

PROGRAM REPORT

2021-22



A Jewish Arts & Music Organization



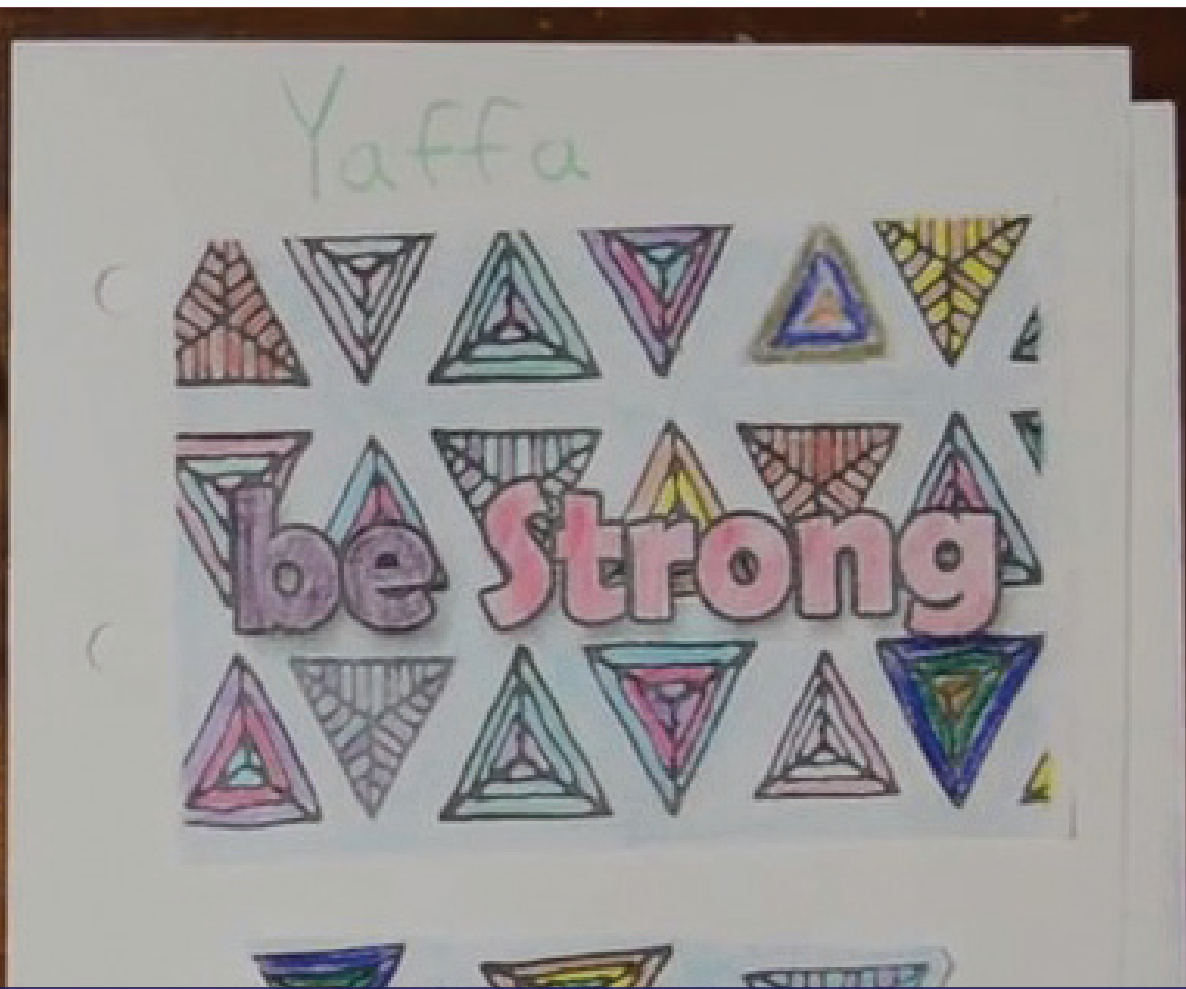
SPIRIT



WIND



BREATH



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With the support of our community, we've arrived at new ways of operating so we can broadly share the arts and all their benefits when people need them most.

Dear Friends,

Tzedakah. It's the Hebrew word commonly translated as charity, or philanthropy, that means more literally "justice" or "righteousness." Its observance in Jewish life is governed by detailed laws and practices. The Torah (Five Books of Moses) teaches that giving to others who need our help is the correct and ethical thing to do, perhaps most fundamentally because money is not ours to spend however we wish – it's G-d's deposit with us for which we are entrusted to be responsible stewards.

Though ultimately Jewish tradition teaches the value of doing things with pure intentions, not for the sake of reward, it also teaches that being motivated by reward can be a necessary prerequisite to action without ulterior motive. Consistent with this, as an additional incentive, Torah sources teach that, as far as one's livelihood goes, the amount of tzedakah one gives can have a significant impact on the amount one gets back in income.

Worldwide, during the past several challenging years, many have been in need, and so many have come to their aid with unmatched generosity, doing what is right and just. Individuals from every background and organizations of every kind have managed through challenges and disruptions, supported by their communities. Arts organizations, like RUACH, have also felt that generosity.

Many people are being killed in Ukraine as I write this. So many people around the globe, let alone in Milwaukee, have numerous basic, fundamental needs. Countless people are hungry and/or poor. Many people are hurt and confused. How can I think that you should seriously consider giving generously to RUACH, a Jewish arts and music organization based in Sherman Park, right now? How could the arts – and more specifically, RUACH



– possibly be a part of the solution to these seemingly hopeless, unrelated situations – and to larger and more important priorities?

The diverse Sherman Park neighborhood in many ways is a model community in Milwaukee, in America, and globally, with coexistence and partnership among diverse groups, including Orthodox Jews – but there is so much more work to be done. RUACH wants to be a big part of that process, not just within the immediate Jewish community, but very much outside of it, and using the arts as a bridge for facilitating mutual respect and understanding. Moreover, Sherman Park is the center from which RUACH's efforts in Greater Milwaukee, nationally, and beyond, emanate. We believe we can be a model organization for bringing diverse people together, especially the underserved, aside from our unique Jewish arts and values programming and organizational format, rooted in tradition. It takes a village, and it starts at home, continuing to branch outward one community at a time.

