

## Message from the President



On November 3-8, along with 42 women from Midwest District, I attended the WRJ Assembly in Orlando. As I previously mentioned in the last M'Keshet, it was a wonderful and significantly rewarding experience.

There is so much to share with you but I hope you will not let the message stop here. Please forward the *Messenger* to your sisterhood board and individual members. This is your opportunity to **“Entice, Excite, Engage and Embrace”** your membership in all that we in WRJ do as an organization. So often the question arises as to why sisterhoods pay dues and what are the benefits to belonging? Hopefully, when you distribute the *Messenger*, women will better understand the importance of the Women of Reform Judaism, which strengthens the voice of women worldwide and empowers them to create caring communities, nurture congregations, cultivate personal and spiritual growth, and advocate for and promote progressive Jewish values.

According to WRJ President Blair C. Marks, “WRJ’s Golden Assembly was truly a one-of-a-kind experience for the WRJ Board members and alumnae, WRJ District and sisterhood leaders, and sisterhood members. Following in the WRJ tradition of excellent conferences, our participants were able to learn new skills and share ideas, celebrate Shabbat with worship and song, form new bonds and reconnect with old friends, and leave feeling inspired as they return to their sisterhoods and Jewish communities.” As in previous years, the WRJ Assembly joined together with the concurrently held Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)’s Biennial for a Shabbat celebration of 5,000 Jews who participated in services, music, and programs.

At Assembly we learned there are important changes about to occur that will impact the future of WRJ as we know it. In the past, WRJ held the meeting of the Legislative Body, elections and all matters of business at the Assembly. However, in the future the Legislative Body will no longer be required to occur in conjunction with the URJ Biennial, and The Fried Leadership Conference will become the format for such business. The Biennial and

Assembly will be directly integrated - no longer parallel conferences. Through programming, all URJ women will have the opportunity to see WRJ in action and learn from our outstanding leadership. This transformation was approved at Assembly. The details are still a work in progress.

With a great many first timers in attendance at the Assembly, I do feel encouraged that the knowledge learned by all will be disseminated to many more sisterhoods. Within this *Messenger* there are many explanations of new and exciting programming. Midwest District is a vital organization and together with all of our sisterhoods, we can make a lasting impact on the world.

In the spring the nominating committee will be meeting and they will be looking to sisterhood leaders to follow the path to District leadership. The skills of women in the individual sisterhoods are great resources on our journey to continued success. If you are aware of anyone who might be interested, please contact me, or Past District President Marcy Frost.

Our future is in all of our hands and we know “We Are Stronger Together”.

May the Chanukah lights shine brightly on your home and family and may 2016 be a wonderful year for all.



What’s Inside	
Assembly .....	3-6
YES Fund Grants.....	7
Ori Ami Awards.....	8
Interim Leadership Training .....	9
WRJ Midwest Leadership .....	10-11
Resources .....	12
Area News .....	13
Kallah 2015.....	14-16
Kallah 2016.....	17
Sisterhoods.....	18
WRJ Midwest Convention .....	19-20



## Mark Your Calendar

### WRJ Midwest District/OSRUI

**Mah Jongg & Canasta Weekend** .....March 18-20, 2016  
OSRUI, Oconomowoc, WI <http://osrui.org/event/mah-jongg-and-canasta-weekend/>

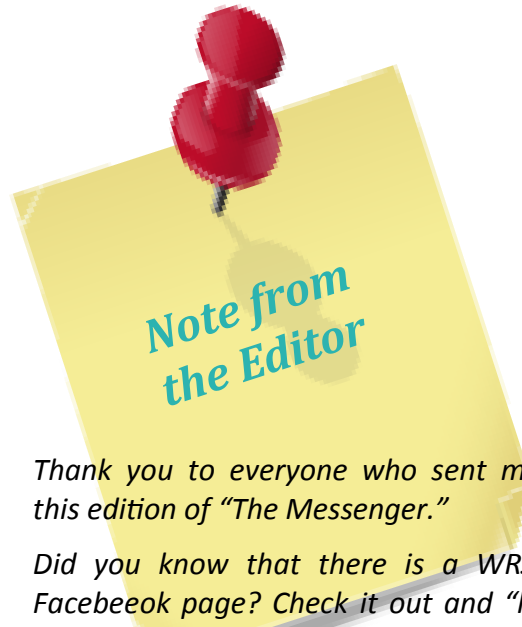
**WRJ Midwest District Kallah Executive Committee Meeting** ..... April 8-10, 2016  
.....April 8, 2016  
OSRUI, Oconomowoc, WI

**WRJ Wilkenfeld International Women’s Leadership Seminar** ..... April 12-14, 2016  
London, England

**RAC Consultation on Conscience** ..... April 30-May 7, 2016  
Washington, D.C.

**WRJ Midwest District Convention Interim Board Meeting** .....October 27-30, 2016  
Downers Grove, IL

**Fried Leadership Conference** .....March 3-5, 2017  
Charleston, SC



## Note from the Editor

*Thank you to everyone who sent material for this edition of “The Messenger.”*

*Did you know that there is a WRJ Midwest Facebook page? Check it out and “like us” at: <https://www.facebook.com/WrjMidwest> and follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WRJMDW>. And while we’re on the subject of online locations, our redesigned WRJ Midwest website is a work in progress. Also, make note of the WRJ website which is [www.WRJ.org](http://www.WRJ.org).*

***Please share this newsletter with your members, prospective members, congregational leaders, and synagogue professionals.***

*This communication piece is only as good as its content. Please let me know when you have local and district-wide events to promote and to report. You can always send me information at any time and I will save it for the next edition.*

*When writing an article or designing a flyer for an event, remember to answer these questions:*

*Who?*

*What?*

*When?*

*Where?*

*Why?*

*Marilyn Weisberg, Editor*  
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## Recap

As the Women of Reform Judaism, we came together November 4-8, 2015 at one of the most amazing WRJ Assembly/URJ Biennials I have ever experienced. In Orlando, with approximately 400 WRJ delegates and more than 5,000 in all, we were led by President Blair Marks and URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs, in what was spiritual, educational and life changing.

