

The Sisterhood of East End Temple

A Year In Review – 5786 (2025 – 2026)

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Member of



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This was a busy year for the Sisterhood of East End Temple. We led 17 programs, 6 of which occurred over multiple dates. This was possible due to the many volunteers who shared their ideas for creating communities and the people who made them happen.

This year we introduced a couple of new programs – book talks by EET members – aligned with our ongoing goal to build community and get to know our members. In addition, three of our board members attended the Women of Reform Judaism Northeast District Conference in March, where we met with sisterhood leaders from around the region, as we prayed and sang together, celebrated the installation of new leaders, and shared experiences and ideas.



We would like to take this opportunity to recognize the work of all of us, because with our community of women passionate about sisterhood and who collaborate with each other, we can be very proud of our collective accomplishment of engaging with our community.

Here are the summaries of our programs this year, in chronological order, with special gratitude to those volunteers who made it happen!

Judaica Shop – Year Round

Established when East End Temple was still on 23rd Street & 2nd Avenue, our Judaica Shop provides a convenient place to purchase ritual and fun items related to Jewish holidays, education, and living. Fran's original connection to a popular Judaica wholesaler allowed her access to a variety of items, very much welcomed by the congregation. Sales are often transacted by the office staff of Sharon and Elyssa during the week, and by Fran and others on Friday evenings before services begin.

With gratitude to Fran Kolin for her devotion to the success of our shop, ensuring a great selection of products is always available.

College Gifts for Rosh Hashanah – September

Our organization of women has a long-standing tradition every year of sending packages to students containing all the necessary trappings for celebrating Chanukah or Rosh Hashanah, while also providing a way to keep them connected to their temple family. We want to let them know that we are always thinking of them. This year we sent Rosh Hashanah packages containing a honey nut gluten free KIND bar, a bag of apple chips and a Starbucks gift card, and special greetings from the clergy, our temple's co-presidents and the Sisterhood Leadership Team – just enough “apple and honey” to reign in the Jewish New Year! Of



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the 32 students, 3 students studying abroad received a Starbuck's ecard along with all the well wishes!

With gratitude to Fern Stampleman who chairs this amazing project year after year, and to the amazing group of people who made this project happen, between supplying the needed information, obtaining the supplies and gifts, to packing and shipping: Cynthia Dubensky, Suellen Eshed, Elyssa Mosbacher, Barbara Ringel, Sharon Shemesh, and all the parents of the college students.

Claim Your Hebrew Name - September-April

There are people at our Temple who were never given or have forgotten their Hebrew names. Three years ago, Fran Kolin began helping congregants who wanted to choose a Hebrew name, to strengthen their connection to Judaism. With the help of a resource book, the blessing of email, and many back and forth conversations, people can choose names of beloved deceased relatives, names that sound similar or share meanings with their English names, names that are meaningful to them in a personal way, or add another name to what they already have. We made wonderful certificates to be presented to the participants at a Shabbat service in April, when the newly named are called up to the Bima to receive a blessing from the clergy.

With gratitude to Fran Kolin for her creative leadership of this sacred endeavor.

Mah Jongg - September through June

This past year, over 160 people played, taught and learned the latest craze. Each game was a buzz of activity and people celebrating with yells of "Mah Jongg!" The evening games were especially popular with younger, working people. We had so many who wanted to learn, we were challenged to find instructors. This was also our big money maker this year, grossing over \$5,000. Due to demand, we decided to continue running games over the summer for the first time.



With gratitude to teachers, organizers, greeters and suppliers of food: Orsolya Bartha, Joanne Bernstein, Suellen Eshed (Chair), Amy Feldman, Beth Hirschhorn, Sandy Magesis, Deborah Meyers, Marcia Muskat, Amy Nanavati, Nancy Schneider, Sara Jane Steinberg.

