



Monmouth Reform Temple

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MRT members created or donated over 500 masks to food banks, support organizations and individuals who needed them as one activity during their first Virtual Mitzvah Day held the last week of April.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monmouth Reform Temple Conducts Virtual Mitzvah Day in the Age of Covid 19

Tinton Falls: The Monmouth Reform Temple (MRT) Mitzvah Day committee had been meeting for months fine-tuning the various activities that bring their temple members together to make a difference in the greater community one day in April. While Mitzvah Day was scheduled to take place on April 26, early on in the month it became apparent that members weren't going to gather to sweep beaches, clean trails or cook at the Asbury Park Center. The local senior centers would not be serenaded by the beautiful voices of Cantor Clissold and her religious school students; nor would families meet in the social hall for all those "make a difference" activities prior to the concluding celebratory barbecue. The temple, as the rest of our world, was closed for Covid 19.

Refusing to be deterred or derailed by this virus, MRT President Marjorie Wold suggested that the temple go virtual with what could be done.

She explains, "We met in a zoom meeting and reevaluated everything we could still do from home and added a few more ideas adaptive to the current situation."

So material was purchased and patterns followed for MRT sewers to make protective health masks. With generous mask donations from other temple members, over 500 masks in all were delivered to the Fulfill food bank for Monmouth and Ocean County, Family Resource Association, the Center at Asbury Park and individuals who needed them.

Spearheading that group, Lynn Shapiro reported, "Everything I delivered was met with tremendous gratitude."

Over 320 homemade soap sacks were filled with soap donations destined for homeless shelters and food pantries. (The sacks did double duty as wash clothes.) Over 100 soap sacks accompanied a Kosher Meals on Wheels delivery.

Susan St Lifer comments on the latter stating, "They were thrilled to add them to the meals as you imagine the number of clients they serve has doubled in recent weeks."

For a demonstration of appreciation to our local heroes of this pandemic, the creativity of the religious school was harnessed with families and children creating art work and cards of gratitude for health care workers.

Temple member Rickie Kashdan, a health care provider states, "Over 200 beautiful cards and artwork from our temple members—adults, children and parents, were delivered to Riverview Medical Center, Monmouth Medical and Jersey Shore University Medical Center (JSUMC).

Rickie Kashdan states, “The managers of patient experience at JSUMC and Riverview and an RN on the Med/Surgical Floor at Monmouth Medical were all excited to receive our cards and artwork of appreciation. They plan to hand out MRT’s cards and artwork to individuals and departments during the upcoming hospital appreciation week and at a clap-in/clap-out recognition event during the change of shifts.”

Kashdan lists some of the messages MRT members wrote including: “Thank you for being a Frontline Ninja... Thank you for putting so much of your life on the line to save others...We are so lucky to have people in this world like you!! You guys are true Super Heroes. Stay safe and healthy... You are such caring, RESPECTED and amazing individuals. We would be nowhere without you.”

The activities for the day (which stretched out into the following week) were coordinated by the MRT’s Social Action Committee under Pam McGovern with Mitzvah Day Committee chairs Marcia Rachlin and Dean Ross.

Pam McGovern adds that one favorite Mitzvah Day Activity of members- cooking at the Asbury Park Center- could not take place during the pandemic, so members chose to cook from their own homes instead.

She adds, “We were able to make home-cooked donations to the Center, which is an activity we will continue throughout the year.”

The Social Action Committee is also spearheading an effort for temple members to grocery shop and deliver food and medications to the more vulnerable members of their community who must strictly shelter in place for fear of infection.”

MRT Rabbi Marc Kline added, “Our members made such an impact that our Federation asked us to run this program for the greater temple community.”

Those who could not participate in the above, were offered a simplified way of giving, by donating to select charities who developed special grants and programs to deal directly with the effects of Covid-19. These included the Fulfill food bank for Monmouth and Ocean County, Interfaith Neighbors, JBJ Soul Kitchen of Red Bank and Lunch Break.

Rabbi Kline comments on the later stating, “A special match donation was offered by a very generous family in our congregation specifically for Lunch Break. That total donation exceeded \$17,500 for the local food pantry!”

He added, “I am incredibly proud to serve this congregation. They just keep showing up.”

In reflection on MRT’s Virtual Mitzvah Day, its co-chairperson Marcia Rachlin stated, “I think given the fact that this whole event could have been conceivably shut down, we really rallied and made a significant contribution (to the community.) And that is because the membership came out (virtually) to support it.”



(Left) For virtual Mitzvah Day, MRT members delivered cooked food and donated soap sacks to (pictured, left to right) Kosher Meals on Wheels representatives Joann Glassoff, Director, and Marisa Kraus at the Marlboro Jewish Center.



(Right) MRT president Marjorie Wold displays some

of the collected food items MRT members gathered in participation of its first Virtual Mitzvah Day to make a difference in the greater community during the pandemic.



(Left) MRT members, with a special assist from the religious school, created over 200 pieces of artwork and cards for our front line workers at area hospitals during the pandemic during a virtual Mitzvah Day.