



The Circle of Leadership 2016

Bernie Blumenthal

Bernie was born at Coney Island Hospital, Brooklyn, in 1926. At the age of 7, he sold newspapers on street corners. He graduated from Brooklyn Automotive Trade High School and, unable to serve in WWII due to colorblindness, he worked for the US Army repairing Jeeps. Relocating to DC, Bernie joined the BBYM in 1946 and worked managing a Toys R Us. He married and had two sons, Mark and Gary. Single again, Bernie married Sara Jane in 1960 and had daughters Laura and Diane.

Bernie joined Temple Shalom in 1974. Both daughters had their bat mitzvot and confirmations here. He has been a very active Brotherhood member, Brotherhood president, and all-around volunteer for decades, and he received the premier Brotherhood Lifetime Service Award in 2011.



Temple Shalom



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Melanie Cohen and Amelia Letnes

Melanie Cohen and Amelia Letnes have been members of Temple Shalom since they moved to the area in 2005. They were married in the sanctuary by Rabbi Feshbach in his first interfaith wedding ceremony. Since their daughter Beatrice was born in 2013, they have become involved more than ever in temple life. They are leaders among families with young children in fostering an early sense of temple community that often does not develop until children enter religious school. As early members of Kids' Time, they have helped the teachers and class develop into the amazing program it is today. From Sukkah building and latkah parties in their home, Melanie and Amelia have always made it a priority to create community wherever they go. They are very thankful for the community they have found at Temple Shalom.



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Julie Knoll

I joined Temple Shalom almost 30 years ago and all three of my kids went through the Religious Education program, including b'nei mitzvah, confirmation and post-confirmation. I taught kindergarten, first grade and sixth grade religious education classes, including developing curriculum. I ran the Purim Carnival for several years, and brought both Mitzvah Day and Family Education programs to Temple Shalom. I served on and chaired the Religious Education Committee and served on several search committees, including executive director, religious education director and rabbinic searches. I also chaired an ad hoc committee to look at the issue of educating children in our religious school who were also being educated in another religious education program. I chaired the Capital Projects Committee for several years and ran some fundraising events. I was part of Rabbi Kahn's last adult b'nei mitzvah group. I served many years on the Board and Executive Committee, including two years as president of the congregation, during which we created the Endowment Fund and transitioned between Rabbi Kahn and Rabbi Feshbach. In recent years, I have served as a madricha and am now tutoring my 19th student! Whew!!



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Sarah Leavitt

Hailing from Madison, WI, Sarah attended Temple Beth El and was youth group president. As a high schooler, she traveled to Israel with NFTY Mitzvah Corps and to the Olin Sang Ruby Union Institute in Oconomowoc, WI. Her involvement at Temple Shalom includes co-chairing the Good-to-Great Committee, working on the Mitzvah Day, Youth, Silent Auction and Future committees, coordinating Shabbat at Home, and volunteering as a Room Parent and madricha. Sarah is also a Shir Shalom Choir and Sisterhood member. She is a curator at the National Building Museum in DC, and enjoys running, cooking, quilting, museums, and movies. Sarah lives in Silver Spring with husband Jay and their son, Simon.



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Janice Pliner

Janice Pliner joined Temple Shalom with her young family in 2004. One of her favorite Temple activities was Mitzvah Day because it brought together Temple members in service to others. In 2010, she became chair of Mitzvah Day. Since then, Janice and her incredibly devoted committee have worked to build a diverse selection of projects and to build community by encouraging the participation of Temple members of all ages. Despite some chilly temperatures, the sun always shines on Mitzvah Day and you can feel the warmth.



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Stacey Wahrman

I grew up attending Perrineville Jewish Center, a very small Modern Orthodox congregation in New Jersey. From the first service we attended at Temple Shalom, Paul and I were impressed by the warmth, diversity, and energy. In many ways I'm still learning about Reform Judaism, but this is where my heart has always been. I appreciate the way the congregation connects to Jewish culture and religion in meaningful ways through music, thoughtful discussion, and the pursuit of social justice, and I feel privileged to have found something I can contribute to the community here.

Much of my volunteer work seems to involve feeding people. I have delivered meals and shiva trays for Mitzvah Corps, made casseroles for SOME, taught adult ed latke- and sufganyot-making classes for Chanukah (one on blintzes for Shavuot). I've prepared the food for two food- and wine-tasting fundraisers and two silent auctions, in addition to the side dishes for Rachel's retirement party in April 2016. I also made appetizers for the Raise the Roof Comedy Night, which was, I believe, the first thing I did to volunteer for the Temple. I'm on the Financial Futures Committee, and helped out with follow-up to last year's silent auction—even when food was not involved!



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