



**WOMEN ^{OF}
REFORM
JUDAISM**

OR AMI AWARDS 2023
Light of my People

Celebrating

50

YEARS

ESTABLISHED IN 1973, WRJ'S OR AMI "LIGHT OF MY PEOPLE"

AWARD recognizes exemplary social justice, community service, and educational programming. For the last 50 years, these award-winning programs serve as a model for other WRJ Districts and sisterhoods to replicate. An Or Ami Award is a great honor for Districts and women's groups who receive them. The winners listed here cover a three-year period, in which many programs pivoted to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, gold, silver, and bronze awards were given to 4-5 sisterhoods each, along with seven honorable mentions. **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS!**

GOLD

Relating to Our Planet: Environmental Justice, Shmita, and Making Positive Change

Sisterhood of Temple B'nai Torah - Bellevue, WA

This sisterhood brought cutting-edge environmental professionals to their Temple community for Tu BiShvat by engaging four dynamic speakers: Associate Rabbi Molly Weisel, national legal expert Marianne Engelman-Lado; award-winning writer and author Julia L.F. Goldstein; and Julia Weinstein from WRJ. The program grew to bring the information to a national audience through the Big Bold Jewish Climate Festival and by partnering with WRJ.

VOICES OF FREEDOM: A Sisterhood Multigenerational Pre-Seder Program

The Sisterhood of Temple Beth Am – Pinecrest, FL

Sisterhood of Temple Beth Am's Women's Seder program was a multigenerational, educational and inspiring experience. It included women from St. Peter's Missionary Baptist Church, with whom they are building relationships. This event focused on how our freedoms provide the opportunity to be in places where we feel comfortable and secure enough to be present for others, while working toward repairing and improving our world. With attendance of over 170 women, a custom-prepared Haggadah, and interactive musical programming, the event built community bonds and reinforced the importance and value of working and playing together.

Building Bridges with Jewish Women Around the World

WRJ Midwest District

"Building Bridges with Jewish Women Around the World" allowed us to connect with other Jewish women worldwide to understand how they study, celebrate, and build community. Working with WRJ's program partners in Australia and repeated with Latin America, both programs included sharing history, watching videos of their respective communities, and hearing personal narratives from women in breakout rooms designed to create personal connections. Each program also included a special Havdalah service.

Change Begins Here: Racial Justice Small Groups

WRJ Pacific District Action & Advocacy Team

This series of lay-led, curriculum-based, small group discussions allowed people to engage with open hearts and minds to address racial justice issues and learn what it means to be anti-racist. Exploring traditional Jewish texts and modern readings, participants reflected on their personal history and biases in a safe space — sharing, listening, and learning together.

SILVER

Mother's Day Photo Exhibit: Women of the Bible Through a Creative Lens

Beth Am Women – Los Altos Hills, CA and Shirat Ha-Yam of Odessa, Ukraine

In partnership with their sister congregation Shirat Ha-Yam of Odessa, Ukraine, this program was originally designed as a collaborative text study and online photography exhibit inspired by biblical women. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine caused their partners to flee or take up arms. As a result, Beth Am pivoted to make the project a tribute to them, incorporating photographs (like the one below) of the Odessa congregation as well as submissions from members of Congregation Beth Am.



Period Project

Women of Emanu-El Milwaukee (Rivers Hills) – Milwaukee, WI

All menstruating people should have reliable access to period supplies. The Women of Emanu-El Milwaukee (Rivers Hills) Period Project empowers the homeless and people in-need to experience their periods with dignity by distributing pads, tampons, and other critical menstruation supplies to local shelters.



*The programs created by our districts
and women's groups are so meaningful to WRJ.
They teach us, they inspire us, they entertain
us, they bond us – demonstrating Sisterhood,
Spirituality, and Social Justice in every way.
We are so proud of all of them.*



– JANE TAVES, WRJ VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Intersection of Climate Change, Gender, and Poverty

Women of Temple Rodef Shalom – Falls Church, VA

Reversing the adverse effects of climate change and preserving our planet is not only a global human issue, but women, marginalized communities, and the poor experience these effects more severely. A panel of experts including Tristan Bove, Fortune Magazine; Dahlia Rockowitz, Washington Director of Dayenu, a Jewish movement confronting the climate crisis; and Lydia Lawrence, Fairfax County NAACP, Environmental and Climate Justice Chair, educated and energized participants to take action. We learned that millions more people will descend into poverty, and there will be harmful impacts on immigration, health care, maternal health, and food insecurity, as environmental conditions worsen.

Making a Difference: The Fight for Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice

WRJ Midwest District

The theme of the first WRJ Midwest Virtual Convention was "Raising Women's Voice, Telling our Stories, Making a Difference," in relation to the era of concern about the changing Supreme Court and the future of the Roe v. Wade. In the summer and fall of 2020, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, z'l, was leading the fight, as was WRJ under the leadership of Rabbi Marla J. Feldman. In response, WRJ's Midwest District assembled an esteemed panel to address reproductive rights including Beth Gendler, Executive Director, NCJW Minnesota; Ally Karpel, WRJ/RAC Associate for Reproductive Health & Rights Campaign; Chelsea Diaz, ACLU-IL Advocacy Associate; and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL) to weigh in on these topics.