The reasons to give to RUACH don't stop there. The arts matter, too! In a world which can seem bereft of meaning and full of negativity, the arts provide a positive vehicle for escape, creativity, and expression of our inner selves, taking us to another world, allowing us to utilize and cultivate our imaginations, and facilitating our return

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

to our other duties recharged and inspired. As the music teacher Glenn Holland says in Mr. Holland's Opus, in discussing with a Vice Principal the prospect of cutting the arts in choosing between Mozart and reading and writing and long division, "Well, I guess you can cut the arts as much as you want, Gene. Sooner or later, these kids aren't going to have anything to read or write about."

(Please see the article herein with some teachings of Rabbi Michel Twerski about the word "ruach" for more inspiration about what the arts can do for us!)

With the support of our community, we've arrived at new ways of operating so we can broadly share the arts and all their benefits when people need them most. We have been called upon to reinvent and transform ourselves during this period in our history, and we have, thank G-d, stepped up and found new ways of bringing light, joy, and meaning during times that can be dark, troubled, and anxious.

There are countless causes in need and deserving of charitable dollars, a reality that is especially true today. But I hope you'll keep RUACH in your heart as you make your giving plans this year. We are a small but mighty organization that makes the very most of every gift we receive. As we enter our 18th year, we believe we've earned your confidence.

Beyond marking the longevity of our organization, RUACH's 18th year milestone has a special significance. The numerical value, or, gematria of the letters in the Hebrew word for "life" – chai – add up to 18. And so, during our 18th anniversary year, we will celebrate the lifecycle of RUACH, proud that we have come full circle through our renewed emphasis on Sherman Park and our relationship with the Twerski and YES communities, especially in the context of our connection with the greater Sherman Park neighborhood. As we celebrate RUACH's life and history, we know our future is bright! But we need your help to accomplish all that we hope.

Which brings us back to where we started. According to Jewish law, for those to whom it applies, and to offer a thought to ponder for those to whom it does not, there are specific priorities regarding where one should give one's tzedakah. These include such considerations as where one lives, the Land of Israel, and tuition dollars for one's children, as well as how much money should be tithed in the first place. (Rabbi Benzion Twerski allows monetary gifts to RUACH to be maasered (tithed), per Jewish law.)

But there is one key factor that cannot be denied or diminished, as Rabbi Michel Twerski has alluded to in the past: Where does your heart move you to give? As it says in the Torah, translated from the original Hebrew, at the beginning of the 'Mishkan (Tabernacle) Capital Campaign' in the Desert, on the way to the Land of Israel, 'G-d spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take from Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion' (ArtScroll Tanach, The Stone Edition, 2011, p. 197).

(As it turned out, the Children of Israel ended up contributing an overflow of gifts to this somewhat-artistic project, until Moses actually needed to tell them to stop giving. Would that this would be the case with your gifts to RUACH! :))

If your heart so moves you, would you consider making a gift to RUACH? As you'll read in the pages that follow, we have so much important work ahead, which will require significant investment if we are to continue to do justice to our mission and meet our great potential. We hope you see that our work merits a place in your giving priorities, given both our track record and our continued potential. Giving to RUACH makes our meaningful work possible, and we are grateful for your support. Thank you for your consideration and, where relevant, your past giving.

All My Best,
Joshua Richman
RUACH Founder & Executive Director

Meet RUACH's Staff

Joshua Richman, Founder & Executive Director

Josh Richman, a Milwaukee native, founded RUACH in 2004 along with his father, Stephen Richman, and lay leaders such as Founding President Jim Hiller and Founding Treasurer Mickey Stein, and continues to serve as its Executive Director.

During the twenty-two years since Josh moved back to Milwaukee, RUACH's development has been shaped in part by his growth as a leader in the Jewish, artistic, and educational activities of Milwaukee's Jewish community. Josh was educated as a classical musician, with a focus on trombone, conducting, and voice. He

attended Whitefish Bay High School, during which time he soloed with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and at the International Trombone Association's Convention as an award winner. At Yale University, he was Principal Trombonist and Assistant Conductor of the Yale Symphony Orchestra, and he was the recipient of the Bach Society Prize for significant contributions to the musical activities on campus.

After receiving a BA in Music from Yale College, Josh studied Torah, Judaic texts, and character development for two years at the Machon Shlomo yeshiva in Jerusalem. After returning to Milwaukee from Israel and working as both a Jewish community educator and for Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, he was the coordinator of the highly successful "A Season of Jewish Music in Milwaukee," produced through the Harry and Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center. Josh's conception of RUACH emerged in part from this combination of concerts and educational programs throughout the Jewish and Greater Milwaukee communities, including such locations as day schools, concert halls, and assisted living centers.

Josh's mom, dad, and sister, all of whom have been active in RUACH, are also musical: his mom, Fran Richman, served as Executive Director of Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra for approximately 25 years, having previously worked for the Milwaukee Jewish Federation; his father, Steve Richman, a founding Board member of RUACH, is a retired attorney at Quarles & Brady and former Board President of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra; and his sister, Wendy, a professional violist and educator who has served on the faculty of NYU, currently teaches at UCLA, and is a founding member of the International Contemporary Ensemble.



Josh, who was awarded the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's 2011 Benjamin E. Nickoll Young Leadership Award and the 2017 Inspiration Award from the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's Coalition for Jewish Learning, resides in the Congregation Beth Jehudah community of Milwaukee's diverse Sherman Park neighborhood. He is a talmid (Torah student) of Rabbi Michel Twerski, Rabbi Yaakov Rosenberg of blessed memory, Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld, and Rabbi Benzion Twerski, and is the proud father of Sara Tikvah, Bentzion, and Reuven Shlomo, all students at Yeshiva Elementary School in Sherman Park.

Nicole Carver, Operations & Outreach Manager

Nicole Carver has worked in the nonprofit sector for nearly 20 years. After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology at Marquette University, she continued to develop and expand her passion for social justice, social inclusion, and diversity through her professional and volunteer work. Her nonprofit career began as the receptionist at M.A.U.D., which, during her tenure, changed its name to the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee (NPC). After leaving the NPC, she worked as the Office Manager for the Planning and Policy Department at the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee and ended her tenure as a Senior Quality Assurance Specialist. While working in the Planning and Policy department, she also coordinated the YWCA's Regional Racial Justice Program (RRJP). Through the RRJP, she became acquainted with Camp Everytown, WI, now a program of the YWCA. Camp Everytown is an anti-bias camp where teens from throughout Wisconsin learn to challenge stereotypes, build self-confidence, and gain leadership skills. Nicole continues to serve as a volunteer for the program.

