

## AVODAH AWARDS --- MAY 15, 2023

**Presented at our Annual Congregation Meeting by Past President Terry Baver**

As we read in Deuteronomy, a community is too heavy for anyone to carry alone. We at Temple Israel have always been blessed with congregants who have brought to our community willing hands and loving hearts. Their loving work has sustained us. Each year, at our congregational meeting, we honor those individuals whose dedication to our congregation has helped us in so many ways. The award honors those who understand and accept their obligation to this community and have worked tirelessly to ensure that we remain a vibrant Beit T'Filah, House of Prayer, Beit Midrash, House of Study and Beit K'Neset, House of Community Gathering.

AVODAH means service...in the broad sense...service as in work and service as in prayer. These awards represent our acknowledgment of the extraordinary Holy service given by these congregants to our Temple community.

On behalf of the Board of Temple Israel it is a privilege to confer this year's AVODAH awards.

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**Pam Carlton** has been a temple member for many years and has always lovingly provided support for our congregation.

This year, Pam has started volunteering to help in our office. She has worked with our new office manager, Nilaja Troy. Nilaja has said that Pam not only works hard and is frequently in the office, but has provided advice and encouragement for all the tasks at hand. And...Pam is always available to make bank and post office runs for us.

Pam does the Good and Welfare for sisterhood and keeps a watch for sisters with events happening in their lives...happy or sad. Sisterhood Co-president Pamela Rogozin, has said that Pam helps with so much...setting up events, helping with clean up and for years she housed all the items people donated for the rummage sales....in her own garage!

Pam also helps with the Caring Committee and helps Pam R handle the shivahs. She also helps prepare food for the needy and is very active in helping Project Hospitality. For many years, she brings our leftover food from events at our temple to them.

Pam is also a longtime choir member, writes beautiful acknowledgments for donations to all temple members and has served on the WRJ boards locally and nationally.

And as a side note, Pam has worked with Claire Guttman's son, Jory, in the past. Just to add to our knowledge of the things Pam does, Jory has said that she has been so involved in BRAVO Volunteer Ambulance, which she joined in 1977. Jory felt so supported by Pam and said that she worked hard to build up many new EMTs and Paramedics. And, her work has saved many, many lives.

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**Sim Lenner** has been a gift to us. As Felicia has said, this was Sim's year to shine! Early in the year Felicia spoke to Sim about her supporting the music in Sunday School on the days Cantor and Jim were not there. Sim also works with them both when they are there, adding more music to our lives. She learned all the music and showed up every Sunday to lead the children in song. Felicia has said that she will never forget Sim's first day, seeing her a little nervous and uneasy. A month later, Sim always had a huge smile and became comfortable, confident and wonderful! When she is singing and playing the guitar on the bimah you can see joy on her face. As Felicia has said, Sim is now a role model for our students. Next year we are hoping she will work with our students in their class and increase our music program. Rabbi has seen Sim become more confident and so knowledgeable about all our music. And he has reminded us that Sim come from a wonderful musical family....and plays the violin too! Sim's mother has said how shy Sim was and now she is so confident and amazing. And no one in their family had a Jewish education...Sim's grandmother felt the safest things to do where Sim's family came from, was not to be openly Jewish. So Sim in the first of their family to learn so much about our religion. Her mom said they didn't feel they would fit in to a traditional or conservative congregation and then they found ours! And Sim is the first of their family to have a Bat Mitzvah!

Cantor Bernstein has said that Sim is a delight! And Felicia has said that we are all so grateful and privileged to have such a mature and incredibly capable young musician be a part of our temple life.

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**Blanche Ricci** has served our congregation and our sisterhood for so many years. As Bryn has said, she is a silent force who never looks for recognition. She has been the rock of sisterhood serving as treasurer forever. She questions the use of money and speaks the truth about how the money should be managed. Blanche also runs the Judaica shop and has for years! She now runs it with Deanna and is always available for you to call her anytime with gift questions! Blanche also organizes the Sisterhood Craft Fair at holiday time and supervises the vendors, the inventory and the set up and breakdown every year.

Blanch also often works in the kitchen and in the sanctuary....without ever seeking recognition! Felicia has said that there is so much to say about Blanche. Felicia sees her as a quiet but fierce leader, who follows through on all her ideas and constantly contributes in so many ways to both sisterhood and the Board.

It is also always important to remember that Blanche is our congregant who reached out to everyone over 20 years ago, to convince us all to provide an upstairs bathroom that would work for people with disabilities and also to have a chairlift so those in wheelchairs could enter our sanctuary.

And Felicia remembers when her daughter Arielle felt sick during a Friday service. Her dad was going to pick her up and she was waiting in the lobby...very sad. So Blanche gave her a small stuffie and made all the difference, helping Ariele feel much better and safer!

Sisterhood Co-president Anita Zuckerberg says that Blanche is so helpful in so many ways and she does it quietly and effortlessly! And when you thank her, she acts as if she's done nothing....but the truth is she is so incredibly helpful to us all.

Jerry Gross has pointed out that Blanche is also passionately interested in our security and always refers security meetings and ideas to our Co-Presidents.

Blanche may not realize it but she is respected, cared about and valued by everyone in our congregation. As Judy Lee has said, Blanche goes beyond all expectations. She is honest and open and always willing to share her thoughts and opinions, and is always tactful and educated to our temple. And.....handles the ritual candles every shabbat!

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### **Brooke Biren Lopez**

has been a gift to us all. She grew up at Temple Israel, being in the choir and the Purim spiels and having a Bat Mitzvah and a confirmation. She and her wonderful husband Louis have two amazing, smart and talented children, Genevieve and Freda. So... Brooke grew up in our congregation...and her mother did....and now her children are as well.

Brooke loves children and is a drama teacher at PS 56, where she creates singing and dancing performances with all the students. Her love of theatre has been with her for so many years. And now, as a temple member, she has brought her incredible talent and ability and intelligence to all our children.

Brooke worked as a teacher in our Religious school for 5 years, working with the young ones and being a very beloved teacher.

Felciia has said that Brooke stepped up to design a universal lesson plan for all our teachers. She has worked hours and days on developing a school curriculum. Rabbi has said that Brooke helped train our new teachers and has provided lesson plans and materials for them. And she is now going to be working to develop a new additional, future curriculum.

She worked with us on the 75th Anniversary event and helped with so many things for the evening, including finding those beautiful table cloths and table decorations.

Brooke also helped the Cantor with the Purim Spiel this year with both choreography and the practices. As Felicia has said, Brooke helped engage the young children and loved working with our Cantor. And Joanna Meltzer has said how extremely creative she was with the costumes and how her enthusiasm was contagious. And Cantor has said that Brooke was "fabulous" and she could not have done it without her.

Brooke also runs the temple's Facebook page and works with Joanna on posting all the right things.

Brooke is stepping up to be our Religious School Parent's Committee co-chair with Felicia. She continues to choose projects and causes and dedicates herself to completing them creatively without needing recognition.

I would like to add, I have known Brooke since she and my son Mike were in PreSchool. I have so many wonderful films of she and both my boys performing in plays all the years while they were growing up. They have remained very close friends all their lives and she is a gift to our family, as well as a gift to our congregation.

