

## **Officers Induction October 27, 2007**

Rabbi Wohlberg, Fellow Board Members and Congregation -- Shabbat Shalom.

My phone rang, 11 AM Sunday Morning July 1, hours after my official term began. A certain ex-president, determined to be first, made a gag call complaining about high-holiday seating. Though caller ID thwarted his prank, he was more discouraged when I told him he was too late. The first call came 8:15 that Sunday morning. Thank you for electing me upcoming ex-president.

I came to Ohav Sholom with Linda and our children shortly after moving to Merrick. Its inclusiveness, its tolerance and Rabbi Wohlberg's inspirational sermons made an indelible impression. We joined and became active. Linda was an Ohavim co-President and served on the sisterhood board. I was a trustee.

I am honored to be the President of this congregation. You have entrusted me and the other board members I am going to introduce with the responsibility for preserving Ohav Sholom's mission and we understand this commitment.

We have strategic plans for the next two years, but first, the non-goals. We had a run of major construction projects: the ramp, the chapel, the library and the lobby. While there is still finishing work ahead for the lobby and we have important maintenance to perform there are no plans for further major construction.

This Executive Board will direct its attention to the following issues:

- Communicating with and Involving our Members,
- Fundraising and Fiscal Responsibility,
- and Growing Membership

### ***Communicating and Involving Members.***

The Internet is the most effective means for sharing information with our members. We had an excellent turnout for this past week's Web Committee meeting; members responded to our appeal with every seat in the library occupied. This highly motivated committee will contribute content to our site for our members, prospective members and visitors. The congregation will have

unprecedented opportunities to collaborate on synagogue activity. I am very excited about this ambitious project and I encourage everyone with internet access to subscribe to our electronic newsletter, the Shofar, visit our website and contribute content.

Our enthusiasm for the Internet does not mean that those without access will suffer an information drought. The office will restructure the synagogue's mailings to make them more readable.

Finally, there is no substitute for direct communication. Do not hesitate to speak with the synagogue leadership. Our congregation has vast collective knowledge that the officers and committee members need. Please speak with us, let us know what you know and help us move Ohav Sholom forward.

### ***Fundraising.***

Bingo remains our biggest fundraiser; please continue your support by volunteering. Nevertheless, its revenues are down and may decline further. We do not know when or if it will rebound and we don't see any other fundraisers that will consistently net \$3500 an evening.

It is extremely difficult for a non-profit to run a profitable business. We need to identify the synagogue's assets and design fundraisers around them. Bingo's success was forged by Ira, his hard-charging committee and volunteers. The other prized asset was the license that excluded competition from private operators. Our real estate and organization were also essential components for the game.

Sisterhood's *shaloch manot* is an ingenious fundraiser. By delivering one package to each family, revenues scale much faster than costs. It provides consumer benefit -- savings in time and money and it reduces calories for each participant. September's wine sale succeeded because it allowed a merchant access to our congregation. We received a share of the sales in return. Still, the revenue from these fundraisers does not compare to bingo.

Fundraisers fail when they require stiff advance fees that shift risk from the business behind the proposition to us. When we examine potential fundraisers, we must cautiously embrace proposals that leverage our real estate, membership and other intangibles and eschew those that exploit.

Fundraising is difficult; we need your ideas, we need your help and we need to be careful.

### ***Membership.***

Membership is the most crucial issue facing the congregation. The financial factor is clear -- unless we want to raise dues or rely on the congregation's largesse, we must actively pursue new members.

There is also an existential argument -- we cannot thrive as a synagogue, regardless of our finances, without growing our membership. This responsibility does not fall just on the executive board or its committees. Everyone in the synagogue is an ambassador and can promote its benefits to friends and neighbors.

Our competition comes more from secular life than from other synagogues. Unaffiliated Jews are simply too wrapped in career, their social lives and their children's activities and test scores. Instead of writing off these families, we must demonstrate that affiliation improves their lives. We need to reinvent our youth activities. Our Ohavim, Men's Club and Sisterhood have pivotal roles in partnership with our membership committee. Yes, we want the unaffiliated to join us, but to some extent, and within the framework of Modern Orthodoxy, we need to join them.

### ***Introducing Our Officers***

The most satisfying aspect of being President is the opportunity to work with a very talented and dedicated Executive Board.

