The 2011 Solomon Schechter Awards  
Program Synopses  
Celebrations and Dedications Category
Celebrities and Dedications - Gold Award

Honoring Sugihara

Sugihara Street Dedication

Congregation Beth David; Saratoga, CA

Contact: Abe Bromberg; abebromberg@hotmail.com

On Sunday October 25, 2009, Congregation Beth David, Saratoga, California honored the memory of Chiune Sugihara by dedicating a street bearing his name. Mr. Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat who saved the lives of thousands of Jews by helping them escape from the Nazis. A Sugihara street sign was erected on a street located in front of the synagogue, containing a plaque on the post with Sugihara’s picture and a brief description of his heroism. The dedication was followed by refreshments, then a showing of the documentary film about Chiune Sugihara, Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness.

The event gained support throughout the Jewish and Japanese communities, and was publicized in community newspapers as well as area synagogues, churches, and in San Jose Japantown. The audience of some 200 people included Beth David congregants, holocaust survivors, members of the Japanese-American community, clergy and members of local synagogues and churches, and interested citizens from Saratoga and the surrounding area.

A broad cross-section of Beth David members and members from the surrounding community was involved in the program. Beth David Jewish Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts from Japantown led the presentation of flags and the Pledge of Allegiance, and speakers included: Reverend Jerry Sakamoto, Minister of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin; Chuck Page, Mayor of Saratoga, California; Yasumasa Nagamine, Japanese Consul General (San Francisco); Joe Yasutake, PhD, Vice President Japanese American Museum San Jose (who, as a child, was imprisoned in a U.S. internment camp during World War II); Rabbi Daniel Pressman, Senior Rabbi, Congregation Beth David; and Andrea Burke, a member of the Jewish community whose mother and 6 other relatives were survivors saved by Mr. Sugihara. A proclamation from U.S. Congressman Mike Honda was read, and Saratoga Mayor Chuck Page presented Beth David a special plaque to commemorate the event. A significant outcome of the event was the connection of the San Jose Jewish and Japanese-American communities.

Celebrations and Dedications - Gold Award

I Have a Dream - A Celebration of the Legacy and Teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Park Synagogue; Pepper Pike, OH

Contact: Ellen Petler; epetler@parksyn.org

Bring together three congregations of different faiths with one common goal – to plan a special program for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2010 – and the end result is a meaningful and highly successful two-day program of interfaith worship, understanding and fellowship. The Park Synagogue took the lead in inviting the two African-American churches which were renting auditorium space in our Cleveland Heights building (unused by our congregation on Sundays) to work with us on this project.

After months of dialogue and planning, Park Synagogue, Abundant Grace Fellowship and Body of Christ Assembly Heights held a lively and uplifting interfaith worship service on Sunday, January 17, 2010 and an inspiring and entertaining afternoon of celebration on Monday, January 18, 2010. The two events attracted large numbers of enthusiastic people of all ages, races, and religions – Jews, Christians, and Muslims – both from the three congregations and from the Cleveland area community in general. We
were truly able to have a meaningful MLK Day weekend celebration by bringing our congregation and community together to promote greater interfaith understanding and awareness of our shared history.

Celebrations and Dedications - Silver Award

**Beth-El Makor Chayim; Cranford, NJ**

Contact: **Stephen Solomon; steveandsidney@msn.com**

*Temple Beth-El Mekor Chayim developed a year long celebration to commemorate the synagogue’s 90th anniversary. This celebration included a professionally created photo journal, a cantor’s concert, a book of memories and a gala party. Although this program was initiated as a synagogue fund raiser, it was clear that of equal importance was to renew and re-invigorate the synagogue spirit by commemorating our past and celebrating our future. Key to that would be to develop programming which would include all aspects of the synagogue and its members.*

The initial program was a photo journal. An outside company was hired to produce the photo journal. This journal contained portrait pictures of member families, candid pictures from various events, staff pictures, a synagogue directory and a brief history of the synagogue. An ad journal was also included as part of the photo journal. In addition to a photo journal, a book of memories was created. This book contained articles submitted by past presidents regarding their memories as president of the synagogue, letters from public officials acknowledging the synagogues 90th anniversary, a listing of sponsors and the cantor’s concert program. The gala celebration included a cantor’s concert and a family style party after the concert.

