

Temple B'nai Torah honors the TBT Giving Garden and its' volunteers.

Wantagh, New York - Temple B'nai Torah (TBT), 2900 Jerusalem Avenue, Wantagh, NY, will be hosting a Garden Party on Saturday, June 10, 2023 at 6PM-10:30pm to honor those who worked and contributed to the success of the Giving Garden at Temple B'nai Torah.

The Garden Dream: a number of years ago, Rona and Bob Kauffman, attended a class led by Rabbi Bar-Nahum of Temple B'nai Torah and Father Mark Genzsler formerly of St. Francis Episcopal Church in North Bellmore. They were comparing interfaith scriptures, when the subject of the wonderful garden at St. Francis was raised. Rona and Bob were very interested and were invited over to St. Francis to meet Susan Salem, the garden creator and coordinator. Soon, the Kauffmans became regular volunteers and tried to learn as much as they could. In addition, Rabbi Bar-Nahum and Cantor Timman of TBT brought the Temple's Youth Group for a Sukkot activity at the St. Francis garden. Members of TBT wondered; can't we have a garden like this at our Temple?

We found a place! Temple B'nai Torah had a large playground that was no longer in use and Susan and the Kauffman's thought this could be converted into a garden where food could be grown to donate to local food pantries. In early 2020, just after COVID-19 and its restrictions closed everything down, the TBT Board approved the use of the former playground for a garden. The next day, a subcommittee of the TBT Social Action Committee, of which Rona is the chair, was formed. Susan came along with her expertise as well as additional experienced volunteers, Pat and Leslie and the Garden began! What were once sand boxes became garden beds. Vegetables would be grown, and all would be donated.

Giving Back: Using organic farming methods, it was not long before the first garden beds produced enough vegetables for the Garden to donate to area food pantries. Each year the Garden has grown. This past year the Garden at TBT grew 1200 lbs. of food and with the support of Restoration Farm (Bethpage) and Temple congregants who donated surplus vegetables from their gardens, The Garden has facilitated the donation of over 3,000 lbs. of fresh vegetables.

Although the Garden was initially conceived as a way to provide fresh, healthy food for those in need, the Garden has also provided many opportunities for environmental and religious education, Eagle Scout projects, artistic expression, fostering an overall sense of camaraderie, it has become a beautiful, meditative green space. This year volunteering in the Garden will be offered as a Garden elective for our Religious School students. In addition, through its partnership with AHRC (Advocacy, Humanity, Reimagination, Change), the Garden at TBT will offer pre-vocational volunteer opportunities to a group of developmentally disabled adults.

Help received on several levels: The Garden committee is most appreciative of a generous start-up grant awarded by the national organization, Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), and the ongoing support from Temple members, other community members and the generosity of the Temple's Sisterhood, without which this program could not have gotten started and would not continue to flourish.

You can usually find volunteers tending to the Garden on Sunday and Tuesday mornings. While Rona's husband Bob can be found working on many garden tasks, he especially enjoys creating trellis systems, developing creative approaches to water delivery and troubleshooting whenever problems arise.

Temple B'nai Torah is very proud of Rona, Bob, Susan and their dedicated committee's accomplishments which provide "Tzedakah", a Hebrew word meaning "justice", specifically doing the right things by helping people or causes in need.

If you'd like to join the celebration and attend the Garden Party or make a donation to the Garden please call the temple office (516-221-2370) and ask for Eileen Schneyman. Volunteers are always welcome at the TBT Garden.

About Temple B'nai Torah- A Reform Congregation

Rabbi: Daniel Bar-Nahum

Cantor: Rica Timman

Religious School Director: Sheryl Gordon

Executive Director: Eileen Schneyman

Mission Statement

Temple B'nai Torah is a *diverse caring congregation that embraces a progressive and inclusive vision of Reform Judaism through worship, study of Torah and righteous deeds. We are creating a multigenerational home in our region by staying connected to our roots, as well as offering spiritual enrichment, Jewish education, and community engagement.*