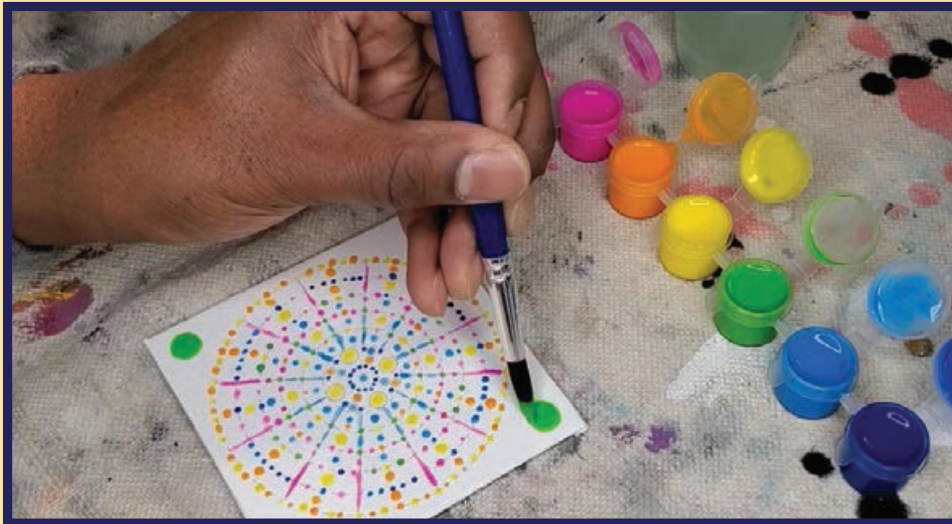


After the YWCA, she worked nearly eight years as Program Director at Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, where she developed and expanded her knowledge and respect for the interfaith community. At Interfaith, she directed the Interfaith Congregation Action Network, an interfaith social advocacy program; the Racial Justice Program; and she coordinated the annual CROP Hunger Walk which raised tens of thousands of dollars annually for Church World Service and collected tons of food for Hunger Task Force.

Her volunteer work includes serving as a member of the ACLU Milwaukee Chapter Board, Camp Everytown, WI coordinator, Future Milwaukee, MOSAIC Milwaukee, Restorative Justice Community Representative, and more.

RUACH ('spirit,' 'wind,' or 'breath' in Hebrew) has grown to provide creative arts opportunities, set against a Jewish backdrop, to diverse Greater Milwaukee residents.

ABOUT RUACH



RUACH is a Jewish arts and music 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to awaken creativity through arts enrichment rooted in Jewish values and the rich cultural diversity of Sherman Park. Since 2004, RUACH has grown to provide creative arts opportunities, set against a Jewish backdrop, to diverse Greater Milwaukee residents, particularly those who are traditionally underserved.

“Art is a universal language and through it each nation makes its own unique contribution to the culture of mankind.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

RUACH develops initiatives in alignment with relevant categories of our program framework:



BEING TRUE TO OUR ROOTS

RUACH's continued work with two of our earliest partners - Yeshiva Elementary School and Ovation Communities - sets the tone for the rest of our programming and provides a foundation for our ongoing commitment to bringing arts opportunities to the underserved.



AN OPEN TENT

In the spirit of the Jewish patriarch and matriarch, Abraham and Sarah, RUACH seeks to provide an open tent as we welcome, work with, and serve those beyond the Jewish community.



CELEBRATING JEWISH CREATIVITY

RUACH widely shares high-quality performances and programs that celebrate Jewish artists, their creativity, and their contributions to an expansive artistic legacy, and that highlight Jewish themes embraced by non-Jewish artists.



THE THREE PILLARS

In alignment with three pillars of Jewish observance (Eminah, Derech Eretz, and Torah), RUACH utilizes the arts as a universal language to lead those who are Jewish to a deeper connection with Jewish tradition and teachings and to respectfully expose those who are not familiar with Judaism to the rich beauty of Jewish heritage.

Board of Directors

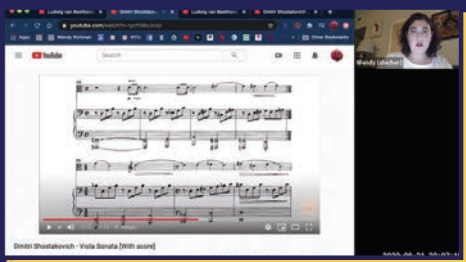
Rabbi David Ordan – Co-President
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Barbara Grande – Secretary
Eliot Strickon – Treasurer
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Rachel Eixenberger
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Ebbie Wells
Stephanie Zollicoffer-Phillips
Stephen Richman, ex-officio
Louis "Mickey" Stein, ex-officio
Devorah Shmotkin, ex-officio
Rabbi Benzion Twerski, ex-officio

In Review: 2021-2022 Programs

“My students greatly enjoyed the opportunity to hear Jonathan Leshnoff’s original works in *The Composer and Spirituality*. We used his music as an opportunity to explore tempo and melody as we described the music we heard. The students were extremely receptive to a genre of music that is usually different than what they listen to. We very much appreciated being able to work with RUACH and their ability to provide a COVID-friendly way to engage with their programming.”

-Erica Johnson, MPS-General Music Specialist,
Elm Creative Arts School



The Composer & Spirituality
Community Outreach



Yeshiva Elementary
School Programs



Arnaud Sussmann’s
Jewish Voices



Sherman Park Arts Festival



Sherman Park Arts Labs



Recorders Play
Jewish Music



A Zos Chanukah Concert
with Ari Goldwag



“A Journey Through
Jewish Music with the
Amernet String Quartet”



“Music: Appreciating Its
Soulful Resonance,” by
Rabbi Melech Lensky

The Composer and Spirituality Community Outreach



Stefanie Jacob and Wendy Richman

After the successful premiere of our high-quality, on-demand virtual program, *The Composer and Spirituality: A Musical Investigation*, featuring the GRAMMY-Nominated, Orthodox Jewish composer, Dr. Jonathan Leshnoff, in August 2020, RUACH launched the Community Outreach phase of the initiative in March 2021. We showed the Main Concert Event - highlighting a pre-concert talk and performances of Dr. Leshnoff's compositions and works of composers who inspire him - to public and private schools as well as senior living facilities in the Milwaukee area, including:

- ALBA School
- Elm Creative Arts School
- Jewish Family Services
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- Milwaukee Jewish Day School
- Mount Mary University
- Ovation Chai Point
- Sherman Multicultural Arts School
- St. John's On The Lake
- The Sam and Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

In addition to the Main Concert Event, which features the tremendous talents of Jeanyi Kim (Acting Associate Concertmaster (2nd Chair), Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra); Stefanie Jacob (Founding pianist of the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music's Prometheus Trio); and Wendy Richman (Renowned violist and member of the International Contemporary Ensemble), the series also included a virtual "Instrument Petting Zoo" highlighting student musicians from Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra as well as interviews with the performers.