Celebrations and Dedications - Silver Award

**Temple Sholom; Bridgewater, NJ**

Contact: **Susan Engelstein; smne@optonline.net**

*Honoring Our Elders accomplished two very important things: we honored the oldest in our congregation (many of them founding members) and we provided our teenagers with a concrete way to interact with and learn from these members. The first step for our committee of three was to create a list of members who were eighty years old or older and then see how many of these members wish to participate. The second step was to discuss the idea at our Hebrew High School and see how many students were interested. We then paired up the students with seniors, sometimes having a brother and sister interview a husband and wife. The students were instructed to call their senior and arrange a meeting. At the meeting, they were to ask them a series of ten questions and to take their picture. They were then to write up their interview and submit it, so that it could be included in a keepsake journal.*

I could not get over the reaction I got from the students. Everyone ended up having a wonderful talk with their senior that went far beyond the provided questions. (One family had the senior couple over for Shabbat dinner.) The kids were given cookies, they were shown old photographs and told stories and asked about themselves and their plans for the future. They learned the history of the Temple and the community and were sent off with words of advice. The students, though apprehensive at first, came to appreciate that though these people were of a different generation, they were still smart and funny and had a lot to offer.*
We then had a luncheon to which the entire synagogue was invited. One by one, the students stood up, introduced their elder and told an interesting thing about them. Then the senior came up and spoke, many with tears in their eyes. The interviews were typed up and put into a keepsake journal with a picture of the senior and the teenager next to each one. Everyone felt that this was one of the most meaningful events that our temple has ever had.

Celebrations and Dedications - Silver Award

**Rabbi Joshua Skoff's 20th Anniversary Year**

**The Park Synagogue; Pepper Pike, OH**

Size Category: 900+

Contact: **Barbara Goldfarb; barbara@parksyn.org**

A year-long celebration in honor of Rabbi Joshua Skoff’s 20th anniversary of service to the Park Synagogue, Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregations, began with planning in June of 2009. On June 27, 2010, over 800 people attended a gala/dinner/program in his honor. Leading up to the gala, there were two additional events: a Shabbat Service on March 20, 2010; and a Fun/Run Walk, lovingly nicknamed, “Take Off With Skoff”, on May 23, 2010.

In addition to these events, a 96-page Tribute Book was compiled and published in his honor. It was distributed at the gala dinner and then inserted into the Cleveland Jewish News newspaper that was delivered to their subscribers the following Friday.

Proceeds from this Anniversary Year were earmarked to help Park’s operating budget. A Rabbi Joshua Skoff Programming Fund was established for on-going donations. Our original goal was to raise $50,000 for two years. We far surpassed this goal by raising over $500,000.

In conclusion, the many volunteers and enthusiastic participants in all these events throughout the year was a way to bring our Park family closer together. We also achieved our monetary goals and confirmed the strength of our congregation. Of course, the most gratifying result was to see the outpouring of affection this community has for its Senior Rabbi.

We look forward to the next milestone anniversary!

Celebrations and Dedications - Bronze Award

**Northern Hills Synagogue Celebrates Its Golden Anniversary**

**Northern Hills Synagogue Congregation B’nai Avraham; Cincinnati, OH**

Size Category: 101-249

Contact: **Joseph Lazear; jlazear_3471@fuse.net**

In honor of its 50th anniversary, as Northern Hills Synagogue - Congregation B’nai Avraham celebrated a series of spectacular social and educational events. The anniversary year began with a Golden Jubilee Gala on Saturday evening, January 23rd. In addition to the wine reception and dinner, the Amazing Portable Circus Game Show will provide entertainment. Members were challenged to answer questions concerning the congregation and member’s past activities. In addition, the congregation recognized members who had been part of the congregation for 50 years, married for 50 years, and celebrating the 50th anniversary of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The contributions of the congregation's youth were also be recognized. A special service was held on Friday evening, June 25th, commemorating the first service held by Northern Hills. Many long term members will be honored for their service to the congregation.
The year of celebration concluded with the scholar-in-residence weekend in November. The featured scholar was Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles.

There have been many milestones for the congregation over the years. These include joining the Conservative Movement in 1963, building its original building at 715 Fleming Road in Finneytown in 1964, merging with Congregation B'nai Avraham of Norwood in 1968, the hiring of Rabbi Gershom Barnard (the congregation's spiritual leader since 1975), embracing egalitarianism in the 1980's, and moving to its current location, at 5714 Fields-Ertel Road in Deerfield Township, in 2004.

The Golden Anniversary was successful in two ways. First, it gave older members the opportunity to gather and reminisce on the founding of the synagogue. Second, newer member learned of the past accomplishments, traditions, and values that formed Northern Hills Synagogue into the strong and vibrant organization it is today.

