JEWISH DISABILITY ACTION & INCLUSION MONTH

"WE ARE A STRONGER COMMUNITY WHEN WE ARE WELCOMING, DIVERSE, AND RESPECT ONE ANOTHER."
– RESPECTABILITY
As Jewish Disability Action & Inclusion Month Begins, Texas Study Shows Progress

By Linda Lait Burger

As Jewish Disability Action & Inclusion Month (JDAIM) begins, a recent survey by RespectAbility in partnership with Jewish Family Service (JFS) Houston and other organizations shows that Jews in Texas overwhelmingly believe that “We are a stronger community when we are welcoming, diverse, and respect one another. Everyone should feel that their presence and participation is welcome and meaningful. We want our children, parents, grandparents and friends with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to fully participate in our community.”

According to the U.S. Census, a disability can be a physical, cognitive, sensory, mental health, chronic pain or another condition that is a barrier to everyday living. Approximately one-in-five people in America have a disability. The survey of Jews showed that common disabilities in our community include mental health, hearing loss, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic pain, and other issues.

The study showed that there are very good intentions on inclusion of people with disabilities in Jewish organizations and life, and real growth in progress on that front. At the same time, religious leaders and activists want to be inclusive, but the study showed that they don’t know how. Free tools and training on that topic can be found at www.respectability.org/faith-inclusion.

The pandemic, which has harmed so many, does have some silver linings for people with disabilities as the surge in the use of virtual formats in response to the COVID-19 pandemic increased the ability of 69 percent of Houston’s Jewish respondents to access their faith community. This likely resulted from a combination of the relative ease with which more people could be included. For example, live captioning and remote ASL interpreters made it easier for those who are deaf or hard of hearing to participate. Furthermore, the lack of a need for transportation, which remains a major barrier for many with physical, visual, intellectual and/or psychiatric disabilities, enabled additional individuals to participate from home.

Jewish respondents from Texas in the study found that “increasing inclusion of people with disabilities in faith-based organizations and institutions,” as well as “enabling people with disabilities to get the education, skills, and jobs they need to succeed” is “extremely important.”

The survey was administered online from October 5 – October 19, 2021 and included members of the El Paso Jewish community. Linda is currently CEO of JFS Houston and Treasurer of RespectAbility. She is the daughter of Mimi and Robert Lait both of blessed memory.
FBI, Jewish El Paso Come Together to Urge Public to Report Threats, Suspicious Activity

The FBI has reaffirmed its commitment to protect the Jewish community in El Paso and West Texas from any potential threats after the Texas synagogue attack.

Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey R. Downey of the FBI El Paso Field Office joined Mr. Robert French, Executive Director of Jewish El Paso and the Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso, in urging the public to report any threats or suspicious activity. "The FBI El Paso Field Office has a very close and enduring relationship with the Jewish community in El Paso," SAC Downey said. “I have personally reached out to several Jewish leaders to assure them we will never lose sight of the threat extremists pose to the Jewish community and to other religious, racial, and ethnic groups. We continue to work with Jewish El Paso, the Anti-Defamation League, and others to protect members of the Jewish community from all potential threats. Additionally, we will continue to establish and build trusted relationships across West Texas, maintain open dialogue, and share critical information. We ask that you reach out to us if you see something suspicious or threatening.”

"We have always maintained a strong and open connection with the FBI El Paso Field Office. Not just Jewish El Paso, but our local Jewish schools and places of worship, too," Mr. French said. “They have always made themselves fully available in terms of safety, training and consultation. This act of terror in Colleyville, has only strengthened our resolve to work together to combat hatred, bigotry, anti-Semitism and intolerance towards us and other religious, ethnic and racial groups. As International Holocaust Remembrance Day approaches next week (January 27th), it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the lessons learned during the darkest stain on humanity are not forgotten.”

Anyone who is aware of threats or other suspicious activity should contact the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI or go to tips.fbi.gov.

We Can Conquer Hunger

At the meeting she admitted she got angry at his child and locked him away in a dungeon, and commanded that he not be given to eat or to drink—and a person came along and gave him to eat and to drink. When the king hears of this, does he not reward that person?" Rabbi Akiva replied. "So that we should have the opportunity to give charity," Rabbi Akiva to him: “I’ll give you an analogy: This is like a king who got angry at his slave and locked him away in a dungeon, and commanded that he not be given to eat or to drink—and a poor baby has milk, and poor children have food, it’s because this Rabbi in Crown Heights had vision.”