Inspired by services that reflected the beauty of prayer, the spiritual uplifting through both traditional and contemporary music led by cantors, song leaders and a remarkable choir, workshops that educated and enlightened our leaders, and the words of Rabbi Jacobs, we can only believe that Reform Judaism will always have an impact on the future of the world and the entire Jewish movement.

Of course, there were a large variety of speakers that offered great insight. Most notable among them was Lilly Ledbetter, who was the plaintiff in the American employment discrimination case *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.* who has since become a women's equality activist. Actor Michael Douglas served on the "[Panel On Audacious Hospitality](#)" moderated by Jodi Kantor, New York Times journalist and author. Rabbi David Wolfman, consultant and coach, "The Human Side of Change", Ambassador David Saperstein former Director of the Religious Action Center, and Rabbi Jonah Pesner, current director of the RAC. The Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, gave voice to the many issues both sisterhoods and synagogues face in today's changing world. Vice President Biden spoke at the joint plenary on Saturday evening. His words were often directed at NFTY delegates whom he empowered with the future of our movement and he continuously highlighted support of Israel by the United States, Israel's strongest ally.

During the WRJ Plenary sessions, we voted on and passed all Constitutional Changes, which included:

WRJ will now allow women to join [WRJ as individuals](#).

Distance/electronic voting of delegates will be allowed under some circumstances for the Legislative Body of WRJ, for those sisterhoods that cannot send delegates to the meeting of this body. Those who join as individuals will also be allowed delegates, proportional to their numbers.

The meeting of the Legislative Body will no longer be required to occur in conjunction with the URJ Biennial.

Instead of a 2 and 4 -year-term for executive committee and board members respectively, they will now hold a 3 year term for both.

Also passed at our Plenary were resolutions on Distracted Driving, Pay Equity, and Paid Family and Medical Leave. Certainly the impact of WRJ is far reaching

"Audacious Hospitality" is currently the key conviction and "buzz word" of both URJ and WRJ. I believe Midwest did an outstanding job of being hospitable when more that 50 people, attendees, families, clergy and friends joined us for dinner on Wednesday evening. Between that and the Midwest District meeting earlier in the day, we had the opportunity to connect with each other. However, we recognize that there are always ways to improve that welcoming feeling which certainly can be tricky in such a large venue.

If you were unable to attend and have a moment, please go to the WRJ Facebook page or YouTube to view daily videos that reflect the spirit of the Assembly and view the speech by [Vice President Biden](#) on YouTube. This is the simplest way to get the feeling of the Assembly though truly the only way to do it is to join us there in the future.

WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM  
**ASSEMBLY 2015**  
[www.wrj.org/assembly2015](http://www.wrj.org/assembly2015)

NOVEMBER 4 - 8  
**ORLANDO, FL**  
 #Assembly2015

We did it all and it did not stay in Orlando.  
 We brought it home



Lilly Ledbetter

For your Book Club







Sherri Feuer

Ask me about WRJ's 50<sup>th</sup> Assembly and my eyes light up and I instantly smile. I have such wonderful memories! Our Midwest District sisters had a "rollicking" good time in Orlando. We attended workshops to broaden our knowledge; revised the WRJ constitution; passed three timely resolutions; heard enriching and enlightening speakers and networked with women from across North America and globally as well. We prayed together, raised substantial dollars for the WRJ YES Fund, and enjoyed being in the company of each other. That's the beauty of WRJ! However, if you missed Assembly, do not fret! The Midwest District Kallah is coming very soon, on April 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, at fabulous Camp OSRUI, in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. If you have never experienced Kallah, it is a lovely way to refresh and rejuvenate your soul. Plan now to attend.

At the Assembly, I was installed as the Vice President of Affiliate Services. I will be working with incredibly capable and talented women. I'm humbled to be following in the footsteps of so many dedicated women. Affiliate Services is the perfect portfolio for me, having served as a sisterhood, congregational and Midwest District president. In my new role, I will be working with sisterhoods/women's groups and assisting First Vice President Susan Bass with the district presidents. I'm providing a little "taste" of my new department here, so you can understand how Affiliate Services can benefit each of your sisterhoods and our Midwest District.

Affiliate Services oversees the WRJ Speakers Bureau. The WRJ Speakers Bureau provides dynamic, experienced WRJ leaders to sisterhoods and districts. Through the Speakers Bureau, WRJ guest speakers share knowledge, expertise, and training skills with sisterhood leaders, members, and congregations. Make sure your sisterhoods understand the program and know how to apply for a WRJ speaker every other year. Remember that our Midwest District Speakers Bureau also provides easy access to wonderful speakers right in our geographic area.

The Consultant Program is another part of Affiliate Services. The consultant program was created to provide WRJ-affiliated sisterhoods and districts with access to WRJ leaders knowledgeable in topics that our affiliates often find challenging. The consultant topics and request forms are available on the WRJ website. Please encourage your sisterhoods and women's groups to use the consultants. This program is a major benefit to sisterhoods and districts, but only if they know about it and utilize the program! Thanks to Midwest District Past District President Susan Pittelman, who spearheaded the consultant task force and to the Midwest District women who serve as consultants in the program.

A growing part of WRJ is in the area of Global Affiliates. WRJ is proud to count women's groups from around the world among our ranks. Today, WRJ has global affiliates in South America, South Africa and Israel. Through Affiliate Services, these groups have access to WRJ programming, materials and leadership guidance. The global affiliates area also maintains mutually beneficial relationships with WRJ North American sisterhoods through the WRJ twinning program. Our department is working hard to help new global affiliates get started and to help established affiliates take advantage of all that WRJ has to offer.

