



# Irving J. Fain Social Action 2013 5773 Awards



*Models of Outstanding Synagogue Social Action Programs*

[rac.org/fain](http://rac.org/fain)

Active commitment to social justice is a hallmark of Reform Judaism. That commitment has inspired Reform congregations across North America to develop and pursue a wide range of activities and programs designed *l'taken et ha'olam*, to mend the world. By reaching out to those in need, by forming coalitions of concern across religious and racial lines, by advocating for equality and justice, the congregations of our Movement help realize the vision of the prophets and create communities informed by that vision.

Irving J. Fain was a passionate proponent of social justice and served for a decade as Chair of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism. The Fain Awards, established in 1983 in his honor and memory, are awarded every two years to congregations whose work in the area of social justice is exemplary. We hope and expect that the 2013 Fain Award winners will inspire others to embark creatively and energetically on the road to justice.

*The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.*



**Religious  
Action  
Center**  
of Reform Judaism



*We are obligated to pursue tzedek, justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage.*

- A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, Pittsburgh, 1999 (CCAR)

# Award Winners

## Washington State Marriage Equality Campaign Temple Beth Am Seattle, WA

Temple Beth Am's congregants and spiritual lay leaders have actively supported LGBTQ civil rights since 1994. In 2012 their clergy played a key leadership role in securing the Washington State Jewish community's support for marriage equality legislation. After the legislation was passed, they joined with other Jewish organizations to form the Jewish Marriage Equality Coalition to defend marriage equality against a referendum challenge at the ballot box.



## Domestic Abuse Task Force Woodlands Community Temple White Plains, NY

Woodlands Community Temple's Domestic Abuse Task Force provides transitional assistance to families separated by domestic violence. Through the organized collection and distribution of kitchen supplies, bedding, groceries, clothing and toys, Woodlands Community Temple helps victims of domestic violence begin to rebuild while also regularly attending to their needs in as they transition. The Task Force also educates the Temple community, framing dialogue about domestic violence and healthy relationships with Reform Jewish values.

## Beth-El "Food & Fun" Summer Day Camp Temple Beth El San Antonio, TX

The Beth-El "Food & Fun" Summer Day Camp provides breakfast, lunch and daytime activities throughout the summer to children ages 1 to 18 who live in the Temple's vicinity and normally use the free meal program during the school year. Over 200 Temple and neighborhood volunteers provide fun, creative and sporting activities, as well as a health clinic with free health screenings and immunizations.

## Ubumwe Preschool Project Congregation B'nai B'rith Santa Barbara, CA

The Ubumwe Center Preschool Project is Congregation B'nai B'rith's international social action project, which helps provide educational opportunities to the children of Gisenyi, Rwanda. Since this project began more than 2 years ago, its scope has grown to include educating the Santa Barbara community about the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, raising funds to build schools and community centers and preserving the memory of the genocide's victims.

## Nueva Generacion Temple Beth Or Raleigh, NC



Temple Beth Or's Nueva Generacion (New Generation) program has rallied the Raleigh, NC community to adopt a village and its youth in Guatemala. Through the sale of *kippot* which are handmade by villagers, the Temple raises

funds to provide educational scholarships and build homes for many of Guatemala's most impoverished citizens. Since the program began in 2008, the Temple has sent two groups of congregants on service learning trips to Guatemala, where they provide a community health clinic, build homes and help improve the quality of life for their adopted community.

## Housing for Homeless Veterans Temple B'rith Kodesh Rochester, NY

All our communities are concerned with the issue of veterans returning from military service with disabilities ranging from depression to traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Temple B'rith Kodesh recognized the challenges our veterans face and sprung into action. Having networked with both a Protestant Divinity School that owned an underutilized apartment building and a veterans outreach organization, the Temple obtained a \$552,000 five-year HUD grant, and today 12 veterans have their own apartments and receive weekly case management from an award winning veteran's service agency.

## Temple Emanuel Global Mitzvah Project Temple Emanuel Kensington, MD

Temple Emanuel's Global Mitzvah Project plans and conducts fundraising, educational and global advocacy activities, all of which inspire active involvement of Temple youth and adults in *tikkun olam*. The Global Mitzvah Project has pinpointed critical areas of need around the world and raised funds to improve health, safety, food security and self-determination for women and children. Since beginning in 2008, the Project has funded projects in Guatemala, Kenya and Haiti.

## **Dream for Equality: Organizing to Pass Maryland 2012 Ballot Questions 4 & 6**

**Temples Sinai, Micah, Beth Ami, Shalom & Emanuel**

**Washington, D.C. Metro Area**

With the organizing support of Jews United for Justice, these five URJ congregations in D.C. and Montgomery County, MD created a powerful, visible and effective Jewish religious presence in support of civil marriage equality and access to higher education for the children of undocumented immigrants. With sermons, house meetings, phone banks, canvassing and get-out-the-vote work on Election Day, these congregations rallied their communities both inside and outside their synagogues. For many, this was a first foray into ballot initiative campaigns as an organized community, and both initiatives passed in the 2012 election!

