



The Communicator

Spring 2012

MIDWEST RETREAT 2012 A BIG SUCCESS!



2012 Midwest Federation of Jewish Men's Club Retreat in Springfield, Illinois- April 27-29, 2012



The FJMC Midwest Region Retreat was held from Friday April 27 through Sunday April 29th in Springfield Illinois. The Theme this year was “The Diminishing Role of the Jewish male in Judaism and Synagogue Life.” Assistant Professor Sarah Imhoff of Indiana University was the primary guest. More coverage inside. Also coverage of the Man Of The Year events and more!

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Prez Sez—

For all those who joined us at the recent 2012 Midwest Regional Retreat, I believe that we would agree that the weekend was intellectually stimulating, spiritually uplifting with non-stop ruach, camaraderie and fun. For those of you who missed it, you really missed a “special” weekend.

At this year's retreat the topic for the weekend was “The Diminishing Role of the Jewish male in Judaism and Synagogue Life”. Assistant Professor Sarah Imhoff of Indiana University offered some theories, insights and data as to why this might be the case.

Rabbi Simon, in his article “The Status of Jewish Men in the Conservative/Masorti Movement” states that the lessening of the Jewish male is a direct result of what men have been taught over the last 30+ years, in which the Jewish community focused significant resources towards rectifying the gender imbalance thru creating an egalitarian community.

This process assumed that men’s needs would remain the same, but as the world changed, so did men’s needs. Unfortunately, these needs were not addressed adequately. Thirty some years later, significant numbers of men find what happens in the synagogue irrelevant and the attempts to engage them resonate to a small minority and continue to attract significantly larger numbers of women than men.

So the question becomes “how do we address men’s needs in our changed world” ?

Sylvia Barad Fishman’s article “Policy Implications of the Gender Imbalance among America’s Jews” succinctly states 5 ways to engage Jewish Men:

1. Men will become engaged if they feel satisfied something has been gained or something has been learned.
2. Men will become engaged if they feel their “volunteer time” is appreciated and not wasted.
3. Men will become engaged if challenged to rise to an occasion.
4. Men will remain engaged if camaraderie is present.

Men will remain engaged if positioned in an environment that balances seriousness of purpose with fun.

Let’s relate this “hierarchy of needs” to what we do in Men’s Club.

By volunteering our time, we feel a sense of purpose and gain, and when we rise to the challenges of the activities and programs that we perform, we hope that we’ll be recognized and we feel appreciated.

And most importantly the camaraderie of being and working with other men with similar interests, motivations and priorities offer an important balance and need in our lives of seriousness with fun.

So come and join us at any of your next local, regional or International events and make it a point to bring someone else along who might benefit from becoming a member of our Jewish community and Men’s Club organization.

By reaching out to other men in our Jewish community and by helping to fulfill these **“5 basic needs”**, I feel that we can engage more men to become active again in synagogue and Jewish life.





MIDWEST REGION RETREAT APRIL 2012



Illinois State Capital Springfield, Illinois



Professor Sara Imhof, Indiana University

Another successful retreat was held on April 27th thru April 29th in Springfield, Ill at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel. Over thirty Men's Club members from Nebraska, Missouri and Illinois gathered to learn, pray and enjoy a most stimulating three days. The theme of the Retreat was "Men's Roles in Jewish Life".



Paul Glaser with new "recruit" Homer Simpson



Professor Sara Imhof, embracing our "ruach!"

Beginning on Friday afternoon, arriving "retreaters" were greeted with snacks and the ruach of the week end began. Soon thereafter, Kabblat Shabbat services were held, followed by a delicious Shabbat dinner. All of the meals were dairy / vegetarian and the hotel catering provided creative menus that everyone enjoyed.



MIDWEST REGION RETREAT APRIL 2012

Professor Imhof with Region President Shelly Pike and Exec. VP Mike Greenberg



The guest speaker was Professor Sarah Imhoff. She is a scholar of the history of Judaism and her research explores Jewish identity in the American past and present with particular attention to gender roles. Receiving her PHD from The University of Chicago, she is presently the Assistant Professor in the Borns Jewish Studies Program and Religious Studies Department at The Indiana University. Professor Imhoff gave an interesting and stimulating lecture on the theme of the retreat, followed by questions and discussion. The hospitality room (Kiddush Club) provided every one a chance to sit around, schmooze and enjoy the atmosphere of men's company.

Havdalah Saturday April 28th



Shabbat morning services were lead by Men's Club members who provided inspirational readings and chanting throughout the service. A Kiddush and lunch followed. The afternoon activity was a walk to the Dana-Thomas House, a Frank Lloyd Wright house, where an hour guided tour took the visitors back many decades. After a Shabbat nap, Mincha, dinner, Ma'ariv and Havdalah, again Professor Imhoff led more discussions on men's roles in Jewish family life and synagogue leadership. A second visit to the Kiddush Club ended the day.