"We viewed the Jonathan Leshnoff, *Composer and Spirituality* virtual concert in my Experiencing Music class on March 1 and thoroughly enjoyed it! Jonathan's music is very interesting and so beautiful. I am still hearing that melody from the second movement of the Yiddish Suite in my head. Gorgeous. Also, it was a wonderful opportunity for the students to hear the composer talk about his works and to become aware of Jewish music. Thank you for providing this terrific learning experience to my class!"

**-Barbara Henry, Music, Movement and Dance
Department Chair & Adjunct Instructor,
Mount Mary University – Milwaukee, WI**

Arnaud Sussmann's Jewish Voices



“It was an honor for the Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) to partner with RUACH and several other organizations to present “Jewish Voices,” featuring violinist Arnaud Sussmann. We found it touching how this renowned talented violinist dedicated this program to the memory of his grandfather, Jacques Sussmann, a Holocaust survivor.

HERC was excited to co-sponsor this program because, through Mr. Sussmann’s descriptions of the lives of each of the Jewish composers and how the Holocaust affected them, he educated our community about these composers and

their music. Programs like this are essential so that we can recognize and honor the memory of these talented and courageous individuals. HERC’s constituents, particularly those with a musical background, were enthusiastic about this program. They expressed that they were very impressed by the quality of the music from these composers and by Mr. Sussmann’s genius as a musician. We look forward to future collaborations together.”

-Kari Altman

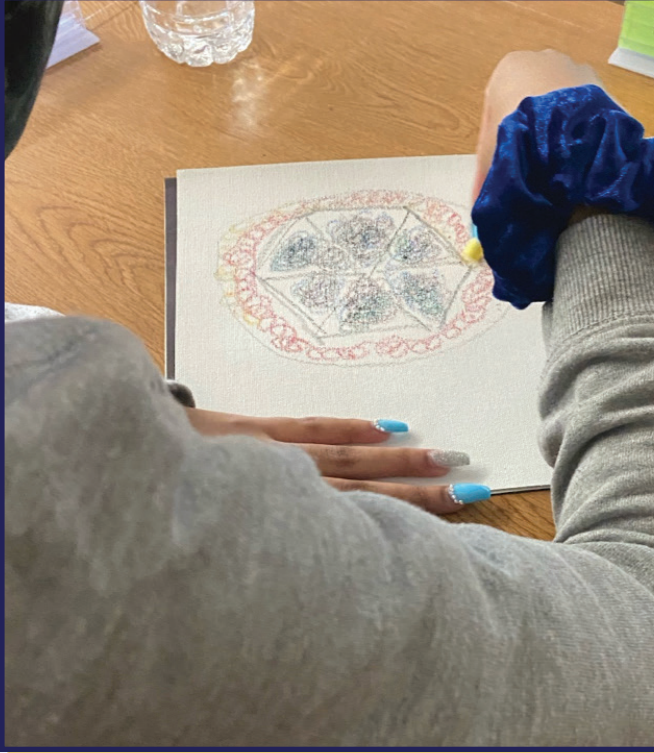
Former Director of Outreach & Community Programming

Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

RUACH provided another opportunity for audiences to experience exceptional musical talent virtually with our presentation of *Jewish Voices*. The concert, which premiered on May 23, 2021 and was available on-demand the following week, featured French violinist Arnaud Sussmann, who, accompanied by pianist Michael Brown, performed pieces by Holocaust-era Jewish composers whose lives were impacted by the Shoah (Holocaust). Complementing his musical performance, which included remarks by famed composer and instructor

Samuel Adler, Mr. Sussmann spoke about his grandfather’s experience in the Shoah and participated in a live Q&A session with audience members. RUACH was proud to produce this meaningful concert in partnership with the following co-sponsors: The Jewish Home & Care Center Foundation (lead sponsor), Lake Park Synagogue, The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC), Congregation Shalom, Mt. Sinai Congregation of Wausau, and Beth Israel Center of Madison.

Sherman Park Arts Labs



The Composer and Spirituality Classroom Experience

RUACH taught a two-session virtual class for 3rd through 5th grade students at Sherman Multicultural Arts School in April and May of 2021. This special residency, based on RUACH's *The Composer and Spirituality* series, featured music history/appreciation and visual arts instruction. The class drew their reflections and impressions of two pieces of music featured in the concert, one composed by Jonathan Leshnoff and the other by Dmitri Shostakovich.

Sherman Park Arts Labs is RUACH's new intensive arts initiative that utilizes arts in a Jewish context to build cross-cultural understanding and generate joy and hope among school partners in Sherman Park. As schools continued to navigate limitations due to COVID-19, RUACH was able to bring convenient, safe, impactful arts programming to the Sherman Park neighborhood.

Project: VITAL (Values In The Arts & Life)

One of RUACH's longest-standing signature programs, Project: VITAL continued with a special residency teaching students about bullying and the importance of being an upstander, with classroom peer role-playing and the use of puppet-making and puppet shows. The curriculum focused on historical examples of bullying and upstanding from the Holocaust and from Slavery in the United States. The six-session virtual program was held for 53rd Street School and Sherman Multicultural Arts School in Spring 2021.

Yeshiva Elementary School Programs



Since our inception, RUACH has nurtured a special relationship with our core partner, Yeshiva Elementary School (YES), recognizing the importance of providing students who may not otherwise have access to arts programming with high-quality opportunities to explore their creativity. Though COVID-19 limited some of our regular programming, RUACH was able to offer some in-person programming at YES with the gradual reopening of school facilities in 2021:

String Institute & Drum Circles

Mrs. Marty Fox, author of RUACH's *Recorders Play Jewish Music* curriculum, conceived of the String Institute, which RUACH administered, and through which 6th-8th grade YES boys participated in an 18-session Mandolin lesson program with artist-educator Guy Fiorentini, who was assisted by YES Secular Studies Teacher and new RUACH Board member, Rabbi Eliezer Cooper. RUACH also facilitated a 9-session Drum Circle program for 3rd grade YES boys.