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Food For Families – October through April

A version of FFF has existed since 1992 making it EET's longest standing social action program. Multi-generational EET members and friends got together on seven Sundays for two hours to prepare meals containing two sandwiches, fresh fruit and a granola bar. Our volunteers also help bag the meals and load the City Harvest truck that arrives to pick up the meals for same day distribution at various locations. Participants bring bread and fruit. Other supplies are organized by our FFF committee and paid for by Sisterhood with costs offset by significant donations. Our committee is very proud that this year, FFF made over 10,000 meals, helping to alleviate a small portion of food insecurity in NYC.



With gratitude to the dedicated team of organizers, decision makers, promoters and shoppers: Cynthia Dubensky, Marian Fish, Melanie Kletter, Julie Lansky, Andrea Pincus. With special mention of Judith Sussman, who each year leads and coordinates the creation of a generous grant from NYU to help fund our program.

Shake Your Soul: The Yoga of Dance – October Through April

On Tuesday mornings, 10-12 people entered the Social Hall, some of us were tired or stressed, and after a short while, we all felt relaxed and energized. Ronni began each class by guiding us through slow stretches set to deeply healing music. Afterwards, we would turn on the lights and join in a circle to shake our souls. With a different set of music for each class, Ronni led us in dance movements, partner exercises using mirroring/reflecting and movement dialogue, and a concluding practice of qi gong. Ronni's kind smile and inclusive teaching style drew us in and together. We became a kind and supportive community that was open to newcomers. Since Memorial Day, we have been meeting on Wednesday mornings in Stuyvesant Park. Please join us – you will feel much happier – we guarantee it.



With gratitude to Ronni Aronow, registered Somatic Movement Therapist and Educator and certified Shake Your Soul Facilitator, who leads this most meaningful community and to Andrea Viders for helping to spread the word!

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Getting To Know Our Community – December through April

Over five Wednesday lunchtime zooms, we met a diverse group of fascinating EET women. Nicola Kraus shared her journey as a best-selling author, as well as her path to Judaism. Nancy Eder, art historian and teacher at the Fashion Institute of Technology, shared her complex personal journey and her experience with raising two autistic sons. Yael Eisenstat helped us to understand the complexities in defending democracy, sharing her experiences as an activist working for organizations such as Facebook and the Anti-defamation League. Laurie Treuhaft revealed her interests in language, leading her to a career as a translator with the United Nations, as well as her joy with being a new grandmother. Lastly, we ended the series meeting Dr. Anne Lifflander, medical doctor to the underserved and most recently, a PhD in divinity.

With gratitude to Ellen Ettinger who reaches out to our community to find engaging members willing to share their stories and expertise with the EET community and then conducts the interviews in an enthusiastic manner.

Rosh Chodesh – January through April

During four sessions, both in person and on Zoom, 15 women gathered in the sanctity of a 4th floor classroom, over an always superb potluck breakfast, and “Unpacked The Book of Esther!” This involved reading the book together as well as ancillary material, followed by lively discussion. The final session was devoted to the universality of the Esther story through time and space, and how she is portrayed in art, music, literature and culture in general. A particular treat was having access to work from a recent exhibit at the Jewish Museum, *Esther In The Time of Rembrandt*.



With gratitude to Fern Stampleman for her dedication and inspiration, along with Elissa Macklin and Laurie Treuhaft, introducing our community of women to different ways of looking at the stories of biblical women, and to all the women who participated.

Stitch A Thon – January through April

Started over 30 years ago, our Sisterhood provides free yarn for members to make hats and scarves for the needy in NYC, as part of our Cold Weather Project. Although we do this year-round, we meet once a month to knit and crochet in the company of others. Sometimes our expert crafters help others with small problems or help them get started! We bring some snacks to share and enjoy the mitzvah we are accomplishing.

With gratitude to Fran Kolin for her dedication to helping the underserved by building community.

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Birthday Fund Speaker Program – February

Three dynamic non-profit leaders who received Birthday Fund grants, gave compelling



presentations about their organizations that mentor middle school students, support young women navigating motherhood, and serve people transitioning to lives outside ultra-orthodox communities. The personal stories that these women shared and the good that they are doing for communities around New York City are inspiring. The 20 people who participated in person and 7 who joined on Zoom, created a connection of sisterhood

with these women that was in itself an act of *tikkun olam*. We are so thankful to all who generously donated to the Birthday Fund so that we can continue to give grants to organizations like these and for showing support to our grantees by participating in the Speaker Event.