Affiliate Services is also involved with new and potential North American affiliates. The WRJ New Affiliates Chair works with our district affiliate chair to provide assistance and training needed to help potential affiliates. Additionally, Affiliate Services helps sisterhoods in arrears for WRJ dues or if they need a temporary dues abatement to stay afloat. Through a confidential process, lay leaders and staff in the Affiliate Services Department assist these sisterhoods. Finally, grants to sisterhoods and affiliates are also a part of the Affiliate Services Department. Some of you may have been able to go to an Assembly or the Fried Leadership Conference by virtue of a generous WRJ grant.

In general, Affiliate Services is a safety net for sisterhoods and affiliates. We provide funding and resources that do not exist on the local level. We help the sisterhoods when they need us. I am honored to be part of that Affiliate Services team, along with the WRJ staff Manager for this department, Heather Lorgeree, and all the other staff at WRJ office who maintain and operate the department.

I'm looking forward to an exciting and challenging term for the next two years. I hope to see you at the October 27-30, 2016 in Downers Grove, IL, and at Fried Leadership Conference in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, in 2017. I want you to have those wonderful WRJ memories and be able to light up, smile and reflect back the way I always do!

Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), through its Youth, Education, & Special Projects Fund, has given \$370,200 in grants to 19 programs that will strengthen the Reform Movement and provide the tools necessary for religious, social, and educational growth in North America, in Israel, and around the world.

## 2015 WRJ YES Fund grants were awarded to the following organizations & programs:

### Youth

- **URJ-WRJ PJ Library Partnership, \$50,000:** This program supports congregations/sisterhoods in small communities throughout North America in implementing this Jewish family engagement program that mails free, high-quality Jewish children's books and music to families with children aged six months to eight years old on a monthly basis.
- **NFTY6 Project, \$25,000:** This multi-year \$75,000 grant was made in honor of NFTY's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to support engaging 6<sup>th</sup> graders in peer-led programs.
- **World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) Youth Programs, \$15,000:** This grant supports camps in the FSU, youth programs in South America, and travel to Israel for South African youth.
- **URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy Scholarships for Girls, \$10,000:** For the second year, WRJ will help encourage and support the participation of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields, which have traditionally been male-dominated, through these camp scholarships.

### Education

- **HUC-JIR Student Scholarships, \$72,000:** This grant covers half-tuition for two students at each North American campus (NYC, Cincinnati, L.A.) for any program (cantorial, rabbinical, education, communal service).
- **Overseas Rabbinical Scholarships, \$40,000:** These scholarships support rabbinical students studying at Leo Baeck College (London) and Abraham Geiger College (Germany) who will serve Reform and Progressive communities outside of North America and Israel upon ordination.
- **Leo Baeck College (London) Library Renovation, \$36,000:** This grant will help the seminary renovate its library, properly house its rare book collection, and develop its *Beit Midrash* learning center for rabbinical students.
- **WUPJ Machon Program, \$18,000:** Part of a multi-year \$36,000 grant to train rabbis and other Jewish professionals from the FSU who will serve their home communities upon ordination.
- **HUC-JIR (Jerusalem) Israel Rabbinical Program, \$18,000:** This grant supports the rabbinical training of Israeli students who will serve Israeli Reform communities upon ordination.
- **HUC-JIR Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Cantorial Prize, \$1,000:** Given annually, this award is presented to a deserving cantorial student.
- **WRJ HUC-JIR Faculty Award, \$1,800:** Established in honor of Rabbi David Ellenson upon his retirement as HUC-JIR President, this biennial award is given to an HUC-JIR faculty member who has supported WRJ or whose work embodies WRJ's mission.

### Special Projects

- **Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) Eisendrath Legislative Assistant (Washington, D.C.), \$25,000:** This year-long fellowship allows a recent college graduate interested in Judaism, social justice, and policy to work on WRJ's social justice legislative priorities and initiatives.
- **Kibbutz Lotan (Israel) Expansion, \$25,000:** Part of a multi-year \$50,000 gift to fully fund 1 of 12 new student housing units at this integrated, holistic community that strives to balance sustainability in everyday life.
- **Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) Mother-Daughter Bat Mitzvah Program, \$18,000:** This program, which aligns with WRJ and IMPJ's emphasis on gender equality, empowers young girls and strengthens their Jewish identity by emphasizing equality, life transitions, and connection to Judaism and the community.
- **Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), \$10,000:** This grant supports advocacy efforts on behalf of religious pluralism, women, and vulnerable populations in Israel.
- **The Torah: A Modern Commentary Translation into Portuguese, \$5,400:** Nearly 35 years after the publication of the first English language liberal Torah commentary, this grant will help translate *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* into Portuguese for the growing Reform community in Brazil.

# We Said YES

# Midwest District Or Ami winners and honorable mentions. Certificates were received at our district meeting in Orlando

## Gold

**Supporting Women in Need: A WRJ Midwest District Initiative to Commemorate 100 Years of Women of Reform Judaism, [WRJ Midwest District](#), IA, IL, Northwest IN, MN, ND, SD, and WI**

WRJ Midwest District sisterhoods partnered with local charities benefiting women as a way of celebrating WRJ's Centennial. Our women raised awareness and strengthened their connections to their communities by gathering donations, raising funds, and donating hours, with a focus on the number 100, to benefit their partner organizations.

## Bronze

**Little Black Dress: Fashion Show Through the Ages, [Women of Emanu-El](#), Milwaukee, WI**

The sisterhood hosted a vintage fashion show of LBD's and a silent auction of donated jewelry, and served hors d'oeuvres. This community event kicked it up a notch by serving a signature cocktail and wine, and encouraging attendees to wear a LBD. The runway show was produced by Goodwill Industries of SE Wisconsin.