Nachas YES, Nachas RUACH

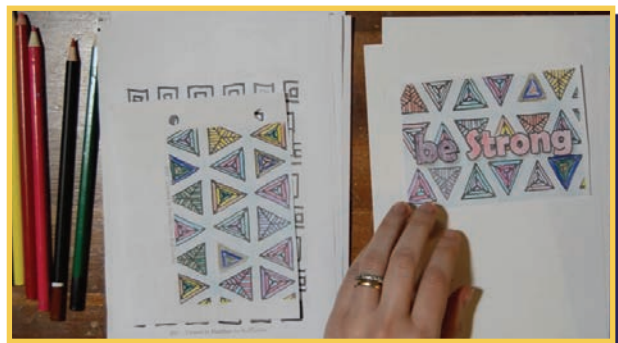
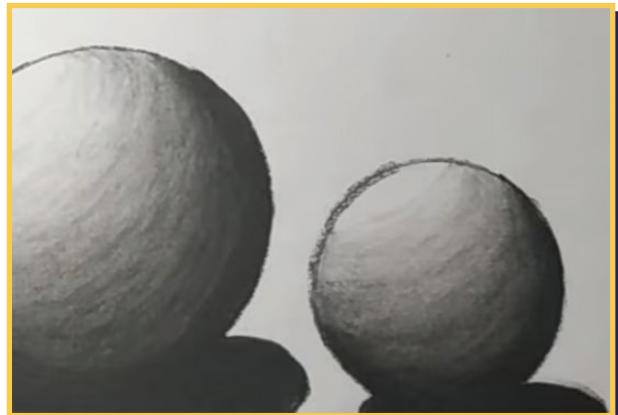
This special 90-minute live performance held at YES on June 10, 2021, was the culmination of String Institute and Drum Circle programming. In addition to performances by proud Mandolin and Drum Circle students, the program also included a student guitar duet by Naftali and Bentzion Fox, and a video performance created in Israel by multi-instrumentalist/vocalist, Dr. Adam Margolis.

“This program is important to us because we are learning how to play an instrument. We really enjoy learning how to play mandolin. Our favorite part is learning new songs. We have learned how to play Beshem Hashem, Asher Bara, David Melech and more. We hope to get better at learning new songs. We also enjoyed performing some songs in front of an audience last year. Another thing we like is when our teacher brings in his guitar and plays along with us, because it makes the music sound better. Finally, this class shows us that you need to work hard but, in the end, the hard work pays off.”

*-Tuvia and Shimon Baumann,
YES Students,
Mandolin Lesson Participants*

Sherman Park Arts Festival

RUACH's Sherman Park Arts Festival made a welcome return in 2021 after its cancellation in 2020 due to COVID-19 disruptions. While the Festival typically includes both a Community Arts Day and a Sherman Park Community Concert, we made the difficult decision to postpone the Community Concert until next season out of an abundance of caution. The 2021 Sherman Park Arts Festival Community Arts Day, which was held virtually, continued the event's tradition of encouraging unity through the arts among all those within the diverse Sherman Park neighborhood. Participants registered in advance to receive a free bag of art supplies that allowed them to complete four different art projects while watching pre-recorded video tutorials available on-demand from March 14th through April 9th, 2021. Featured Milwaukee-area artists included Gavi Slutzkin, Yaffa Karan, VIBEZ Creative Arts Space, and Thomas McKinney, Jr.



The Big Blue Bag

The “Big Blue Bag” refers to the blue fabric Sherman Park Arts Festival bags that held the Community Arts Day supplies for each family and that have since been used by many in the community.

The Big Blue Bag is something I see,
Walking through Sherman Park or swimming at the JCC.

In its trademark color of royal blue,
The Big Blue Bag unites us,
At the grocery store, farmers market, doctor’s office
just to name a few.

As neighbors, community members, and friends
working together,
The Big Blue Bag provided materials,
to create fun projects and crafts,
no matter the weather!

The videos were awesome,
allowing each person or family to go at their own pace,
Ensuring the time was well spent,
without the pressure of a race.

The size of the Big Blue Bag
Is larger than you think,
Making space for items and our hearts
Bonding our community through a common link.

While RUACH used The Big Blue Bags
to help us all during quarantine,
Now when we see someone carrying it,
make sure to say hello to another member of the team.

- Mrs. Faygie Hellman, Sherman Multicultural Arts School Psychologist, Parent of Community Arts Day and Yeshiva Elementary School (YES) Mandolin Class Participants, YES Social-Emotional Learning Partner



Amernet String Quartet

“A Journey Through Jewish Music with the Amernet String Quartet”

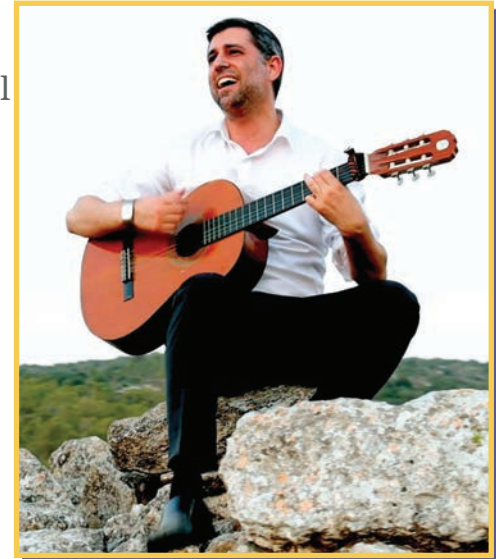
In January and February 2022, RUACH presented “A Journey Through Jewish Music with the Amernet String Quartet”, an on-demand virtual program of Jewish-related works over the past 150 years. The program included works by Schulhoff, Gershwin, Krein, Osvaldo Golijov’s *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, and also featured New World Symphony clarinetist Jesse McCandless. The night of the concert premiere, donors



were offered an engaging special live Q&A session on *The Future of Classical Music* with Sarah Dinin of Dinin Arts Management & Consulting, LLC. A masterclass with Misha Vitenson (first violinist) and Michael Klotz (violist) of the Amernet String Quartet held with Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO) students also complemented the concert. MYSO violinists and violists were selected to perform a portion of a work of their choosing, after which the Amernet String Quartet clinicians provided critique. “A Journey Through Jewish Music with the Amernet String Quartet” concert and masterclass were sponsored by generous RUACH donors, including the National Endowment for the Arts, United Performing Arts Fund, Harri Hoffmann Family Foundation, Clarice S. Turer Charitable Fund, von Briesen & Roper, s.c., Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Milwaukee Arts Board, CAMPAC, Ralph Evinrude Foundation, the Wisconsin Arts Board, and the Jewish Community Foundation of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.