Aside from turning a political gut punch into the catalyst for her greatest legacy, the Rebbe illustrated a fundamental truth about our world. God provides enough food in the world to feed everyone. Our mandate is to ensure that the food reaches every person. It takes a feeling of compassion, responsibility and a willingness to cooperate with others to make it happen.

The famous Rabbi Akiva was once asked by a Roman governor the following question: “If your God loves the poor, why doesn’t He feed them?”

"So that we should have the opportunity to give charity,” Rabbi Akiva replied."

The Roman countered, “On the contrary: for this you deserve to be punished. This is like a king who got angry at his slave and locked him away in a dungeon, and commanded that he not be given to eat or to drink—and a person came along and gave him to eat and to drink. When the king hears of this, is he not angry at that person?”

"Yes. When we view humanity as God’s children and make the effort to provide food for them all, we will usher in an era of global peace and tranquility with the arrival of Moshiach, when hunger will be a problem of the past.

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Shuttle service available for Las Cruces Residents Borderland’s Café Europa For Seniors 65+

Café Europa

For Registration Assistance Call: 915-842-9554

www.jewishelpaso.org

SEE OUR ONLINE CATALOGUE AT WWW.JEWISHELPASO.ORG
Finding A Place by 1LT Scott (Shalom) Klein - Jewish DRGL at Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range, and Holloman AFB

Fort Bliss, in El Paso, had a COVID-19 outbreak. The Army base locked down knowing many lives were at stake.

But truly living is about more than just survival; the Jewish community craved religious revival.

We dusted off small Chapel 3, on one Shabbat night, holding two white candles, and filling all with light.

Each Shabbat we returned, making safety a task; streaming services on Facebook and praying through masks.

The connection was strong throughout the Jewish community, from young Army recruits to military retirees.

2021 began with a a three-month renovation, concluding with many causes for celebration.

Outside the chapel stood a tall, shiny menorah. While in the ark we placed a brand new torah.

April’s torah dedication became a huge event, the Army’s senior leaders spoke and the message was sent.

A critical element of our great nation’s birth, was the founding principle that every faith has worth.

So each spiritual soldier on any Army base will be treated as equals; everyone has a place.

And for the Jews, Chapel 3 will always find a way to light the candles on Shabbat and celebrate high holidays.

Each sweet new year, the shofar will sound, raising a noise across the Fort Bliss Army grounds.

Temple Mount Sinai Present: Scholar in Residence:

Jane Larkin on February 25-27, 2022

FRIDAY: Services 6:15pm Followed by Shabbat Dinner & Discussion
“It’s Not Who Stands Under the Chuppah, But What Goes on Behind the Mezuzah”
RSVP by Feb. 21 required, $10.00 per person
RSVP link: https://form.jotform.com/220027248871151

SATURDAY: 6:15pm Havdalah, Dessert & Discussion
“Interruption & The Jewish Future: Optimism & Opportunity”
RSVP by Feb. 21 required, no charge RSVP link: https://form.jotform.com/220027078614147

SUNDAY: 10:00am Coffee, Bagels & Kibbitz
“The Oys & Joys of Being the Parent or Grandparent of a Child in an Interfaith Relationship”
RSVP by Feb. 21 required, no charge RSVP link: https://form.jotform.com/220027037232138

For More Information: Noelle Meyer nmeyer@templemountainsinai.com

This weekend is made possible, in part, by a generous grant from The Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso.

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For those of us in our 20s and 30s

Relax @ RELAXE
February 27 | 4-6 pm
Food, drinks, axe throwing. Join the fun and escape reality.
Registration required.
Funded by a grant from The Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso
Contact Rebecca Mendez 915-995-0514 or rmendez@jewishelpaso.org to get updated on bi-monthly invitation only Shabbat Dinners and upcoming events.
Visit www.jewishelpaso.org

Rise Against Hunger
In-Person Meal Packing:
Sunday, February 2022 @ Don Haskins PK - 8 School

Help us send 20,000 meals globally Help end local food insecurity by supporting ElPasoans Fighting Hunger - being non-perishable items you on the day.