**Temple Chai Sisterhood Opens Doors - Accessible Door Installation Project, [Temple Chai Sisterhood](#), Long Grove, IL**

Working with temple staff, the Inclusion Committee, and the Building Committee, Temple Chai Sisterhood funded the installation of handicapped accessible doors for the front entrance of our building and the handicapped bathroom. The doors were dedicated by our Senior Rabbi as part of the congregational sisterhood Shabbat.

**Vashti's Banquet, [Women of North Shore Congregation Israel](#), Glencoe, IL**

WNSCI celebrated Purim with a Persian feast, fun activities, and a Shushan Bazaar for women and their daughters in the synagogue. This first-ever event grew from the life experience of one of our members, an Iranian immigrant from Hamadan, the supposed resting place of Queen Esther.

## Honorable Mentions

**2015 Sisterhood TBI Women's Seder  
[Sisterhood Temple Beth Israel](#), Skokie, IL**

**CommUnity Building: Shalach Manot Project  
[Temple Chai Sisterhood](#), Long Grove, IL**

**In Our Own Voice  
[Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood](#), Skokie, IL**

**Linkin' Hearts in Lincoln's Heartland  
[WRJ Midwest District](#), IA, IL, Northwest IN, MN, NE, ND, SD, and WI**

**Making Meaningful Women's Tallitot for the Synagogue  
[Women of North Shore Congregation Israel](#), Glencoe, IL**

**Sarah's Circle Tea  
[Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood](#), Skokie, IL**

**The History of Sisterhood Temple Beth Israel  
[Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood](#), Skokie, IL**

**Women Helping Women in Need  
[Women Of North Shore Congregation Israel](#), Glencoe, IL**

**WRJ Midwest District Kallah: The Art of Being Jewish  
[WRJ Midwest District](#), IA, IL, Northwest IN, MN, NE, ND, SD, and WI**



## Interim Leadership Training

### Echoes and Voices: We listened and learned, by Denise Fogel-co-chair

*“Moses didn’t get to the Promised Land, and it reminded me nobody ever gets to go to the Promised Land. You never accomplish everything that you want to accomplish. You do as much as you can to move things forward, and your consolation is knowing there’s a Joshua to follow.” –Sally Priesand, first female Reform Rabbi*

Thus began the bi-annual Midwest District Leadership Conference and Interim Board Meeting. Nearly 60 women from 8 states and over 20 different Sisterhoods converged at OSRUI immediately after Yom



Kippur for an intensive weekend of leadership, learning, and looking ahead to the future of WRJ. From board meetings to workshops to learning about leadership through the eyes of fifty amazing Jewish women who paved our way, including Sally Priesand, we honed in on the talents we have and the skills we need to take WRJ to the future and beyond. The expertise and knowledge of Abby Fisher, VP of Advocacy and Marketing & Communications at WRJ, provided us with the tools we need to get the word out to our Sisterhoods about the latest

resolutions, policies and procedures and how to navigate exciting changes in WRJ’s communications methods.

Coupled with Abby’s myriad presentations were an auspicious 18 of our own Midwest District presenters, providing informative workshops, pre-conference activities, moving services, and beautiful music. Beyond a thorough overview of WRJ and breakouts for Presidents and Area Directors, we had opportunities for enrichment through Torah study, catching up on the latest activities of Women of the Wall, and a chance to focus on helping each other by learning how to be good mentors/mentees. Learning and networking complete, we took a well deserved break to decorate the Sukkah, filling it with ushpizin (visitors) to lead our way to the future through study of the past, and of course, some time for mahj and ice cream. No WRJ event would be complete without a YES Fundraiser and a Social Action project, which were both a smashing success. Several boxes of school supplies were collected and transported to the Women’s Center of Waukesha, overwhelming the people of the shelter with our combined generosity. After selling our gently used books to one another for the YES Fundraiser, remaining books went to the Women’s Center and Better World Books. We are truly a team of women who make things happen!



WRJ Board Members

Our ranks are made up of an impressive set of numbers, giving us ample opportunity to engage the next generation of Sisterhood women. If you aren’t yet convinced we are stronger together, how about noting that our group included approximately 22 past presidents, 17 presidents, 30 district board members, 20 of whom also serve on the Midwest District

Exec Board, around 20 first timers to Interim and 3 who have never attended a district event. And let’s not forget the 17 WRJ Singers who not only entertain, but keep us informed of important upcoming events. Are you getting ready for Kallah from April 9-10 or the Midwest District Convention from October 27-31 next year? Opportunities abound to be a part of the ranks who lead us into the future, passing the baton once again to the next Joshua in our midst.



Co-chairs Donelle Macey and Denise Fogel



WRJ Singers ready for Orlando



In Solidarity with the Women of the Wall

## Department of Marketing and Communications



Have you ever wondered what it takes to communicate information to a large group of people? There are a lot of variables to make sure the district has correct and accurate information on all members of the board and all sisterhood and women's group presidents. The Midwest District has different forms of communication vehicles to communicate a wide variety of information to our members and to many outside of the district. Most of our district communications are handled through **Constant Contact**. This has become our main tool of sending emails to members of the district. Our president, Lynne Turry sends out a monthly email around Rosh Chodesh called M'Keshet. She shares her thoughts on different topics, district birthdays, good and welfare, district and sisterhood events and more.

If there is a change in leadership, we need to be in the know so that your sisterhood or women's group is kept informed on the latest information. I am very proud of my team and would like to share who each of them are and what area of communications they are responsible for. A picture goes a long way to put a face with a name. Linn Ullenbrauck, WRJ Board Member, VP, Marketing & Communications for the WRJ Midwest District



We have an extensive **database** and **directory** that is maintained by Peggy Kipp, ([pegk56@comcast.net](mailto:pegk56@comcast.net)). The database is an Excel spreadsheet with all of our district's contact information for board members, sisterhood and women's group presidents as well as clergy and temple presidents of each of our 34 affiliated sisterhoods and women's groups. The directory is the Word version that is communicated to each of you. It has a lot of details regarding district information, WRJ, the YES Fund and more. It is emailed once a year and it is a great source of information for everyone.