A Place Called Home: The Senior Homelessness Project

WRJ Pacific District

Designed by WRJ's Pacific District, this program provides education and programming guidance for their women's groups to help seniors in their communities who are or soon may be homeless – an often overlooked segment of society. Learning how to support these vulnerable seniors is crucial to the mission of repairing the world as Reform Jews.

BRONZE

Social Action Birthday Party

Congregation Schaarai Zedek Sisterhood – Tampa, FL

The Social Action Birthday Party benefited the Tampa Bay Party Project (TBPP), which hosts birthday parties in the Tampa Bay area for underserved children whose families or caregivers cannot afford to give them a birthday party. Sisterhood members and congregants assembled gifts and goody bags, created birthday cards for the children, and made tie-dye T-shirts for TBPP volunteers who help with the parties. In total, 125 presents and goody bags were wrapped and assembled, 50 handmade birthday cards were written, and 12 T-shirts were tie-dyed. Below, volunteers Judith Mish, Roz Miller, and Nancy Weiss put together gifts at this incredible birthday party.



Grandparents: Schmooze and Share

Women of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation (WBHC) – Baltimore, MD

This program offers the opportunity for Jewish grandparents to virtually receive and share programs and activities that bring the importance and love of Judaism to their grandchildren. Each month, in-person or virtually, a specific Jewish topic is explored and discussed, and activities and materials are shared. The Women of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation offered programs on holidays during the first year. This year, they will offer programs focused on life-cycle events and individual Jewish values.

Talking about End-of-Life Care and Our Legacies

Women's Organization of The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue – New York, NY

This program brought the subject of end-of-life care and legacies to the forefront, from a psychological, legal, and spiritual perspective. These interactive virtual seminars consisted of various experts - from the founder of DotCares, to a trust and estate lawyer, to a Rabbi - discussing and informing issues concerning all of us as we age.

From Concubine to Rabbi: Women in Judaism from Purim to the Pulpit

WRJ Pacific District

The Pacific District turned the Purim story on its proverbial head by analyzing it in terms of women's rights, then expounded on the role of women as members of clergy in contemporary society. Their distinguished panel represented three generations of women rabbis, including the first in North America, Rabbi Sally J. Priesand, Rabbi Rachel Kay Bearman, and Rabbi Amy Schwartzman.

HONORABLE MENTION

Hanukkah Essentials and More – Curbside Pickup

Sisterhood of Temple B'nai Torah – Bellevue, WA

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Temple B'nai Torah's Judaica Shop was on hiatus, so the Sisterhood offered essential Hanukkah items in a packaged kit for pre-order and pickup along with a few other items and a mystery gift. This program was held in December 2020 before any vaccines were available, so this program gave members a chance to connect.

MLK Jr. Elementary School Teachers' Lounge

Temple B'nai Jeshurun Sisterhood – Des Moines, IA

King Elementary School partners with Iowa State University (ISU) to provide four years of free tuition for their K - 5th grade students who go on to successfully complete 12th grade in Des Moines public schools. To encourage and celebrate teachers who see the college potential of their students, the Sisterhood furnished a new teachers' lounge in ISU colors of Gold and Cardinal and hosted a "grand opening" when all was completed.

We Care Project

Temple Beth-El – San Antonio, TX

As part of their ongoing We Care Project, Temple Beth-El had a "Stuff the Bag for Thanksgiving" event for the food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. During the event, they donated 1,208 pounds of food for Thanksgiving dinners. In 2021, in partnership with their JCC, they held a "Fill the Shoe Box" event of personal hygiene items for men, women, and children for United Way to distribute to their non-profit partners, during which the Sisterhood collected 875 boxes of items to donate.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

Sally Frank, Chair

Yvette Bergman

Sherri Feuer

Debra Goetz

Josie Hertz-Ackerman

Lillie Heyman



Holiday Gifts for Legal Services Clients

Women of Emanu-El Edison – Edison, NJ

The Women of Emanu-El Edison became aware of the huge need for holiday cheer for clients of Legal Services of New Jersey (a non-profit that provides a myriad of services to underserved/disadvantaged/disabled citizens in NJ). In coordination with their social workers, the Sisterhood received a list of five families, their short bios, and "wish lists" for gifts for their children. The Sisterhood fulfilled those lists at Emanu-El's annual Chanukah program.

Crafts for a Cause: Pet Beds for the Montgomery County Humane Society

Women of Temple Beth Ami – Rockville, MD

Many of Temple Beth Ami's Sisterhood members are involved with Days for Girls, an international organization that makes and distributes washable menstrual pads and other items. These sewing projects generate large quantities of fabric scraps, so the Women of Temple Beth Ami reinvented the scraps as stuffing for pet beds for the Montgomery County Humane Society.

The Bubbe Project

WRJ Pacific District

The Bubbe Project was penned during the long days of the pandemic as an activity guide to help grandparents sustain and enrich their relationships with their grandchildren at a time when, by necessity, they needed to be apart. Reflecting Reform Jewish values, from shared Shabbat meals to Passover seders and the generational passing of the Torah, the project presented activities in tikkun olam, family histories/traditions, art, and cooking.

The Rebranding of Women of Holy Blossom

Women of Holy Blossom – Toronto, Ontario

In the spring of 2021, Holy Blossom's Sisterhood became Women of Holy Blossom (WHB) and rebranded around its values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This rebranding led to a renewed and energized purpose and vision for WHB, creating new opportunities for programming, sponsorships, advocacy, partnerships, education, friendships, and succession planning.