



Women of Reform Judaism Central District

2020 Deborah Honorees

Virtual Gathering
November 6 – 8, 2020



Magic happens when *women* build community.

The Deborah Honor
WRJ Central District Virtual Gathering
November 6-8, 2020

The Deborah Honor gives each Sisterhood in Central District the opportunity to recognize a woman who exemplifies many of the qualities of our prophet and judge Deborah, such as solving problems, strategizing with military precision and providing wise counsel. Deborah, one of the rare women of the Bible whose prominence was not connected to a male relative, rose to distinction on her own.

Sisterhoods also could honor members by choosing other criteria, such as willingness to volunteer and treating everyone with kindness. Like an open-ended question, Sisterhoods were constrained only by their imagination. Every woman nominated was a “winner,” literally and figuratively.

We are grateful for the selfless and devoted members of our Sisterhoods. It has been truly inspiring to read these nominations as we prepared this booklet.

Lisa Kalson, Awards Committee Chair

Pamela Feldman-Hill, Vice President Marketing/Communications

Jo Ann Radwin Zimmerman

Temple Israel Sisterhood

Temple Israel (Marion, Ohio)

Jo Ann Radwin Zimmerman over many decades has been a pillar of our community. Beyond her years as an officer of the congregation, her outstanding musical contributions on piano and guitar and her leading us in song and chant have enhanced the beauty and spirituality of our services. She has also notably aided the mentoring of the many student rabbis who have served our congregation.

Ellen Half

Women of Temple Israel

Temple Israel (Columbus, Ohio)

During a time that our temple has been without a permanent building, Ellen Half began and continued a monthly "Ladies Night Out" each time at a different restaurant and area of the city. She has continued to connect with those women participating even while the world has been socially limited during the pandemic.

Sue Goldsmith

Temple Beth El Sisterhood

Temple Beth El (Bloomfield Hills, Michigan)

Sue Goldsmith, a longtime Temple and Sisterhood member, is passionate about social justice. Over the years, Sue has participated in several activities in support of charitable organizations. In 2014, Sue and her family joined a community Mitzvah Day that led to her passionate commitment to Detroit's Corner Shower and Laundry. As a board member of this new organization, Sue has been instrumental in the raising of funds needed to construct and operate a shower and laundry facility serving the homeless in Detroit. Sue's passionate leadership has supported this organization from a simple idea to a fully operational facility. Her skills as a leader and community organizer have encouraged others to participate in this worthy social-justice initiative. Sue consistently sets an example for others through her leadership and commitment to social justice. As a result of Sue's dedication, the Corner Shower and Laundry will bring dignity to the lives of many for years to come.

Janice Hirshon

Women of Fairmount Temple

Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple (Beachwood, Ohio)

Janice Hirshon, a programming vice president, gives good advice when others need guidance as to which way to go. She jumped right in as a new temple member and became involved in a host of our women's committees: executive, budget and membership. She also chaired the nominating, sunshine and spring luncheon committees. And Janice had the energy to lead the book club, too. At the temple level, she is on the caring committee and made many reassuring phone calls to older members during the pandemic.

Enid Yurman

Women of Fairmount Temple

Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple (Beachwood, Ohio)

First and foremost, Enid is a kind and caring woman and a great listener. She has a calm demeanor, which is always welcome in any organization. Enid is the first member in our Sisterhood to be communications/marketing vice president, a position which she personally created and crafted. She knows how to get things done. In fact, when she saw a new and better way to market items in our gift shop, she rolled up her sleeves and made it happen.

Enid sits on all our committees, and we are happy to have her input in programming, membership and fundraising. She has redesigned our e-blasts by using Constant Contact to keep our membership informed. She willingly assists our temple communications director with writing entries for our congregation's bulletin as well as creating invitations and fliers. She also submits program information to the Cleveland Jewish News and other local publications. Enid works diligently to maintain our Facebook page.

If all that isn't enough, Enid and another member started an evening book club so that working women can participate. This has become a very popular program. Overall, Enid is a qualified member worthy of this acknowledgment.