## **Veterans Affairs and Recognition**

**Temple Sinai**

**Sandy Springs, GA**

Temple Sinai's commitment to support the troops is unwavering. Not only do they provide volunteers who staff Atlanta airport's USO multiple times per year, but they set aside an entire



Shabbat to honor members of the military. During their military Shabbat service an honor guard is present, and current and retired members of the military are invited to share their stories of service. While this might seem like enough, Temple Sinai also streams their High Holiday services online so that active duty service members on bases around the world have an opportunity to participate.

## **Project Kehila: Congregation Rodeph Sholom's Disaster Response**

**Congregation Rodeph Sholom**

**New York, NY**

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Congregation Rodeph Sholom organized their members so that they might offer an effective and meaningful response to disaster. Their efforts since then have helped support victims of the earthquake in Haiti and tsunami in Japan. So when disaster struck in their own back yard, it was no surprise that the response was tremendous. Immediately following Hurricane Sandy, Rodeph Sholom's members were cooking and delivering hot meals to home-bound seniors, delivering carloads of critical supplies and organizing 3 weekends of hands-on volunteering. Project *Kehila* even managed to raise \$25,000 for victims of the Hurricane.

## **Children's Defense Fund Freedom School**

**Stephen S. Wise Temple**

**Los Angeles, CA**

The Stephen S. Wise Temple Children's Defense Fund Freedom School provides a six-week literacy & enrichment program for low-income, at-risk students to prevent learning loss during the summer. The program also provides enrichment activities to foster self-confidence and generate a more positive attitude towards learning. Staffed entirely by Temple members who act as mentors and program facilitators, the school is not only for students, but also their parents, who attend weekly workshops on topics ranging from parenting skills to financial literacy.

## **Fighting for New Jersey's Homeless**

**Barnert Temple**

**Franklin Lakes, NJ**

Barnert Temple has provided survival supplies and emergency housing to a large community of homeless men, women and children forced to survive winter in a Tent City. Recognizing the Jewish imperative to help lift the fallen, they have gone to court to fight for the rights of the homeless in their community, and have won several legal battles and ensured emergency shelter for hundreds. In the process, Barnert Temple has brought worldwide media attention to the injustices against homelessness individuals.

## **Multi-Generational Muslim-Jewish Women's Dialogue & Social Action Project**

**B'nai Israel Synagogue**

**Rochester, MN**

The leadership of B'nai Israel saw an opportunity to initiate direct conversation between members of their community and local Muslim women.

An enthusiastic response to a kick-off brunch and dialogue at the synagogue was followed by Iftar and Sukkot events and a movie screening, all of which were followed by discussion and a decision to work together on social action projects.



## **Thoughtful Thursdays**

**Achduth Vesholom**

**Fort Wayne, IN**

Congregation Achduth Vesholom's Thoughtful Thursdays program assists 85 Fort Wayne families whose children attend the Head Start program that meets in the congregation. Through b'nai mitzvah projects, fundraisers, religious school projects and a corps of adult volunteers, the Congregation provides children and their families with groceries, recipes, home goods and educational activities. This project has strengthened the Congregation's partnership with the local Head Start chapter and regularly provides critical support to some of the community's most vulnerable.

## Creating Community for Developmentally Disabled Children

Kehillat YOZMA

Modi'in, Israel



Kehillat YOZMA has created a special relationship with Beit Eden, a home for developmentally disabled children in the town of Ramle, Israel. Since 2002, a group of volunteers has created a comprehensive program of supportive and inclusive activities for the children of Beit Eden and their families, including guiding the children through *Aliyah l'Torah* at the Western Wall and group Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. In the state of Israel, where inclusion for those with disabilities is not always common, these activities are more significant and unique than ever. The relationship between Beit Eden and YOZMA has resulted in a heightened awareness for those who are typically marginalized.

# Honorable Mentions

## Sustainable Sinai

Temple Sinai of Glendale – Glendale, CA

Temple Sinai took their greening initiative to the next level by installing solar panels and energy efficient appliances throughout their building. When the savings were calculated, they had reduced their annual energy bill by \$20,000.



## Motel Meals – Feeding the Hungry

Congregation Beth Chaim – Princeton Junction, NJ

Through a year-long partnership with a local homeless organization, Congregation Beth Chaim organized volunteers to prepare and deliver hot meals to families placed in welfare motels.

## Extreme Home Makeover: Temple Shalom Edition

Temple Shalom – Newton, MA

Temple Shalom adopted a family that was being transitioned from a homeless shelter into their own apartment. Rallying their congregants, they collected enough donations to fully furnish the apartment, providing the family with a home to call their own.

## Living with Dementia

Holy Blossom Temple – Toronto, ON

Holy Blossom Temple's Living with Dementia program uses specially trained congregants and social workers to provide a 10-week support program for individuals with dementia and their caretakers.

**For more information on these and other programs, visit [www.rac.org/fain](http://www.rac.org/fain)**

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