

~ SYNAGOGUES AND CONGREGATIONS ~

The Spirit of Giving Is Strong at Temple Beth El



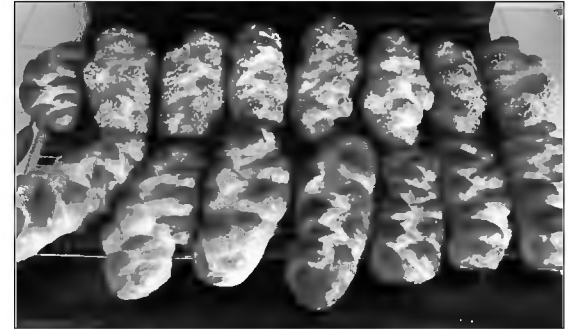
Eden Gobuty

By Eden Gobuty,
Director of Development and
Member Services, Temple Beth
El

In August 2020, amid a global pandemic and right before the High Holy Day season, I began my role as director of development and member services at Temple Beth El (TBE). My husband, Kevin, and I have been members since we moved to Charlotte in 2018, and the opportunity to work alongside TBE's outstanding clergy and staff was tremendously exciting. More than six months into the role, I have some key observa-

tions and have learned important lessons about TBE and Charlotte's Jewish community are apparent to me.

TBE's community is generous. When COVID hit, TBE's leadership had to consider how much the pandemic might affect membership in the coming year along with other revenue sources such as rental income. We followed a conservative budget that allowed for a significant decrease in My Temple Commitment (annual membership income) due to anticipated financial challenges among congregants because of the pandemic. The community



One example of generosity at Temple Beth El – congregants baked and delivered challah for the entire congregation for TBE Challah Day on March 12 and 19.

responded with a resounding cry — one that said, “TBE is important to my family, and I am committed to this congregation.” As we face the beginning of another uncertain fiscal year, we feel confident that the congregation will again rise to the occasion, ensuring the continuity of TBE's staff and community.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte is full of menschen. While I have been fortunate to see the leadership and partnership of the Federation first-hand before this role (primarily because of my experience in the most recent cohort of the Bernstein Leadership Group), our Federation took it to another level this year. In addition to Federation's annual allocations, the emergency grants provided to the community immediately after the pandemic began and the creation of the new Adaptation and Transformation Fund show a level of compassion and acumen that I will never take for granted. At TBE, funds from Federation in 2020 allowed us to pivot to online programming and hire a social justice outreach coordinator who will build on our tikkun olam work. We are so thankful.

Partnership is powerful. One of the most exciting aspects of this role is being part of a congregation that is so intertwined with other communities, both locally and nationally. As our congregation is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, I participate in professional meetings with other development and/or membership directors at congregations around the country who are asking the same questions we are. Additionally, I have benefited greatly from the partnership and experience of working with our friends at the Foundation for the Carolinas and the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community, in particular Phil Warshauer and Doug Benson. As both congregants and professionals in the philanthropic space, their support has been invaluable. Connecting with others in similar

roles always helps me feel more connected and less isolated.

Building relationships in a pandemic is rough. This one almost needs no explanation. While I have been a member of TBE for a few years, I still need to meet so many congregants, and the pandemic has not made this easy. Through phone calls and online meetings, Shabbat services and delivering mishloach manot to our new members, I have made some inroads, but there is still a long way to go. Many of us are struggling to build new relationships during this time, and my suggestion is that we continue putting ourselves out there. Everyone is looking for connection, and even when we think we are suffering from Zoom fatigue, human interaction is priceless.

There is nothing like a dedicated team of lay leaders. I am so deeply inspired by the commitment of TBE's lay leaders. From baking more than 100 hamantaschen to deliver to the aforementioned new members, making phone calls to those who had not renewed their My Temple Commitment, being all-in on an online Purim shpiel, sending out cards of condolence to those who have lost loved ones ... the list goes on and on. I am consistently in awe of our Development Committee members who are truly the experts on the generosity and capacity of our community. It has been wonderful to learn from and be guided by them in these first months on the job, and I look forward to continuing to build our partnership. Todah rabah for the warm welcome to this role, and I look forward to meeting even more members of our community, professionals and congregants alike, during the next six months and beyond.



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