A Zos Chanukah Concert with Ari Goldwag

We were honored to present a Zos Chanukah virtual concert filmed especially for RUACH by renowned Jewish pop singer Ari Goldwag. Jewish mysticism and Chassidic Sages teach that Chanukah, and, in particular, Zos Chanukah (the final night and day of Chanukah), is the final sealing of judgments for the year, making it a powerful time for praying for important things. Filmed in the hilltops of Israel, Ari Goldwag's Zos Chanukah concert featured music and uplifting commentary, including performances of compositions by Rabbi Michel Twerski of Milwaukee's Congregation Beth Jehudah, and also incorporated some of Goldwag's popular music videos. This event was generously sponsored by Armin & Hollie Nankin, in memory of Ben Karan, Ben Tzion ben Tzvi HaKohen, of blessed memory; and by Milwaukee Property Management, LLC.



"[Music] elevates both mind and emotions to Divine inspiration and this lends man the strength to overcome anything that might disturb his inner peace and serenity."

- Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, ztz"l, The Hirsch Psalms, commentary to Psalm 4:1

"Music: Appreciating Its Soulful Resonance," by Rabbi Melech Lensky

With the Jewish Home and Care Center Foundation, RUACH co-presented "Music: Appreciating Its Soulful Resonance," by Rabbi Melech Lensky, an installment of the Rubin Sharpe Tribute Series. Rabbi Lensky's inspiring class about the importance of music in Judaism premiered February 23, 2022 and is currently scheduled to be available free and on-demand through February 20, 2023.



*View Music:
Appreciating
Its Soulful
Resonance!*

"Attending the Jewish Music RUACH event with Rabbi Melech Lensky was very inspiring and spiritually uplifting. Rabbi Lensky's presentation provided well-researched 'tidbits' regarding many Jewish connections to music. He also spoke about the spiritual connection that the Jewish Nation has to music dating back to the times of the Beis Hamikdash (the Holy Temple in Jerusalem), including the Levites' Trumpets and Song as well as David's Harp. I walked away uplifted and inspired and await new adventures that RUACH will be providing in the future."

- Yaakov Lieberman

“Chanukah 2021 arrived as we emerged from another Covid wave and gratefully with it RUACH’s Zos Chanukah concert featuring Ari Goldwag. Just after we lit Chanukah candles, our children and grandchildren joined us for the virtual concert, and we were transported to the bright and beautiful hills of Ramat Beit Shemesh in Israel, watching and singing along with Ari Goldwag’s uplifting music. Thanks to RUACH and Ari Goldwag for actualizing the message of Chanukah and spreading the light throughout the world with this fabulous program.”

*– Hiller Family,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

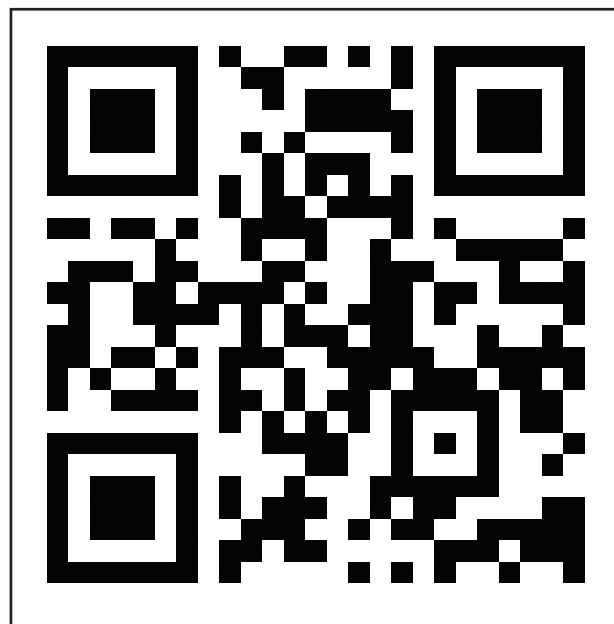
Recorders Play Jewish Music

RUACH continues to make headway in selling *Recorders Play Jewish Music*, our recorder method book written by Mrs. Marty Fox, a long-time, pioneering music educator at Yeshiva Aharon Yaakov/Ohr Eliyahu in Los Angeles. Destined to be a trailblazer in the fields of Jewish and music education, the book features entirely Jewish music, so that Jewish students are exposed to their own heritage and can pick up the instrument more easily, and so that non-Jewish students can be exposed to the richness

of Jewish tradition and culture. We have piloted this recorder method book with schools in the Milwaukee area, both Jewish and not, to great success, and are now reaching out to other schools across the country.

If you are interested in bringing *Recorders Play Jewish Music* to your school or organization, contact: Joshua Richman, Executive Director at joshua@ruachmilwaukee.org or 414-367-4891.

View our award-winning video, created by Debra Zarne, about *Recorders Play Jewish Music*!





SPIRIT



WIND



BREATH

RUACH: Behind the Name

Inspired by the words of Rabbi Michel Twerski

Compiled by Josh Richman/Yehoshua Ish Asher RUACH bo

(‘Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit (ruach)’--Numbers 27:18)

‘Ruach,’ a Hebrew word commonly translated as ‘wind,’ ‘breath,’ or ‘spirit,’ appears frequently throughout the Torah (Five Books of Moses), Prophets, and Writings. Common and/or well-known phrases which have the word ‘ruach’ include: “Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit),” ‘Nachas Ruach (Pride or Pleasantness of Spirit),’ ‘Ruach Shtuss (A Spirit of Folly),’ and ‘Ruach Elokim (Spirit of G-d),’ among many others. The name ‘RUACH’ was presented to Rabbi Michel Twerski of Congregation Beth Jehudah in Sherman Park as one of several options of names to select from for our fledgling Jewish arts and music organization, ~18 years ago. According to Jewish tradition, when parents name a child, they are granted a hint of prophecy, as a name is reflective of one’s essence. We at RUACH like to think that our name is reflective of our essence, even as our mission and programming have evolved over the years. Our name informs our mission and all of the programming we do both within and, by extension, outside of Sherman Park, both inside and beyond the Jewish community.

Rabbi Twerski, who ultimately selected the name ‘RUACH’ for our organization, sat down with RUACH Founder and Executive Director Josh Richman to discuss his thoughts on the meaning of the word ‘ruach’ and how it is reflective of our organization. Based on what Rabbi Twerski had to say about the word ‘ruach’ and one of its earliest mentions in the Torah, here’s an insight into our name:

One of the earliest and most important uses of the word ‘ruach’ is in Genesis 2:7, where it says ‘and G-d Blew a living spirit into man.’ The Targum (the Aramaic translation of the Torah, by the commentator Onkelos) translates this ‘living spirit’ as a ‘ruach mimalala.’