With gratitude to Jodi Malcom and Andrea Vidars, who researched potential grant recipients, presented recommendations to the Sisterhood Board and arranged for these incredibly meaningful speakers. We are also grateful to the people who helped make this event a success: Jill Bregenzer, Nancy Eder, Alexis Pederson, Susan Rose, and Carol Sauerhaft. (See more later about the Birthday Fund.)

Hamantaschen/Macaroon Sales - February-March

One of Sisterhood's fundraisers is the Annual Hamantaschen Sale. Over 190 pounds of hamantaschen were sold and boxed for pick-up. This year we had an efficient group of volunteers who helped with the packing. Many pounds are donated to the Religious School as a Purim snack, served at a Shabbat Oneg, and at the Family Purim Party! On a smaller scale, Sisterhood also sells macaroons for the Passover holiday.

With gratitude to Fran Kolin for spearheading this delicious program and to all the people who helped pack the boxes ready to sell and give away.

EET Book Talks - February and April

This year the Sisterhood of East End Temple hosted two virtual events with published authors who are also members of EET, Nicola Kraus and Claire Berger. We found these conversations with our own EET authors to be thought-provoking and hilarious.

Nicola Kraus co-authored the nanny diaries, which became an international #1 best-seller selling over 6 million copies in 32 languages and inspiring a movie starring Scarlett Johansson, Laura Linney, Paul Giamatti and Alicia Keys. Nicola spoke about the process of writing her new novel, a family saga spanning decades, “The Best We Could Hope For” and we shared our own views on the characters and themes.

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Claire Berger is an acclaimed comedian and writer who provided an overview of her innovative memoir and self-help book, “How Much Is Enough?” and we shared stories about our own struggles and triumphs with the concept of “less is more” in a variety of realms.

With gratitude to Alexis Pederson for reaching out, arranging and leading these engaging discussions.

Sisterhood Shabbat – March

A long-standing tradition of combining prayer and song with honoring women,



Sisterhood Shabbat presents us with the opportunity to showcase our accomplishments. This year, our theme, as suggested by Ellen and developed with Suellen, Fern and Fran, was about the ways that Sisterhood helps everyone to be empowered to be their best selves. We continued the tradition of community candle lighting using electric tea lights, had multiple speakers come to the Bima to lead prayers we selected, and Ellen delivered our shabbat *dvar*. On our recommendation, and as inspired by attending the WRJ convention, Cantor Olivia introduced the song “I Have a Voice” by Elana Arian.

With gratitude to the teamwork of Suellen Eshed, Ellen Ettinger, Fran Kolin and Fern Stampleman, for creating an inspiring service.

Lilith Seder – April

The Sisterhood of East End Temple has proudly held women's seders since 1994. As suggested by Florence Peloquin, z”l, we call ours the Lilith Seder because it celebrates assertive women breaking matzah in a new way. This year, 30 women dined on delicious food they contributed, danced and sang under the leadership of Cantor Xan Weiser, prayed together following our unique Haggadah focused on the women of the Passover story and worked in community to set up and clean up. We also added the “I Have A Voice” song to the Passover seder, which we introduced at Sisterhood Shabbat.



With gratitude to the true teamwork of Nancy Eder. Suellen Eshed (Chair), Fran Kolin, Judith Lorber, Alexis Pederson, Barbara Ringel, Fern Stampleman, Andrea Viders. A true example of women working together!

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Helene Spring Library Event - April

The Sisterhood of East End Temple hosted the 22nd annual Helene Spring Library Event.



This year, Jane Eisner spoke about her latest book, an interpretive biography of Carole King called “Carole King: She Made the Earth Move” which is part of the Yale University Jewish Lives series. Jane discussed the fascinating life of this accomplished Jewish woman (one of the greatest living U.S. songwriters). There was a lively Q&A with our large enthusiastic audience after Jane's talk, followed by a wonderful dessert buffet (thank you to all bakers!) and a book signing.