Our Executive Vice President--**Adam Greenberg** (please stand) has been an active member of the board for many years in various positions: he was treasurer for five years, vice president of house and property, and Ohavim chairperson. As Executive Vice-President, he has no formally defined duties, but in fact his job is to do anything I ignore, forget or botch -- I'm not going to ask how busy you've been. His wife, Hope, is a past president of the sisterhood who also served on the executive board. Adam is the vice president of Capitol Discount Corp.

Our VP of Ritual Services--**Kenny Duftler**, grew up in Merrick and is a second-generation member. Kenny and his wife, Fay an Ohavim co-president, moved back to Merrick five years ago. He served as trustee before becoming our Ritual

Vice-President. Kenny is a litigation consultant at DOAR Litigation Consulting.

Our VP of Fund Raising, **Mario Wilkowski**, and his wife Susan moved to Merrick in 1990 and joined Ohav Sholom. They soon became active members. Mario joined the Hebrew school board and ultimately became board president. Susan was president of the Hebrew School PTA. Mario has served on Ohav Sholom's board of trustees, was vice president of social activities, and is now serving his second term as Fundraising Vice President. Moreover, Vice is the right term, because through the wine sale and bingo he has chosen the time-tested booze and gambling approach to fundraising. Mario is a project manager at Bank of America

Our VP of Social Activities, **Rebecca Moldwin** is a second-generation member. Both Rebecca and her husband Rob have been active in synagogue affairs for many years. Rebecca was co-chair of Ohavim, served two terms as corresponding secretary and has been the coordinator of the Women's Prayer Group since its inception in 1993. In her current position, she plans the significant social events at Ohav Sholom and is the officer responsible for membership. Rebecca is President of Health Promotion Consultants, Inc.

Our VP of house and properties **Steve Gochman** is brand new to Synagogue politics. It must have been a rude awakening to get that call about the leaking skylight on your first week. However, the real test came the week before the high holy days when the air conditioning failed -- Steve worked with our maintenance company and in three days the air conditioner was working. I was relieved at this week's board meeting when he assured us that the air-conditioning would work fine this winter. Steve has been a member since 2003 with his wife Roberta, who is also an active member of the synagogue and who represents Ohav Sholom on the Jewish Community Council. Steve is a registered architect and is currently a senior project manager at C.B. Richard Ellis.

Our Treasurer, **Barry Birnbaum** grew up in Oceanside. He and his wife Rona moved to Merrick in 1998 and joined Ohav Sholom. Barry served four years as financial secretary before becoming treasurer. Rona is our current Sisterhood president. Rona -- I know you both cannot attend our board meetings so I want you to know that Barry did an excellent job presenting your Sisterhood report at this week's board meeting. Barry is director of financial process at Thomson Financial.

Our Financial Secretary, **Ira Balsam** grew up in Brooklyn and moved to Merrick with his wife, Sheri, 12 years ago. They joined Ohav Sholom in 2000. Ira

coordinates the annual golf outing, a major fundraiser. Sheri is the current treasurer of the sisterhood and since Ira is our Financial Secretary, the family holds a tight grip on synagogue finances. This is exactly what I would expect from Ira, the Chief Financial Officer of Avenue Capital Group.

Our Recording Secretary, **Adam Marchuck** is a second-generation member. He and Debbie have been members of Ohav Sholom since moving to Merrick in 2000. He served as a trustee before joining the Executive Board. Adam has also served as Financial Secretary and works as an attorney at Standard & Poor.

Corresponding Secretary **Ron** was born in Israel. Ron and his wife, Lynda, a second-generation member, settled in Merrick in 1997 and joined Ohav Sholom. Ron was elected to the board as a trustee and currently serves as school board president. As corresponding Secretary, responsible for synagogue publicity and press coverage, he is very proud of his Iraqi heritage -- as well he should be -- Iraq produced the journalism luminary Comical Ali. Lynda is a past president of the sisterhood. Ron works in pharmaceutical sales.

I want to thank our Executive Officers for their outstanding work at Ohav Sholom. Our officers work full time and have families. I thank their spouses and my wife Linda for the extra work at home they take on. I thank our previous presidents and their executive board members for establishing and growing this synagogue. Thanks to Rabbi Wohlberg, our spiritual leader, for all of your help. Finally, I thank the congregation. We look forward to working with you as Ohav Sholom continues to serve the community.