A ‘ruach mimalala,’ translated as a ‘speaking spirit,’ is even more fundamentally a ‘communicating spirit’ or an ‘interactive spirit.’ The Torah and Targum, then, in translating man’s ‘living spirit’ as a ‘speaking or communicating spirit,’ are teaching that G-d blew into man a life energy that reaches out - a spirit that goes out of man to interact with the world.

Rabbi Twerski also taught that G-d’s Intention was that the ruach mimalala, the communicating spirit G-d ‘Blew into’ us, motivate us to interact with the world and enrich it with our gifts. With the ruach mimalala, then, G-d invested man with the capacity to give from the rich gifts which every person is endowed by G-d, to radiate those into the world so that the world can be uplifted by them. That’s why a person is endowed with the ability to sing, the ability to create music, the ability to act, the ability to write, the ability to draw beautiful things – any artistic or creative gift – or, gifts like the ability to comfort or console, or the ability to listen. The expression of these many gifts by a person can be a product of a heart through which G-d speaks, saying, ‘I’m giving you all of these



Rabbi Michel Twerski

things - bring them into the world, use them in the world.’

Traditional Jewish belief teaches that all of us will be asked by G-d, ‘I gave you this quality, this ability – let’s see how you used it, let’s see how the world became better because of it...’ That’s the essence of ‘ruach,’ according to Rabbi Twerski, whom we thank for his wisdom. Here at RUACH, we seek to make Sherman Park, and by extension, Greater Milwaukee and beyond, a better place because of our unique programming based on a rich and beautiful Jewish perspective on music and the arts. We each have a creative spirit and unique gifts to share, as Rabbi Twerski taught us, whether those talents are “artistic” in the traditional sense of the word or not. RUACH wants to grow in being a vehicle to continue to nurture and facilitate the sprouting and maturation of those gifts in each one of you. Please help us to accomplish this mission, in turn, by reaching out and investing generously in us and in our valuable work. In doing so, you will become a partner in a sublime effort to enrich the world through music and the arts, one community at a time.

Photo Credit: Rabbi Yosef Aryeh Schlusser
For prints of this picture please contact yschlusser@gmail.com

Current & Future Programs

Learn about and support the grand plans and aspirations for our small but mighty organization. Invest in our growth and impact!

Jewish Voices Outreach

This coming season, we will be revisiting our popular *Jewish Voices* virtual concert featuring acclaimed French violinist Arnaud Sussmann, bringing the program to diverse partner organizations and educational institutions. The concert includes Sussmann's performance of pieces by Holocaust-era Jewish composers and remarks about his own grandfather's experience in the Holocaust.

Rubin Sharpe Tribute Series

RUACH is thrilled to resume the Rubin Sharpe Tribute Series this season after a hiatus due to COVID. The series, which is funded by a bequest to the Jewish Home and Care Center Foundation, presents approximately one-hour Jewish-themed concerts by talented area musicians, including musicians from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, for Ovation Communities residents and the general public. We anticipate offering both virtual and live concerts.

Yiddish Music Series

In partnership with the Jewish Home and Care Center Foundation and Ovation Jewish Home, RUACH has resumed bringing live Yiddish Music concerts to residents of Ovation Jewish Home with memory loss. The concert series has proven to be therapeutic for many of the residents, helping them to engage and recall warm memories.

Sherman Park Arts Labs

RUACH will continue to grow the Sherman Park Arts Labs intensive arts program with Sherman Park schools, offering a menu of programs from which schools can select. Recent 2022 programming has included anti-bullying classes utilizing puppetry, drum circle programming, and a drum pad/stick technique/rhythm instruction program. Instructors have included Guy Fiorentini, Mrs. Chavi Miller, and Dovid Chesner.

WhoseTorah: Retracing the Journey of G-d and Humanity Throughout History

This new program, now in development in partnership with Congregation Beth Jehudah (CBJ) and Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun, uses theater, creative writing, and storytelling to inspire participants to look at their shared history, connect with their heritage, find higher purpose, and learn important life lessons. By developing scripts and engaging in theater and creative writing exercises based on Midrash, Torah, Jewish history, and their contemporary applications, RUACH and the WhoseTorah team – including the Rabbis Twerski of CBJ and Rabbi Mendel Metzger of the Sukkat Shalom Institute and CBJ – plan to engage participants of all ages to enact scenes and learn modern day lessons having first examined relevant experiences of Torah figures in the episode of Joseph and the Brothers.

Fourth Annual Sherman Park Arts Festival

The Sherman Park Arts Festival is RUACH's annual effort to bring Sherman Park neighbors together to create and engage in art, a universal language, in order to strengthen and unite our community. RUACH's upcoming Festival is slated to include:

Community Arts Day

This program invites families, friends, and neighbors, mostly from the Sherman Park area, to join together in creating and enjoying arts and crafts projects created by artists who live or work in the Sherman Park community. The 2022-23 Community Arts Day is anticipated to be virtual.

Sherman Park Community Concert

The 2022-23 Sherman Park Community Concert will be held in the Sherman Park neighborhood, where a top-notch artist is tentatively slated to perform a program of music that celebrates the Black and Jewish experiences.

Storytelling Initiative

RUACH continues to develop the NEA-sponsored Storytelling Initiative, which delves into various forms of storytelling – including spoken word, theater, music, and visual arts – in an effort to explore common ground in the diverse Sherman Park neighborhood.

Nigun Initiative

RUACH is working to develop this program through which young people learn about reading and composing music using Jewish melodies (“nigunim”). The Nigun Initiative will also incorporate music theory and history instruction.

YES Programming

RUACH continues to nurture a special relationship with Yeshiva Elementary School (YES), offering arts programs including a girls music, theater, and dance production for 3rd-8th graders led by Mrs. Chavi Miller; a 6th-8th grade boys choir with Mr. Dovid Chesner; and Jewish mandolin/guitar lessons for 6th-8th grade boys with Mr. Guy Fiorentini. RUACH also hosts the Nachas YES, Nachas RUACH annual concert featuring music students from YES to showcase students’ participation in our arts and music enrichment programs and to bring joy to the wider community.

RUACH will continue to serve as an inspiration and resource for other institutions by lending supplies and instruments, referring arts teachers, offering highly subsidized programming to institutions where there is need, spreading the message of the importance of the arts in a Jewish context (particularly in Jewish schools) and values-based arts education (particularly outside the Jewish community) through groundbreaking programs, and supporting schools as they work toward creating their own independent arts and music programs.

In Celebration of RUACH's Volunteers

We are forever indebted to all those who have served on RUACH's Board of Directors since the organization's inception. Their generous contributions of time and expertise have been instrumental over the course of our history. Here, we're privileged to recognize a few recent members for their years of service. We also wish to honor the memory of Mrs. Phyllis Lensky, of blessed memory, a dear and loyal Board member, friend and supporter, who passed away in May of 2021.