Join this fun, high-energy - masked and distanced - social action event appropriate for all ages from pre-school to adults to Seniors.
Meal Packing Shifts:
- Shift 1: 9 - 10:30am
- Shift 2: 11am - 12pm

General Admission is $5 per person
- Purchase a $36 Ticket which covers 109 meals
- $50 Ticket which covers 151 meals

Sponsorships: starting at $180 which covers 545 meals
Visit www.jewishelpaso.org to register or to sponsor

KALLAH 2022
May 27-29
Tanque Verde Ranch, Tucson

Book your Room NOW for Temple Mount Sinai’s Kallah 2022
Join us for an amazing Shabbaton Weekend of Learning & Fun!

“Adult Educational Opportunities & Activities for the Whole Family”
Meditate in the Mountains, Liturges & Learning; “I Painted That” Shavuot edition, Torah Study Class Campfire & S’mores, Ice Cream Social & Karaoke, Hiking, and More!!!!

Kallah Room and Meal Weekend Package:
- $225 per adult (Shared Occupancy); $235 per adult (Single Occupancy)
- $150 for Teen (13-17); $50 for youth (6-11); Children 3 and under - Free

Price includes hotel accommodations, all meals and Temple Sponsored activities!!!
Bus Transportation will only be available if 15 or more people sign up at an additional cost to be determined.

Registration and non-refundable payment MUST be received in full by March 21, 2022.

For Registration Forms or Questions about the Kallah Retreat please contact:
Maile Meyer ph. 915-532-5590, email: meyerat@templemountsinai.com

This event is made possible in part by a grant from The Jewish Community Foundations, The Burguedo Fund, and the Temple Mount Sinai Sisterhood.
What value do we need most in our world today?

This question forces me to select only one value, and that is a challenge. By the time a person reaches 77 years of age, they usually have an organized set of values that define them as a person. At the top of my list at this moment is caring for the poor and less fortunate. In December, I became a cultural mentor for a relocated Afghan family. The husband worked with the U.S. Army for 12 years and lost both legs in the process. It is incredibly fulfilling to “work the system” to get them the resources they need to begin anew.

What do you value most in your friends?

Monika has profoundly influenced my definition of the word “friend.” Friends aren’t somebody you meet once at a baseball game. Friends are people you have spent months or years getting to know. Friends share common values and care about each other. I have a small group of friends. Almost all of them connect with my hobbies and interests.

Who’s your favorite Jewish hero (living or not/fictional or not) and why?

When I first saw this question, the name Richard Feynman immediately came to mind. Dr. Feynman authored many of the textbooks I used as a Physics major at the University of Michigan. I looked up Dr. Feynman on Wikipedia and decided to describe my second hero. I spent most of my university career teaching in Catholic institutions. But, my first “boss” at Mercy College of Detroit, MI was Dr. Phyllis Hodes a dynamic Jew who started every day with a 10-minute standup Jewish comedy act. She mentored me for nine years and it was her training that established the core of my professional beliefs. I attended my first Seder meal with Phyllis and Isidore Hodes back in the early 70’s.

What does it take to be a good leader?

I have always been interested in leadership, especially during the years I was an academic dean. A good leader must delegate responsibilities and praise those who are successful. A good leader must evaluate outcomes and strive constantly to improve.

What’s the best thing about being part of our Jewish community?

The thing I enjoy most about being part of our Jewish community is the comradery with smart people that enjoy a good laugh, sharing of life stories, and of course sharing good food.

How is it being a First Husband? What is it about the role that you enjoy most?

Monika and I have always enjoy debating issues, brainstorming ideas, and working together to solve problems. Both of us are formidable devil’s advocates. Talking with another person helps you hone your ideas and arguments. I enjoy being Monika’s most fervent fan.

How have you seen the integration of Las Cruces enhance the relationship between our communities?

I have been a firsthand witness to the growing relationship between the Jewish communities in Las Cruces and El Paso. Monika, during her presidency at Temple Beth-El arranged this marriage. I am so proud of her vision and persistence. Being a First Husband you get all the perks of being a leader without any of the stress that comes with leadership.
Borderland’s Cafe Europa Shabbat Lunch

PJ Library - Little Planters

Jewish Film Festival

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L’Chaim - To Living

Sunday, March 27, 2022 • El Paso Zoo from 2:30 - 8pm

Come celebrate our return to living
Join Jewish El Paso and our entire community in celebration that will ignite the senses!

Indoor and Outdoor Activities:
See all the activities (including access to all zoo exhibits)!
Hear the sounds of Live Entertainment!
Smell the aroma of sumptuous food!
Taste the refreshing libations!
Feel the energy as we all gather and celebrate in-person again!