**The Messenger**, our district newsletter is managed by our editor, Marilyn Weisberg ([mweisberg0@gmail.com](mailto:mweisberg0@gmail.com)). Articles such as this one and other information shared by our executive team are communicated in this fashion. News and photos from district and WRJ events are shared on a wider scale. If your sisterhood or women's group is hosting an upcoming event that you want the district to know about, please share it with Marilyn.



What would any organization be without a **website**? Marla Goldberg ([auntiemar@msn.com](mailto:auntiemar@msn.com)) is our website chair and has actively been working hard to revamp the site to modernize it and entice our members to go to and utilize the website. The site is a way to introduce people to who we are, what we do and how we can benefit sisterhoods and women's groups. Our website is <http://www.midwestwrj.org/>. You will notice more changes to the site in the coming months! I encourage you to go to the site and see what we can do for you!



Who is that person behind the camera? Well it is none other than Barbara Heinrich ([BGHHeinrich@comcast.net](mailto:BGHHeinrich@comcast.net)). Barbara is our **historian**. She is responsible for taking photos at our district events, creating photo albums to share on our district **Facebook** page and hardcover format. She also forwards district information to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, OH.



In this age of **social media**, we are very active with our **Facebook** page <https://www.facebook.com/WrjMidwest/>. Jennifer Schneider ([jeisen45@gmail.com](mailto:jeisen45@gmail.com)) is social media chair and administers and maintains the page for us. The page is followed not only by our Midwest ladies but friends and women from other districts and including other pages such as **WRJ**. Currently 181 people or pages like and follow our district page. District events are created to promote district functions. Links to more than 80 other pages where articles, photos and blogs may be shared. This includes WRJ and all the districts, all the sisterhoods and synagogues within the district that have a presence, Jewish organizations and other pages of interest. If you and your sisterhood or women's group are on Facebook and has a page to like, please be sure to like and follow our page.

Did you know we are also on **Twitter**? Yes we are. Please follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WRJMDW>. This is as an additional vehicle to communicate district information with a growing group of Twitter followers. Our district is one of two districts with Twitter accounts. Currently the Twitter account is following 76 people and groups and is followed by 37 people and groups.

## **WRJ Midwest District Resource People**

*Call them for ideas and/or tell them of your successes. They are here for you.*

### **KALLAH**

Carol Berger (847) 205-9793 [ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net)

### **RELIGIOUS RITUALS/WORSHIP**

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### **CRITICAL ISSUES/SOCIAL ACTION**

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### **MEMBERSHIP**

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### **SPEAKERS BUREAU**

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## WRJ Provides New Resources to Help Sisterhoods

By Janet Buckstein

One of my favorite activities (right up there with canasta) is to talk with new sisterhood presidents and upcoming leaders. You are excited, energetic, and committed to providing the direction your sisterhoods require excel, but you are often nervous about the challenges ahead. Have no fear... help is on its way!

You may already be aware of WRJ Midwest District resources such as our speaker's bureau, leadership training at area days and district workshops, networking opportunities with other sisterhood leaders and of course, your WRJ Area Director, who can provide support that is just a car ride away. WRJ North America also provides many resources, including...

**Speakers Bureau** – each WRJ affiliated women's group is entitled to a WRJ North America speaker every two years. The only cost is for local transportation and meals.

**Weekly Digest** – an email that includes many Strategies for Success on topics ranging from social action programs, to membership development, to creating marketing materials

**Yammer** – WRJ's online network providing interaction with experts and peers, as well as shared resources.

**Webinars** – on diverse issues such as finance and budgeting, marketing and communications, and programming.

These resources are available to you as a benefit of your membership in WRJ and at no (or minimal in the case of WRJ Speaker's Bureau) charge.

Two new resources are now available to you: **WRJ Consultant Program** and **WRJ Marketing Toolkit**.

The **WRJ Consultant Program** was created to provide WRJ-affiliated sisterhoods with access to WRJ leaders who are knowledgeable in topics that our affiliates often find challenging. The WRJ Board Members and Board Alumnae who serve as consultants have a great deal of experience in their local sisterhoods as well as special skills and interest in the one or two [topics \(click to see list\)](#) in which they are consulting. These topics range from budgeting and finance to governance, congregational relations, fundraising, programming, membership and marketing. Each consultant can provide guidance, how-to's, resources, and assistance; they are eager to offer their support to help you and your sisterhood succeed. **To request a WRJ Consultant, please fill out a [request form](#).** Once you have submitted your request, you will receive an email confirmation. A WRJ Consultant will contact you within a week.

The **WRJ Marketing Toolkit** is an online guide designed to help sisterhoods develop and implement successful marketing programs. It is available on Yammer in the Marketing and Communications Group. This guide takes you through the process step by step and provides specific recommendations for everything from how to organize to create and manage the process to specific tools that can be used for marketing campaigns. The toolkit provides links to examples and resources and is intended to be a real time resource, with ongoing updates and the addition of new and modified tools.

This resource was introduced at the Assembly in Orlando and you can expect more information and tips on how to use it. The WRJ Consultants assigned to supporting Marketing and Communications needs are familiar with the toolkit and can help sisterhoods implement it.

One additional plus for Midwest District sisterhoods is that we have resources right in our District to help. Susan Pittleman championed the development of the Consultants Program and there are 9 women in Midwest who are identified as consultants; while I was integrally involved in the development of the Marketing Toolkit.