Jay Frank

After serving more than ten years on RUACH's Board of Directors, eventually taking on the role of President, Jay stepped down from the Board at the end of the 2020-21 season. A registered investment advisor, Jay moved to Milwaukee from Illinois in 1986, and has worked in financial services his entire career. Jay and his wife, Sarah, who preceded Jay on the Board, were among RUACH's first advocates. During RUACH's early days, Jay and

Sarah's children were students at Yeshiva Elementary School, and they realized, just as Josh Richman had at the time, that though the arts are critically important to a child's education, resources for these programs were limited. Without RUACH, he says, so many children would have grown up without exposure to arts skills and appreciation programs. Jay was also particularly interested in the concept of utilizing Jewish arts and music as a way of developing relationships in the uniquely diverse Sherman Park community, noting, "Jewish content isn't just for Jewish people." Jay was particularly fulfilled by his time on the RUACH board because of its diversity. He said, "RUACH was by far the most diverse board I sat on. It allowed for interactions I wouldn't have in any other setting."



Merilou V. Gonzales

Merilou Gonzales, Communications Director at Bader Philanthropies, is a Chicago native, who came to Milwaukee more than 20 years ago, by way of Washington, D.C. Before her time with Bader Philanthropies, Merilou worked for the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and prior to that, with Public Allies in various capacities for more than 15 years. Merilou, who joined the RUACH Board of Directors in 2017-18, views her volunteer role as an opportunity

to help the organization grow and develop, while learning more about the arts and Judaism. For small and humble organizations like RUACH, a "diamond in the rough," she says, Merilou feels that anything is possible. As RUACH expands its programs and deepens its reach, she hopes RUACH will be seen as a leader in the arts community.



Rabbi David Ordan

Rabbi David Ordan, RUACH's current Board Co-President (having served as the lone President in 2021-22), came to Milwaukee in 2008, and joined the Board in 2015-16, having known Josh Richman and RUACH's work since his arrival in the city. As the Executive Director of the Eisenhower Center, a vocational program for adults with disabilities, Rabbi Ordan brings considerable nonprofit expertise to his volunteer work with RUACH. Drawn to RUACH because of its service to schools, he recognizes the importance of providing arts enrichment, especially amid school budget cuts, which often result in reductions in arts programming. Rabbi Ordan also appreciates RUACH's efforts to reach across different communities to bring the spirit of music and the arts to people of all kinds. During his time on RUACH's Board, Rabbi Ordan has enjoyed working to streamline governance processes and is excited to help the organization achieve even more targeted Board participation. He encourages others to become a part of the RUACH community: "The more people that can get involved in spreading the word about what RUACH's doing in the community, the better. We welcome people from all over to get involved!"

RUACH Tribute to Phyllis Lensky, of blessed memory, by her children



Book of Life signing with the Jewish Community Foundation of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Born in 1936, Phyllis Lensky, of blessed memory, grew up on the South side of Milwaukee where her father owned a drug store. Her parents, Sophie and Louis Kaplan, made sure she had Jewish connections and sent her to Hebrew/Sunday School at Congregation Beth El. Junior and senior high school in a new home on the West side provided more opportunities to enhance her Jewish connections. This also marked the beginning of her volunteerism as she became first a member and later president of her BBG group (B'nai B'rith Girls, a Jewish girls' youth organization). College introduced Phyllis to many new Jewish friends where she became president of her dorm. She graduated from UW-Madison in 1958 as an Occupational Therapist, and in 1986 she received a Master's degree. In the summer of 1958

Phyllis was set up on a blind date with Harry Lensky, an attorney, the man who became her husband a year later.

IN CELEBRATION OF RUACH'S VOLUNTEERS

While busy with their careers and raising their two children, volunteerism became a big part of their lives. Harry served as president of the Board of Jewish Education, Congregation Beth Israel, and Jewish Family and Children's Service. Phyllis found her niche in National Council of Jewish Women, Congregation Beth Israel, the Liver Foundation, and short-term assignments with VNA (Visiting Nurse Association), AARP, and other community organizations. She expanded her activities to include Congregation Anshe Sfard Kehillat Torah (ASKT), the archives of the Jewish Museum Milwaukee (JMM), and RUACH. It was the most natural thing in the world for Phyllis and Harry to give and share what they had.

In 2003, seven and a half years after a liver transplant, Harry died. The years since then changed Phyllis's life in many ways. She joined a new synagogue, ASKT, which provided her with a wonderful Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) community as well as support during times of illness and distress. And of course, she became a valued volunteer at ASKT, spearheading the creation and production of a yearly calendar and co-chairing the Adult Education committee.

After living her whole life in Milwaukee, Phyllis seemed to know everyone in the Jewish community! As one of the most active volunteers for many years in the archives, Phyllis identified people and places in hundreds of unlabeled photos -- often adding a story or two about the people in the photo. Her deep knowledge of the Milwaukee community assisted JMM staff and researchers when more information was needed about an event, person, or business, or to assist a family seeking information about relatives.

After spending many winters in Florida, Phyllis decided that traveling was too difficult even though she was not looking forward to Milwaukee winters. As a social and outgoing people person, she knew that living alone in her condo would be too isolating, so she made the decision to move to Chai Point. Not only did she make new friends at Chai Point and ingratiate herself to people there, but she also edited their bulletins, helped conform menus to Jewish holidays, and started a welcome program for new residents. She very quickly became the "Captain" of Chai Point!

Phyllis had a deep appreciation for the arts. In addition to having subscriptions to the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the ballet, she was part of a writing group and wrote many personal memoirs. Although she cut back on many of her volunteer commitments because she was too busy, when approached about being on the Board of RUACH she could not say no. Obviously RUACH meant a great deal to her, and she greatly appreciated what they provided to the community -- and especially to the residents at Chai Point.

Phyllis was a loving daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She was kind, caring and supportive to her family and friends. She related to people and understood them and had a strong moral compass. At times her opinions might be hard to hear but she always said what was on her mind with thoughtfulness and respect. At times she could be a force with which to reckon! She had a great sense of humor, and was spunky, fun, lively and friendly. She overcame many obstacles and challenges in her life but always found the strength to cope, the ability to adapt, and a way to make the best of a situation. She engaged life on its terms. Phyllis touched many lives in many places and was an inspiration to all who knew her. She will be missed by many people.

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October 20, 2020-August 14, 2022

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