

# The Charlotte JEWISH news

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Save \$5 off registration with the  
code on page 5.

## It Takes a Congregation to Chronicle 70 Years

By Amy Lefkof

Temple Beth El has been a spiritual home to Reform Jews throughout its 70-year history, no matter the size or location of its physical home: from Hotel Charlotte on West Trade Street where TBE was officially organized on New Year's Day 1943, to a loft above Downtons' Grocery Store at the intersection of Kings and Morehead, to the first temple building on Providence Road where the 1948 groundbreaking occurred shortly after Israel's Independence Day, to the current temple building with its Jerusalem stone facade at Shalom Park.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a congregation to recount TBE's 70-year history. There were many artifacts in the Charlotte Jewish Archives of the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center, including an amusing *Charlotte Observer* headline unearthed by librarians Jean Moats and Paula Brown announcing the imminent formation of Charlotte's first "Reformed Hebrew Church" (see photo). There were TBE yearbooks ranging

from 1956-1973. A weathered anonymous scrapbook from 1968-1976 yielded newspaper articles about clergy and congregants, snippets of sermons, photos, and sisterhood programs. Walter and Elizabeth Klein's Treasures of Temple Beth El collection contained meticulously labeled photos and documents. Long-time congregants, such as Gladys Lavitan, Frances and Ron Liss, and the Kleins, were interviewed, and several other congregants helped identify faces in old photos of religious school classes, Wildacres' retreats, and Sisterhood events.

The seven decades of TBE's rich history have been pictorially captured on seven vertical banners that grace TBE's foyer. The first banner (1943-1953) features founder Arthur Goodman, Sr., Joan Gottheimer being honored as the first Sisterhood President, the tenth anniversary program



featuring the original temple building, a group photo of Temple Beth El's Saturday Night Supper Club, an early photo of Anita and Herman Blumenthal, and the 1948 groundbreaking photo featuring famed author and civil rights advocate Harry Golden (who served as Board Secretary, Sunday School teacher, and author of our first Constitution and by-laws).

Later banners highlight social justice accomplishments such as our first Habitat for Humanity house and TBE's active support of Sterling Elementary and the Shalom Park Freedom School, as

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