



## *Bea Sacks*

It would be impossible for anyone to walk into Temple Emanu-El in Oak Park and not see and feel the impact Bea Sacks has had on the congregation. For over 50 years she has played an active leadership role at the Temple where, as a founding member and a past president, she has initiated more projects and programs than any member of the congregation. Bea continues to play an active role at the Temple today and is a cherished wealth of inspiration and resource for the members.

Originally from Brooklyn, Bea's first introduction to community service was through the ambulance corps for the Red Cross picking up the wounded soldiers in World War II as they arrived from Europe on the Queen Mary. Her husband and his brothers were all over seas in the army at the same time which made this job a very difficult task. It was something that she has never forgotten.

A former public school teacher, Mrs. Sacks developed her own curriculum focusing on minorities. She is a true visionary whose ability to get people involved and making a difference is done with ease through the power of her personality. Just by walking into a room, Bea creates zeal and passion for life that is contagious. She makes you *want* to get involved either through her gentle persuasion or as a motivator. One of her early passions was the Better Schools program where she had a marked impact on children and adults alike through her involvement.

If you were to look up the term "social action" in any dictionary, you'd find Bea Sack's name next to it. As Chairman as of the Berkley Council for better Schools, Sander Levin got to know of her as she worked on preserving the Berkley school district. In 1964 Sander called her and asked her to be his Campaign Manager during his bid for State Senator. The Levin legacy has lived on and Bea has been with him on campaigns or congressionally ever since in addition to volunteering time with Carl Levin as well.

"Bea's induction is a tribute, so well deserved, to her endless activities of all kinds – religious, civic and governmental – within and beyond the Jewish Community." - *Congressman Sander Levin*.

To know Bea Sacks is to know that she is a special woman. People of all ages are drawn to her through her vibrant persona. She was the kind of Cub Scout den mother that could break the

rules without having to explain, but nobody would object because they knew she was right. She believed that sometimes after a long day in a stuffy classroom at school it just made more sense to take the boys outside for a baseball game and buy them ice cream rather than making them sit in a circle and carve soap.

Gardening has always been an interest of Bea's as she has continued to support and work in the Temple's tree planting and garden programs. After the vegetables are planted, grown and harvested, they go to Yad Ezra every year. She's also continued her efforts for social action along those same lines along the same lines through the chavet which is a depository for cans of food in the Temple lobby. This is where religious schools kids and adults place the cans so they can be distributed to Wellness House and Yad Ezra. The plaque above it reads "for the poor and the stranger you shall leave it."

She's always thinking of other people with thoughtful projects such as the yearly Chocolate for the Jewish troops at Chanuka campaign and a similar project at Rosh Hashana for Israeli troops.

"What makes Bea so extraordinary is her ability to envision programs and projects of great social value," says Rabbi Klein of Temple Emanu-El, "She brings both light and heat to our community."

Her latest endeavor that has been helping commemorate the 50th anniversary of Brown versus the Board of education. At Bea's suggestion, members of Temple Emanu-El and members of the Second Baptist Church in Detroit (which was the last stop housing the underground railroad) have participated in a 2 day program, which as we speak is happening! The first day was yesterday at the Temple and the second day at the church continues after today's program as a way of remembering where we were on this issue in 1954 and where we are now in 2004.

Bea is a past recipient of the Lamed Vav Award through the Metropolitan Detroit Federation of Reform Synagogues. She is also a member of the Tri-County Community Coalition, a substance abuse group and serves on numerous committees at Temple Emanu-El. Her lifetime of commitment to social action and incomparable ability to inspire both children and adults alike truly set her apart as a special and treasured elder of our community.