Suzanne Singerman

The Temple Women's Association

The Temple Tifereth Israel (Beachwood, Ohio)

Suzanne exemplifies what it means to be an exceptional leader. She served as our Temple Women's Association (TWA) president for two years. When our Sisterhood was faced with the prospect of no one willing to step forward to take on the leadership role, Suzanne extensively researched the issue and proposed the creation of a four-person Presidential Council. Not only was this concept wholeheartedly approved by our board, but Suzanne accepted a position on the Presidential Council—making it her third year as president of TWA. Problem solved!

Suzanne's patience and wisdom were evident at every board meeting she led, allowing everyone to express her views and yet knowing when to step in to move things forward. She has shown us all the value of being a good listener and communicator by living those values herself.

Creativity and compassion have always been apparent in her leadership style. As an example, she implemented a new practice for our TWA board meetings, with each attending member contributing a dollar to be donated to an agreed-upon charity. How thoughtful and wise to keep the concept of tzedakah ever-present in our minds.

Our TWA has been strengthened and blessed with Suzanne's leadership. We could go on and on about her but presenting her with the Deborah Honor says it best of all.

Sandy Flaksman

Women of Temple Shalom

Temple Shalom (Louisville, KY)

Sandy Flaksman has been a dedicated member of Women of Temple Shalom (WOTS) for approximately 10 years. A longtime classroom teacher for Jefferson County Public Schools, Sandy has been a volunteer at Louisville's renowned Kentucky Derby Museum as well as an active member of ORT in Akron, Ohio. As a member of WOTS, Sandy has been treasurer, president, chair of the nominating committee, and has repeatedly served as chair or volunteer for special projects and events. She is currently involved in updating WOTS By-laws. In addition, Sandy is program chair for the Temple Shalom Board of Trustees. For WRJ Central District, she is serving as membership secretary after being assistant treasurer.

Sandy is generous with her time with WOTS and WRJ; she is totally dependable in seeing all tasks to completion with meticulous attention to detail. It is evident that Sandy Flaksman is the classic representation found in the significance of the Deborah Honor.

Jessica Springer

WRJ/Sisterhood

The Temple/Adath Israel Brith Sholom (Louisville, KY)

Jessica Springer has gone above and beyond to get younger women involved in our Sisterhood – she's not only served as secretary of our board but has been the initiator and planner for new events that have attracted younger families. She also organizes our "So Eat All-Ready" efforts for members of our temple community who are welcoming new babies to their families. Jessica also is one to shop, organize or volunteer for any and all WRJ/Sisterhood projects or programs.

Barrie Kraus

Women of Rockdale

Rockdale Temple (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Barrie Kraus is an amazing woman. For many years, Barrie has provided Christmas Dinner for Ronald McDonald House in Cincinnati. This entails asking local businesses for donations, shopping for a hundred people and creating recipes to literally feed a crowd. Barrie also organizes the volunteers to prep, cook, serve and clean the RMH kitchens on Christmas Day. In addition to this, Barrie is a past president of Sisterhood, has operated the Judaica shop for more than 10 years and recently became a member of the temple board. She has been incredibly supportive of our religious and Hebrew schools and so much more. Barrie is so much fun to be with – always kind, encouraging and engaging.

Janice Kirshner

Women of Temple Sholom

Temple Sholom (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Janice Kirshner is a person always ready to jump in and help with any activities our Sisterhood has planned. For example, Janice was instrumental in working with other Sisterhood members to help a local church transform a lower-level room to meet the needs of refugees. She is a strong organizer and gets things done in a timely manner. Janice was co-president with Debbie Moffatt for two years and now has become our membership chair for the foreseeable future. Janice is a pleasure to work with, and we are proud to nominate her for the Deborah Honor.

Stacey Spivak

The Valley Temple Sisterhood

The Valley Temple (Cincinnati, Ohio)

We are delighted to recognize Stacey Spivak as our Deborah Honor recipient. Her dedication and commitment can be seen through her various roles as Chai Life chair and fundraising vice president on our board as well as her willingness to step up for any need. We are most grateful for Stacey sharing her technological and design knowledge with us to help bring us further into the digital age. She helped design our Sisterhood brochure and set up all our digital systems. We are so thankful!