**So... if you need us we will come!!!**



# News from the Areas of WRJ Midwest

By Alese Goers and Michelle Scheinkopf, Co-Area Vice Presidents

This past summer Metropolitan Chicago had a wonderful Area Day at Beth Tikvah Congregation in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. There were over 90 women in attendance for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in row! Sisterhoods and Women's Groups members from the south suburbs of Chicago, Northwest Indiana and Wisconsin were also in attendance at Beth Tikvah! Taal Hasak-Lowy, Executive Director of American Jewish World Service, was the luncheon guest speaker. Oak Park Temple Sisterhood has volunteered to host Area Day in June 2016.

Metropolitan Chicago President's Brunch will be at Area Director, Gloria Kaiz's home on October 24, 2015. She will be joined by Area Directors Andi Blain and newly installed AD, Laura Cooper. Confirmation of Laura becoming the third AD to metro Chicago took place at the Interim Board Meeting at OSRUI in September. We are excited to have Laura back as an area director for 2015-16.

There was also an Area Day in Madison, Wisconsin. The lunchtime speaker, Carousel Bayrd, a member of the Dane County Board of Commissioners, inspired a great discussion about social action and lobbying. Ruth Treisman has offered to host the event in 2016 at Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun and to work on planning it! Marcy Frost is planning a President's Brunch for November.

October 26<sup>th</sup> Mount Zion Temple, Temple Israel, and Bet Shalom Sisterhoods sponsored a guest speaker, Connie Hertz for a program titled 4 Ways to Get Unstuck & Live the Life You Love.

We had a wonderful weekend for Interim at OSRUI, September 25-27. This year's Leadership Training & Interim Board Meeting's theme was- Lessons on Leadership: Hearing our Past, Listening to our Futures. Thank you to our Co-Chairs of Interim, Donelle Macey, Denise Fogel, and Programming Chair Sue Schneider who provided us with wonderful programming, great food, and lovely weather!

Mae Schwab, Speaker Bureau Chair, is awaiting your filled out forms for getting a speaker from the Speakers Bureau. You are entitled to one Midwest Speaker per year as well as one WRJ Speaker every other year (by filling out the WRJ Speaker Bureau form). Contact Mae at [maewash@aol.com](mailto:maewash@aol.com) for more information about obtaining speakers for your events!



## TOP TEN REASONS WHY 2015 KALLAH, THE ART OF BEING JEWISH WAS AMAZING!

**OSRUI!!** We are so blessed to have such a wonderful facility in our district. Accommodations and food were excellent. Staff was amazing, and we were so fortunate to have Susan Alexander, Assistant Camp Director, lead us in song during the services, and Barbara Gordon, OSRUI Program Director, teach challah braiding. And, yeah for good weather!!! It was wonderful to be able to be outside.

**AMAZING WORKSHOPS.** Our amazing team of very talented presenters were awesome! Thank you to Lynne Kleiman and Hedda Schless (BJBE), Harriet Krasnoff (Bet Shalom), Sherri Frisque, Janet Burbul, Peggy Kipp and Ruth Garner (Mt. Zion), Lorri Fishman and Linn Ullenbrauck (Temple Beth Israel), Elana Morone (BYBS), Nikki Levin (Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun), Mary Frost (Temple Israel), Sandi Finsel (Temple Chai), Marsha Cooper (Oak Park Temple) and Cantor Lauren Phillips (Congregation Sinai, Milwaukee).

**NEW PRE KALLAH WORKSHOPS.** Our get ready for Shabbat themed workshops were sensational. Everyone enjoyed coming to camp a little early to learn flower arranging from Lynne Kleiman (BJBE) and challah braiding from Barbara Gordon (OSRUI) and Kathy Madura (Oak Park). The beautiful flowers and handmade challahs added a special touch to our Shabbat tables. And how about our "drama queens?" They were great, performing a skit written and directed by Harriette Krasnoff (Bet Shalom) of the week's Torah Portion.

**BIRTHDAY BAG TZEDAKAH PROJECT.** It was great fun to make the birthday bags for the Oconomowoc Food Pantry. Thanks to Marcy Frost, Denise Fogel, and Aviva Weisberg (Temple Israel) for coordinating this project which put a smile on the shelf at the pantry.

**YES FUND ART AUCTION.** Michelle Scheinkopf (NSCI) and Zabe Williams (Beth- El, South Bend) did an awesome job on sorting all the donations and running the live auction. WOW! We raised over \$1400 for the YES Fund.

**SERVICES.** Our services were wonderful, spiritual experiences. Thanks to Kristin Stern (Beth-El, Munster) for preparing the services, Sally Frank (B'nai Jeshurun) for leading the services, and Marla Goldberg (BJBE) for the inspiring D'var Torah on Friday night. Special thanks to Susan Alexander (OSRUI) for the beautiful music, and Harriette Krasnoff (Bet Shalom) for the Torah portion skit.

**TIMBRELS.** How fun was it decorate our own timbrels (aka tambourines) on Friday night? Our special instruments made Miriam's Song on Saturday morning a spectacular celebration of song, music, and dance. Thanks to Kathy Madura for coordinating the craft supplies.

**THE YONIM STUDENT ISRAELI DANCE TROUPE.** How fortunate we were to have these talented youngsters at camp for the weekend. We loved their performance and dancing in the sunlight with them before Havdalah on Saturday night.

**FOOD.** As always, food was plentiful. Thank you to Lorri Fishman (Temple Beth Israel) and Lorraine Edelstein (Sinai Temple) for coordinating and reminding us to be mindful of healthy choices. Our late night treats were innovative! Thanks to Karen Schwartz (Temple Chai) for the fun cupcake decorating on Friday, and Lorri Fishman (Temple Beth Israel) for the smoothy bar.

