just formed an ongoing relationship with Operation Mend. Operation Mend is a specialized unit at UCLA Medical Center that treats physically and emotionally injured military personnel from the Gulf wars. Patients travel from around the country to Los Angeles for 3 weeks at a time for treatment. While they are here Operation Mend provides meals and buddies and that's where ChaiVillageLA comes in. Some Village volunteers will provide dinner meals once a month and others will serve as buddies. Buddies are assigned to one patient. Buddies spend time with the personnel when they are in L.A. They might go for a walk on the beach, take them to a movie or their home for a meal and conversation - tpullan@pullan.com

Family Philanthropy Club continues to be one of the most successful programs at Temple Isaiah. It was born out of the desire to help Temple Isaiah families engage in deep, meaningful and sustainable partnerships with non-profit organizations concerned with a variety of issues facing Los Angeles, including, but not limited to, hunger, homelessness, child and teen welfare and sustainability. The ultimate goal of the FPC is to establish deep connections between communities that are close geographically but are worlds apart economically, socially and religiously, to open our children's hearts and minds to issues and struggles beyond their own backyard, and to provide a forum for Temple Isaiah families to do this work together. They currently plan about 9 events a year, and often (through circumstances beyond their control) have to turn people away. Together with Am Tzedek: Isaians Pursuing Justice they will be collaborating on a joint event in the fall specifically geared to teenagers and their parents. The FPC is looking for lay leaders who are interested in getting more involved in Temple Isaiah justice work and who are interested in learning more about this great program and helping plan

the FPC monthly activities. For more information please contact Hillary Hartman at hillhart@me.com or Jessica Dabney at jpdabney@me.com.

Roots and Wings - this program continues to connect students at Santee and University High School with mentors from Temple Isaiah since 2008. We strive to create a temple-public school partnership that mutually benefits both institutions through purpose-driven dialogue, empowerment, and relationship-building. By invoking many positive Jewish values, the mentorship program enables students to broaden their world experience and helps them achieve success in high school and beyond. Mentors agree that while the relationships have impacted their mentees in many positive ways, their own experience has also been deeply meaningful as a way to give back to their larger Los Angeles community. The program at Santee will sunset in June and the University High partnership will continue on into the future - in fact there is talk of doubling the capacity going forward - jenniferkforman@gmail.com

Pre-School Social Action Committee - a key focus of everything we do at Temple Isaiah is Justice and it is no different in our pre-school where the children have hands on experiences in creating blessing bags, purchasing shoes, and packing lunches for children in need. Teachers and parents are committed to the Jewish ideal of tikkun olam and work on various projects through the year that deal with real issues in an age appropriate way - nikkirabin@gmail.com

We are a community that is reminded of our history of greatness and one that challenges itself to look to the future and how best to address the issues of our time in a way that builds relationships within our community and looks outwards to build the necessary relational power to address the issues of our time.

Respectfully submitted
Janet Hirsch
VP Community Affairs