Celebrations and Dedications - Bronze Award

Come Rejoice, Come Celebrate, Come Worship, Come Give Thanks

Highland Park Conservative Temple - Congregation Anshe Emeth; Highland Park, NJ

Size Category: 250-499

Contact: Linda Tondow; ltondow@gmail.com

On May 2, 2010/18 Iyar 5770, the Highland Park Conservative Temple - Congregation Anshe Emeth community celebrated the dedication of their new synagogue following a devastating fire three years earlier. “Come Rejoice, Come Celebrate, Come Worship, Come Give Thanks” was the theme for the dedication weekend, which began with a Shabbat dinner and concluded with a Sunday morning community program and reception. The Dedication weekend celebrated and dedicated the new beautiful space and gave thanks to those who make the new space possible. It also provided the opportunity to recognize and honor the history of the two congregations, Highland Park Conservative Temple and Congregation Anshe Emeth that had merged three years earlier; through this weekend the two congregations emotionally became one.

Celebrations and Dedications - Bronze Award

Divas on the Bima

Temple Beth Sholom; Cherry Hill, NJ

Size Category: 500-899

Contact: Jennifer Stofman; jennifers@tbsonline.org

Divas Rock the Bima was a hugely successful program designed to officially install Jen Cohen as Cantor of Temple Beth Sholom. In addition to being an installation, the concert brought together four area female cantors to showcase their amazing musical talents. The evening was billed as a celebration of our favorite female voices on the bima. The concert provided female cantors the opportunity to perform classical, popular and Jewish music for their community. Over 500 people from throughout the community were in attendance. We held a second Divas Rock the Bima this year with an even larger attendance, and other congregations have replicated the program (using our title and materials).
Celebrations and Dedications - Bronze Award

Ahavath Achim Synagogue; Atlanta, GA

Contact: Barry Herman; bherman@aasynagogue.org

This program was to honor the memory and Cantor Isaac and Betty Goodfriend z”l. Cantor Goodfriend was the Cantor Emeritus of Ahavath Achim Synagogue for more than 30 years. Participating in the concert were Cantor David Propis (current President of the Cantorial Assembly), Cantor Alberto Mizrahi (current Vice-President -- administration of the Cantorial Assembly), the Atlanta Jewish Male Choir, conducted by the world renowned Fletcher Wolf (who also conducted the Ahavath Achim Synagogue Choir before Cantor Goodfriend retired) and accompanist Kim Goodfriend, the daughter of Cantor and Betty Goodfriend. A tribute was also made by Elie Wiesel in honor of the contributions of Cantor and Betty Goodfriend.

Celebrations and Dedications - Bronze Award

A Congregational Tribute to Rabbi Mark G. Loeb

Beth El Congregation; Baltimore, MD

Contact: Gilbert Kleiner; gil@bethelbalto.com

After the sudden death of Rabbi Emeritus Mark G. Loeb z”l, the leadership of the congregation along with Rabbi Steven Schwartz, Senior Rabbi, decided to hold a tribute to Rabbi Loeb on his first Yahrzeit anniversary. A committee was formed of board members, congregants, officers and senior staff to undertake the task of involving as many of the congregants whose lives were touched by the over 30 years of Rabbi Loeb’s service. The committee met in May, 2010. Several Subcommittees were formed, Program, Reception, Invitations, and Communications, with Richard Hollander a past president and close friend of Rabbi Loeb chairing the tribute. The date selected was Sunday evening, September 26, 2010 one day before the first Yahrzeit.

During the next three months the committees began organizing the evening. Electronic communications were sent to the membership requesting photos, videos and letters regarding life cycle events where Rabbi Loeb officiated. Hundreds were received and incorporated into a video presentation. In late July the program committee developed the evening’s timetable. See attachment of the program.

After meeting in early August, the Communications committee recommended that this be a “family tribute” and simple black ink on white card invitations (see attachment) were sent to the entire congregation and to those with a personal relationship with Rabbi Loeb. The goal was to have this evening be one of tribute and remembrance for the Beth El family. Over 1,000 reservations were received for the evening by the September 13th deadline.

The cost for the one hour and ten minute program was underwritten by a family with a close relationship with Rabbi Loeb. Save for the lavish dessert reception coordinated by the Reception committee and catered by Rabbi Loeb’s favorite caterer in Baltimore at a cost of a $9,500, the expenses were nominal and included mailing and production of the video at $1,600 and the full color program at $1,100. Copies of the video tribute were made available and over 400 DVDs were requested and sent out by mail. The evening was also posted on our website.