**YOU!** We had record breaking attendance. This Kallah was so popular that we used every available room at OSRUI and last minute registrants agreed to do triple rooms and sleep on cots so they would not miss out. 24 Sisterhoods were represented: an amazing 70 % of the Sisterhoods in the Midwest Regions. We had 16 women who had never attended a WRJ event previously, and 8 women who were first time Kallah attendees. **We are stronger together!!**

We need to also mention the outstanding job Linn Ullenbrauck and Laura Cooper (Temple Beth Israel) did on Event Brite Registration, and publicity and informative emails sent to our attendees. Thank you Ladies. It was our pleasure to work with such a great leadership team and welcome so many to camp. Thank you for your enthusiastic response and complimentary emails afterwards.

**So you may ask, what's next? Kallah 2016 of course! Mark your calendars now for another spectacular Kallah, April 8-10<sup>th</sup>. See page 17.**

**Carol Berger (Congregation BJBE) and Kathy Madura (Oak Park Temple)**

# THE ART OF BEING JEWISH May 1-3, 2015





Her Own



Stronger Together

# THE ART OF BEING JEWISH May 1-3, 2015





# WRJ MIDWEST KALLAH 2016

## THE GAME OF LIFE

*Traveling the path of LIFE. Making Decisions, Choosing YOUR Path,  
and definitely HAVING FUN!!!*

**APRIL 8-10, 2016**



**We are delighted to welcome Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus**, Rabbi Emerita of Congregation B'nai Yehuda Beth Sholom, Homewood, IL to this year's Kallah. She is a founder and former president of the [Women's Rabbinic Network](#). In 2001 she became the first female president of the [Chicago Board of Rabbis](#). In 2009 she was installed as the second female president of Reform Judaism's [Central Conference of American Rabbis](#)

(CCAR) in Jerusalem, making her the first female leader of a major rabbinic organization to begin her tenure in Israel. In 2009 she was also inducted onto the Board of Governors of the [Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion](#). In 2010 she was selected as one of the top 50 rabbis in America by *Newsweek*.

All who attended KALLAH 2015, The Art of Being Jewish, know that the team of Carol Berger [ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net) and Kathy Madura [optsisterhood@yahoo.com](mailto:optsisterhood@yahoo.com) promised AND delivered a SPECTACULAR KALLAH! We are so looking forward to seeing you and your friends at **KALLAH 2016**

**The Game of Life. SAVE THE DATE. APRIL 8-10, 2016**, and please let us know if you would like to be on the planning team.

## Individual Sisterhood Events

**Sisterhood Temple Beth Israel** has been bustling with activity. Our most recent major event was our yearly holiday Artisan Faire that was held on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Forty artists participated. Handmade Judaica, jewelry, pottery, clothing and accessories as well as greeting cards and yummy Thanksgiving cookies were among the items that were for sale. Each of our artists kindly donated an original piece to be raffled off. Snacks were available through Temple's Nosh Café and Superdawg catered a delicious hot dog lunch. The Faire was a successful fundraiser for Sisterhood, and earned \$2700.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, we held a shopping night at Vibrato, which is a charming boutique in Glenview. We had lots of fun shopping and socializing. Best of all Sisterhood earned \$300.

December 2<sup>nd</sup>, we held our monthly Open Meeting at noon, where we celebrated Hanukkah with a candle lighting, and a delicious latke lunch. One of our congregants presented a program on Bryce and Zion National Parks. His magnificent photos made the presentation extra special. Later that evening, we held at Social Action Program. Thirty attended *Fighting Sex Trafficking: The Jewish Community Takes a Stand*. Guest speakers included Julie Newman from the National Coalition of Jewish Women and JCAST (Jewish Coalition against Sex Trafficking). She and her colleagues spoke about the work these organizations do to fight sex trafficking. A survivor of sex trafficking shared his compelling story.

December 16<sup>th</sup>, our evening book club will be meeting to discuss *The Language of Flowers*, by Vanessa Diffenbaugh.

The first session of our weekly Sisterhood Monday morning study sessions with the Rabbi began on October 26<sup>th</sup> and will be concluding on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The second session will be starting in March.

We are looking forward to a Social Action Program on the evening of February 3<sup>rd</sup>, *Demystifying Hospice Care*. Sisterhood will also be holding T'Fillot Nashim, our women's Shabbat Service on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. Trivia Night, a fundraiser, will be held the evening of March 19<sup>th</sup>. We are holding a Women's Seder on the afternoon of April 5<sup>th</sup>.

We are looking forward to being together and participating in all of our events.

Jane Page and Harriet Arons, Co-Presidents

**Temple Emanuel Sisterhood**, Davenport, Iowa  
Sheila Gluck, President,

In October we had our annual Diane Meade Health Program (in memory of an ex-Sisterhood President) with a guest speaker to address women's issues on anxiety. Also, from the Diane Meade Fund, Sisterhood was able to purchase an AED for the Temple---this past year.

On December 5 our community will be coming together to engage in a humanitarian effort aimed at feeding the starving Syrians in the refugee camps of Jordan and Greece. Temple Emanuel Sisterhood has donated money and volunteering their time to assist with this cause. We do gift wrapping at three places from December 18-24. This is a joint effort with two sisterhoods. We donate one third of the money to a local charity. Also, in December is our annual Hanukkah Party/Auction which is at a local restaurant. Each person is asked to bring a gift beautifully wrapped for the auction. It is a fun evening. About half of the money from the auction will be donated to the YES FUND.

In February our sisterhood will be hosting a Shabbat Chavarin which a dinner and service.

March we will have a police officer come and talk to the sisterhood on personal safety and home security. Our annual Women's Seder is in April this year. We invite women and girls from the congregation to join us for a very festive evening.

Then May is our Sisterhood Shabbat Chavarin (service and dinner) and Installation.

