

Reflections on the Drive Home by Barbara Brown

Driving home from the WRJNE District Kallah, I am digesting the weekend (and all the good food we had), while listening to NPR. I was thinking about what to “bring back” to my own Sisterhood. Our Temple Sisterhood Board meetings are packed and there isn’t much time, or often interest, about District “doings”.

During the weekend, we got many useful leadership pointers from Karen Sim, the WRJ guest speaker and “trainer”, on everything from how to look and sound when making a speech, to what to include in a D’var. We participated in a social action project and made heart pillows for breast cancer patients in Israel, and raised money for the YES fund via a lively Missouri shuffle. We celebrated Shabbat with new and old WRJ friends and our lovely cantorial student.

What I felt most strongly on the drive home though, was the amazing support system WRJ creates for those who choose to become involved, and how meaningful that is when life’s “blows” hit. Just during this weekend, one friend’s husband is dealing with terminal cancer and has little time left; my roommate/”planned” driving partner’s husband came down with shingles; the vice president coordinating the event is facing an operation in six weeks or so; and one Area Director’s mother died this morning.* Yet though these women may have arrived late or left early, they all found a way to get to this retreat because it was SO important to each of them...and to the rest of us. The caring for those suffering most was palpable.

A physics professor was being interviewed on the NPR show. She mentioned her Catholic background and how there are values in their religion promoting helping others. She also spoke of the danger facing coral reefs and how they form from many individual cells coming together. She mentioned how they are stronger together. These concepts we value of tikkun olam, and being stronger together are not exclusive to WRJ, but it is so nice when we can find a group that resonates with us and feels comfortable and supportive at the same time. This is what pulled many of us to WRJ, and what keeps us there.

*Thank you to the women who agreed to share their stories