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Morning Prayers Sunday April 27th, led by Midwest Region members



Sunday morning found everyone putting on Tallit and Tefillen. Following a typical lox and bagel breakfast, with all of the trimmings, the program was “Leadership Training”, “Hearing Men’s Voices” and “Men’s Issues in Synagogue Life”. These discussions were lead by our own men. After lunch, warm “good byes” and back home . A most worth while week end of learning, praying and enjoying a “man’s thing”. Next will be the International FJMC Convention in Boston, Ma. to be held on July 24th to July 28th, 2013. — Ernie Smolen



Man of The Year February, 19, 2012

Chicago and Milwaukee Clubs



Region President Shelly Pike with this year's honorees.

Eight men were saluted at the 2012 Man of the Year Brunch set for Sunday, Feb. 19 at Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, Ill.

- **Brad Burker**, Congregation Kneseth Israel, Elgin, Ill.
- **Jeffrey Goldsmith**, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, Ill.
- **Gabe Jacobson**, Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, Ill.
- **Howard L. Loeb**, Beth El Ner Tamid Synagogue, Mequon, Wis.
- **Alan H. Medansky**, Congregation Beth Shalom, Northbrook, Ill.
- **Jerry Sakol**, Congregation Beth Judea, Long Grove, Ill.
- **Marc Stopeck**, West Suburban Temple Har Zion, River Forest, Ill.
- **Charles Wallens**, Congregation Beth Israel, Glendale, Wis.



Man of The Year March 4, 2012 St. Louis Clubs



Region President Shelly Pike, Exec. VP Mike Greenberg, Creighton Cohn and Bob Olshan with this year's honorees.

- From two St. Louis men's clubs, two men were honored at a luncheon in the St. Louis area on Sunday, March 4:
 - Dr. Harvey Cantor, Congregation B'nai Amoonah
 - Gary Kodner, Shaare Zedek Synagogue





Around the Region

Following the lead of its fellow clubs to the East, **Congregation Kneseth Israel's Men's Club** (Elgin) inaugurated a monthly Shabbat Evening Service at Friendship Village, a retirement community in nearby Schaumburg this past November.

Filling in for a couple that travels to the South for the winter, CKI's Paul Glaser, Club President Joe Rosenfeld, and Saul Mariasis visited Friendship Village for a monthly series of services which were very well received by the participating residents.

The program was not without some interesting developments. Bad weather caused the cancellation of one evening, and another had to be cancelled due to an influenza outbreak that shut down the entire facility. Perhaps most noteworthy was that despite the fact that the CKI Men brought both kosher wine and grape juice to celebrate kaddish at each service, the residents unanimously preferred the "harder stuff," and the bottle of grape juice was never opened all winter.

CKI looks forward to resuming its connection with Friendship Village this coming winter, and possibly expanding its reach to a new retirement community (affiliated with Friendship Village) in the far western suburbs. - **Paul Glaser**

On Sunday, April 22nd **Beth El Ner Tamid, the Men's Club** sponsored their annual Yom Ha Shoah program. The guest speaker was Edie Shafer, who discussed her experience living in the Shanghai Jewish Ghetto during WWII. We learned about the history as to why Jews from all over Europe, Russia and the Middle East settled in Shanghai China during the late 1930's and the horrendous conditions that were imposed upon the Jews by the Japanese. This program was open to the public and a light brunch was served prior to the program.

Donations from the Yom Ha Shoah Yellow Candle Program helped to fund this worthwhile program.

— Rodney Ugent



MIDWEST REGION FJMC HONORED



The Chicago Council for the Jewish Elderly honored the Men's Clubs at a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on April 15th, held at Beth Hillel Congregation B'nai Emunah in Wilmette. This is a yearly event honoring approximately 250 volunteers. For the past five years several Men's Clubs have been assisting at Shabbat morning Services at the Lieberman Geriatric Center in Skokie.

Quoting from the award certificate, " Devoted volunteers from the FJMC Midwest Region, which include groups from local Synagogues Beth Hillel Congregation B'nai Emunah, Congregation Beth Judea, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Congregation Beth Shalom and Northwest Suburban Jewish Congregation (until the Congregation closed in 2010) have been participating in Shabbat morning services with residents at Lieberman Center since 2007. Generous donations through the congregations as a result of relationships built, have enhanced services at Lieberman and Gidwitz Place by helping repair or replace Torahs and printing new prayer books, which were adapted to the residents' special needs. The ruach that these volunteers bring to Lieberman's services each week enriches the experience for the residents exponentially. They are performing a great mitzvah by sharing their Shabbat with Lieberman residents, and are truly Outstanding Volunteers! "

Representing the Clubs were: Donald Babendir, Beth Hillel Congregation B'nai Emunah; Mark Travis, Congregation Beth Judea; Darryl Temkin, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El; Dan Sher, Congregation Beth Shalom; Ernie Smolen, Northwest Suburban Jewish Congregation and project coordinator.

The festive luncheon and award ceremony was followed by a wonderful and entertaining concert by the Chicago a cappella choir, who offered outstanding Hebrew selections.

The FJMC Midwest Region appreciates the honors and looks forward to continuing this most worthwhile mitzvah in the ensuing years.

Ernie Smolen



Midwest Region - FJMC

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**Where can you find more pictures,
articles, information about the
Midwest Region FJMC?**

**Visit the Midwest Region FJMC Web
Site at:**

<http://www.midwestregionfjmc.org/>

The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering:

Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.

-Ivan Scheier ([from Building Staff/Volunteer Relations](#))