Mt Sinai Sisterhood  
Wausau

## Cookie Exchange



Saturday, December 19, 2015  
3:00 - 5:00 PM

Please join us to share your winter holiday favorite or family recipe cookie for our exchange and tasting. The tasting starts immediately, and the exchange starts at 3:30 PM.

You will need:

- 6 Dozen (or more!) cookies on a display-ready platter with your name on the bottom. Warm cookies do not travel well, so please bake a day or two ahead.
- A container to transport your plethora of cookies.
- A printed copy of your recipe.

RSVP to the Evite with your cookie choice no later than Monday Dec. 14, 2015. It's important to RSVP as soon as possible if you really want to make a specific cookie - only 2 people can do the same recipe. No store bought cookies, bar cookies or pre-made cookies.

Questions? Email julieckbjn@kcbjfamily.com

## WRJ Midwest Convention 2016



Every two years women from our district come together to learn, pray and celebrate our achievements as well as install women who said YES to be part of our district leadership team. We will be getting together at our district convention **October 27-30, 2016** in Downers Grove, IL to do just that.

We are so thrilled that our special guest will be none other than Sara Charney, WRJ VP of Programs and Education. She is from Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.



The theme of the convention will be: ***B'reishit... a New Beginning. Creating our WRJ Community One Woman at a Time.*** We are hoping that this event will kick-off a time of building and fostering a WRJ-wide family where every member has an opportunity to learn, grow and feel part of a nurturing community of Reform Jewish women.

**Creating Our WRJ Community**

**One Woman at a Time**

**October 27-30, 2016**



Our workshops will center on three themes:

**BUILDERS:** Laying the foundation for stronger Sisterhoods and Communities...the “how to”, nuts and bolts workshops;

**GOOD NEIGHBORS:** Contributing to our Community through acts of Gemilut Hasadim (loving kindness) and Tzedakah (justice, righteousness and good will);

**L'DOR VADOR:** Honoring our past, designing our future. New ideas for building our Sisterhoods and more.

Sunday morning will feature a panel discussion on “How to be a Mensch”.

There will be preconvention activities on Thursday that will include trips to the [Morton Arboretum](#) and [Oakbrook Shopping Mall](#). If you can make the time, these places are definitely worth the visit. The color changes in Chicago in October will be spectacular.

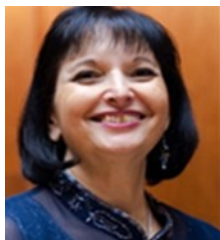
**How do we promote it? On Facebook and Twitter [#WRJMD2016](#)! Want to volunteer on a project or for a day? Email Michelle at [scheinkopf@sbcglobal.net](mailto:scheinkopf@sbcglobal.net) and she will be happy to add you to our growing list. There will be more to come so keep an eye out in your emails for more updates in the coming months!**



**Double Tree Hotel  
Downers Grove IL**

## Planning Your Convention

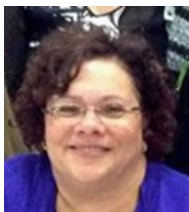
Planning an event like this takes a village. To lead that village are four women who won't take no for an answer: Carol Berger, Michelle Scheinkopf, Cheryl Stern and Linn Ullenbrauck. Each of us has different responsibilities to make the 2016 convention a success. We wanted to share with you a little tidbit of information of what each of us are responsible for to entice you into attending next year's convention. Not only do we want you to come, but we also want you to volunteer your time. After all, it's your convention!



Carol Berger ([ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ponderer4552@sbcglobal.net)) is responsible for overseeing all the programming for the weekend from start to finish. While planning most of the workshops are still in the works, we are able to share a few of the activities.



Michelle Scheinkopf ([scheinkopf@sbcglobal.net](mailto:scheinkopf@sbcglobal.net)) is a Jack of All Trades or JOAT for short. She is responsible for keeping the list of volunteers for the other co-convention chairs and to help the Volunteer Co-Chairs to find the volunteers at large for the actual convention. This portfolio also includes the services that will take place during the course of the convention including Friday night services at [Etz Chaim Congregation](#), Shabbat morning, Havdallah and the Installation Service all of which are located at the Doubletree. Rhoda Hauptman, Women of Valor, and the YES Fund Brunch and Awards program fall under her watch as does the Social Action Project that all attendees will get to participate in.



Cheryl Stern ([cbsternies@aol.com](mailto:cbsternies@aol.com)) is our venue and F&B lady. She helped find the location where we will hold our convention. Where is that you say? We will be staying away the [Doubletree Suites](#) by Hilton in Downers Grove, IL. It's about 15 miles southwest of O'Hare International Airport. Each room is a suite with a living room with a pull-out sofa. You can easily sleep 3 in a room. A breakfast buffet is included in the rate. The single and double rate is \$99 and triple is \$109 and quad is \$119.



Linn Ullenbrauck ([linneupooh@att.net](mailto:linneupooh@att.net)) is your communications guru. She is responsible for overseeing all marketing and communications of the convention including promotional emails, the production of the program/ad book, proofreading and printing the Kavod/Woman of Valor booklet and all other printed materials, the convention bags & tags and signage at the convention site. Marketing and communicating the convention is up to all of us so we have a successful attendance from all of our sisterhoods!

During our district meeting in Orlando, we did a big reveal and changed into t-shirts and distributed buttons with our convention logo. Everyone at the meeting received a button and was asked to recite our convention oath:

"I (fill in your name), will do my best to attend the 2016 WRJ Midwest District Convention at the Double Tree Suites by Hilton in Downers Grove, Illinois, October 27-30, 2016. I will do my best to bring other women from my sisterhood or women's group to share and experience the warmth, camaraderie, and meaningful times I have come to know with a fabulous group of like-minded women from our district. By joining my Midwest sisters at our convention, I will be helping to create our WRJ community one Woman at a time."

You weren't at assembly to get a button? Well don't worry, we have plenty. We'll have more to distribute at Kallah in April 2016.

