

In Loving Memory of Sandi Sternig-Babcock
By Devorah Servi, ChaiVillageLA Executive Director

What I noticed first about Sandi was her height. She was tall in stature and wore bright ensembles. A fashionable purple streak ran through her beautifully coiffed white hair. She was a presence, someone who took on the world personally and professionally. I loved hearing her delightful stories about family and friends, especially granddaughter, Luna. Sandi and her beloved partner, Ralph Allen, cared for Luna while Luna's mother, Audrey, toured the world as an opera singer. Family came first.

Sandi hosted our first Chai Village program co-chairs meeting in her Westside home. Photographs and artwork decorated the walls. I discovered she made many of the colorful necklaces worn by Village members and friends. Sandi was enthusiastic and overflowing with program ideas for us. She juggled many balls at once --- authors for authors' nights, artists for art classes, professorial-type intellectual speakers, interest groups, Jewish historical tours, etc.

Sandi was a strong character and strong of character. I witnessed Sandi persevere, endure and overcome obstacle after obstacle, especially in these last few years. Little did I know until recently that she also was a bra-burning feminist and was widowed too early when her Peabody Award winning journalist husband, John Babcock, died, leaving her to raise her daughter on her own. Dayenu, but no, Sandi continued on, pursuing a Ph.D. in special education and teaching from UCLA. She cared deeply about children, especially the most vulnerable and those with learning disabilities. "She believed that everyone deserved a second chance," says colleague, Robyn Lutsky. For years Sandi served as president and CEO of the Dubnoff Center for Child Development in North Hollywood. She managed all aspects of the center's services for special needs youth, including the day school and residential programs. Later, she worked as interim director of education at Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services and headed the Temple Emanuel Academy Day School.

Sandi and Ralph were fixtures at Temple Emanuel's Shabbat morning minyan. Even in her pain, Emanuel was her priority.

ChaiVillageLA assisted Sandi and Ralph over the past years with calls, visits, meals, unpacking of boxes, assembling of furniture and most importantly, being caring companions. Her best friends couldn't do enough for her and that was true of her family too.

In closing, here are reflections from a few of those long-time caring temple friends.

"Sandi has been an inspiration to all who knew and loved her. She was so positive and persevering in all the chapters in her life till the very end. She was never a victim, and always concerned and out there to help others. Her sense of humor was truly contagious! Sandi will be missed, but we will all cherish the memories we've had with her." – Marge Chirchick

“Sandi had a zest for life that was unparalleled and a generous spirit to match. I am so grateful that she was my friend. I would say rest in peace, but I am sure that if possible, she is actively engaged in whatever heaven has to offer.” – Judy Kandel

“Sandy was a member of the Temple Emanuel Women's Book Group since its inception over a decade ago. Her insights into the books we read, along with her wit and infectious joy will be greatly missed from our book discussions.” – Debra Carnow

“The word to describe Sandi is valiant. She was passionate about life until the very end.” – Sandy Silas

Of all her caring companions, her beloved partner, Ralph, will especially feel Sandi's absence. It is now Ralph whose hand we will hold, whose heart we will comfort, and whose company we will invite into our homes and ChaiVillageLA programs.