Cynthia Rovai

Women of Wise

Isaac M. Wise Temple (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Cynthia Rovai goes above and beyond volunteering and promoting programs within our congregation. She's the person behind the scenes without recognition who makes programs successful. She will nurture a program, help it grow and continue working to make it successful. One such program she is passionate about is Sharsheret, which Cindy and other Sisterhood members learned about at the 2019 URJ Biennial. Sharsheret supports young Jewish women diagnosed with breast cancer. In the past, she has worked on Bedtime Bundles, IHN Hosting and Gelt for Religious School. The Deborah Honor is a small way to say a BIG "Thank You!"

Bennie Silver

Temple Sisterhood of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation

Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (Indianapolis, IN)

Bennie has been the vice president of social action for more than six years. She has developed an amazing committee that works successfully. The committee has set up and run many yearly projects, such as our Greenbriar Project, which provides take-home food to more than 100 students over school breaks, a holiday book give-away and complete Thanksgiving food baskets for families in need. Bennie also has set up an annual day of pampering at a women's shelter. She also organizes members to serve meals at a local hospital for families who are long-term visitors. Bennie is a fabulous baker and always contributes to temple-wide events. Her sisterhood commitment is invaluable!

Wilma Turetzky

United Hebrew Congregation Sisterhood

United Hebrew Congregation (Terre Haute, IN)

We are nominating Wilma Turetzky for the Deborah Honor as she has been a very dedicated Sisterhood member for years and is a very caring person. She has always been there when we need her; she volunteers for anything that needs done. Without being asked, Wilma has helped with set-up for different occasions. This has been especially important because the Sisterhood president has needed extra help due to illness in her family. The saying goes: if you need help, call Wilma! Our Sisterhood is very small and she really keeps us going. The Deborah Honor is a very special way to let her know how important she is to our Sisterhood. Thank you!

Becky Paul

Congregation Beth Shalom Sisterhood

Congregation Beth Shalom (Carmel, IN)

We are nominating Becky Paul, our president from 2017-2020, as our Deborah honoree because of her commitment, dedication and hard work for our Sisterhood, which began just five years ago. Becky has worked hard to learn about WRJ, be engaged in all that we do, and then bring it back to our local Sisterhood. Becky has worked with our committees, vice presidents and entire board to give support, stability and the needed encouragement to help our Sisterhood grow and be meaningful to not only our congregation but WRJ as well. As a new Sisterhood, there was much to learn and share with everyone; Becky was and always is open to doing just that and with a very positive attitude. We are thrilled to honor Becky as our Deborah honoree for this year.

Marguerite Howe

Congregation Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood

Congregation Shaarey Zedek (East Lansing, MI)

Marguerite was our 2019-2020 programs chair. She volunteered for the position, planned and implemented some great programs, and helped both Sisterhood and congregational community come together for fun and meaningful events.

Eileen Higer

Temple Kol Ami Sisterhood

Temple Kol Ami (West Bloomfield, Michigan)

We take great pride in honoring Eileen Higer as this year's Deborah Honor winner. Eileen has led our Sisterhood as an executive and general board member since 2012, serving as secretary, co-president, immediate past president and vice president for membership. But her dedication and devotion to our Sisterhood and its members far exceed the titles that she has held. Eileen is a generous and kind person who gives of herself to everyone. As a leader, she holds herself and everyone else to a high standard of caring and service. She reaches out to people and brings them into her circle of friends easily and genuinely. Eileen understands the importance of Sisterhood to our temple and creates an atmosphere that encourages everyone to get on board. She exemplifies the spirit of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and Tzedakah (justice) through her efforts.

In addition to her leadership roles in Sisterhood, Eileen (along with her husband) serves the temple as co-chair of the Caring Community, which provides assistance to members in need. She organizes meals for the sick, rides for those who can't drive, and other support services. She also serves on the Mitzvah Corps, conducting Shiva services at members' homes.

Eileen is a true Deborah Honor winner. She provides a shining example of what a Sisterhood leader and friend should be.

Ann Podolsky

Temple Israel Sisterhood

Temple Israel (West Bloomfield, Michigan)

Ann has been involved with Sisterhood for countless years, whether as an executive board member or a committee member. She currently is our recording secretary. Ann also is chairing the Honey for the Holidays and Passover candy sales, because we needed someone to take charge. She often volunteers to help with our Mahj Tournament – even though she does not play! She has handled Spring Boutiques tickets in the past. Ann gives of herself lovingly and puts in many hours of her time to assist others. Ann is someone we can always count on when she is needed.