With gratitude to Alexis Pederson and Barbara Ringel (co-Chairs) for getting this amazing speaker and the bakers! Additional gratitude to all the bakers and helpers: Judy Brown, Nancy Eder, Marion Klein, Fran Kolin, Beth Labush, Jodi Malcolm, Alexis Pederson, Edna Rosen, Sharon Shemesh, Sara Steinberg, Andrea Vidars

Post Abortion Comfort Supply Packing – May

Over 30 women, men, and teens worked together to pack 100 backpacks with post-



abortion comfort supplies for the Women 's Health OB/GYN Clinic at Bellevue Hospital. To kick-off the program, we showed an award-winning documentary, “The Devil is Busy,” about a day in an abortion clinic in Georgia. Rose Arce, one of the film's producers, provided a recorded introduction and Suellen facilitated a Q&A and

discussion. We raised over \$1,700 in contributions from participants and other EET and Sisterhood members, which was used to fund the supplies, with an additional donation to be made to a pro-choice/abortion support organization. Susy Rose established the connection with the Senior Health Educator of the OB/GYN Clinic, who was extremely appreciative and touched by our effort.

With gratitude to the team who made this happen: Suellen Eshed, Susy Rose, Carol Sauerhaft, Andrea Vidars. Special mention to co-president Rebecca Shore, who connected us to the film's producer.

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Financial Accomplishments

This year was also a banner year for fundraising which was then used to support diverse aspects of EET community.

As of the end of May, we:

- Raised over \$13,000 to support our Food For Families program, not including the generous donations of bread and fruit donated by the participants.
- Raised over \$5,000 through our Mah Jongg programs.
- Raised over \$1,500 to support our Post-Abortion Comfort Care project
- Raised over \$5,000 to support our Birthday Fund project
- Raised over \$9,000 in membership dues (with \$3,000 allocated to our membership in Women of Reform Judaism)
- Gave \$6,000 to the temple to cover our administrative expenses
- Pledged \$54,000 towards the Kehila Capital Campaign; paid first installment of \$18,000
- Spent over \$400 to send holiday packages to college students
- Replenished our Helene Spring Library with new books, through our Grow Our Library initiative
- Spent \$2,000 on our Helene Spring Library Event speaker.
- Bought kiddush cups for all Bet Mitzvah students
- Gave office staff holiday gifts.

We are so grateful for everyone's support!

With gratitude to our Finance Committee for guidance, oversight and reporting, under the leadership of Judith Lorber and Liz Gross, with advisors Cynthia Dubensky, Judy Scherzer and Nancy Schneider.

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Birthday Fund

Now in its 14th year and starting with an idea put forth by Judith Lorber to give people the opportunity to honor themselves on their birthday by giving to others, Jodi Malcom has led this project with passion and commitment. Creating the requirement that funds collected each year be given to organizations dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in NYC, the Birthday Fund has donated over \$23,000 to 20 organizations. The work to do this has been both immense and fulfilling, from recording the birthdays of our Sisterhood members, sending emails inviting them to donate (along with a personal birthday recognition!), thanking them for their donations, to researching worthwhile organizations to be recipients of our grants. The Sisterhood of East End Temple is incredibly proud of the work done by Jodi Malcom and the relationships she has formed through these efforts.

Recognizing the enormity of this project, three years ago Jodi started to mentor Andrea Viders, and with her commitment to social justice, this became a perfect partnership. In the last couple of years, the Birthday Fund has evolved into a series of programs to build community and expand interest. The Speaker Event has received recognition across a diverse EET population, and last Chanukah and Passover, we partnered with the Religious School to create packages for one of last year's BF grant recipients. We are now looking to build these kinds of relationships even more.

At the end of June, the Board of the Sisterhood of East End Temple looks forward to hearing the latest recommendations for our 2025/2026 grant. The results will be shared over the summer.



Also, at the end of June, Jodi Malcom, after 15 years of service dedicated to our Sisterhood, steps down from the Board. She will continue in an advisory capacity on the BF project and participate in our programs. We are so grateful for all the work she has done, not only with the BF, but for raising her hand in so many ways and generating enthusiasm about building Sisterhood.