Kavod Award Honorees

By Jon Simon

Allen Eisenberg and Howard Hoffman won coveted Kavod Awards, and Rabbi Bill Rudolph was honored for his years of support to Men’s Club at the 2015 Kavod Award breakfast on Sunday, May 3.

Allen received his award for Service to Congregation Beth El for more than a decade of leadership and devotion as Beth El’s senior usher for Shabbat and holiday services and for contributions to our worship community.

Howard was honored for Service to the Community at Large in recognition of his “ground-breaking contributions” to the environment and years of “dedicated and relentless work” at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Marvin Yudkowitz introduced Allen as “a true mensch.” Quoting from Pirke Avot about serving others and acting humbly, Marvin said, “Allen exemplifies these teachings.”

A native of Detroit and the son of Holocaust survivors, Allen and his wife of 33 years, Connie Stromberg, have three sons, Mathew, Ari, and Jonah.

After obtaining a religious studies degree from Michigan and a law degree, Allen spent part of his professional career with United States Agency for International Development, living in five countries including Nepal, Barbados, Ecuador, and Peru. In each country, he sought out a synagogue to join its Jewish community. “My Judaism was a gift – an entrée into local society that wasn’t available to my fellow Americans,” Allen explained.

Allen joined the shul shortly after moving here in 2001, quickly accepting responsibility as senior usher, and often serving as gabbai. Allen said he is a believer in the concept of community. “For it to function,” said Allen, “everyone has to contribute.” He urged Men's Club members to “Find a committee that matches your interest.  And, if you aren’t already an usher – join us!”

Allen is also proud to be a member of this year’s winning Beth El “It’s Academic” team.

Barry Elman recognized Howard for “Outstanding Service to the Community at Large,” for three decades in the field of environmental protection. “Despite his modest, soft-spoken demeanor,” remarked Barry, “Howard’s influence on air pollution policy and regulation has been far-reaching and substantial.”

Explaining how he and Howard had first met as young attorneys in the EPA general counsel’s office, Barry said Howard “played a significant role in drafting the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments – at the time, the biggest and most expensive peace-time legislation ever enacted. That legislation that has touched the lives of every American,” said Barry.

Accepting his award, Howard said he was “truly honored and delighted.” He reminisced about how Rabbi Rudolph had officiated at his daughter’s baby naming and his son’s bris; both Elana and Adam watched as their father was honored.

Howard touted the work of three Israeli environmental groups – a subject near and dear to his heart – EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East, Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies - known for its “Israel Ride” bike tour in which Rabbi Rudolph and several congregants have participated.

Discussing Israel’s environmental suitability, Howard said that Israel’s low growing shrubbery, well suited for goats, and its bee-attracting wildflowers or date trees may have inspired the phrase “*zavat halav u*‘*dvash*,” a land “flowing with milk and honey.”

Also during the morning program, Larry Sidman, Kavod Awards chairman, thanked Jordan Rosner, outgoing Men’s Club president, for his “dedicated talents and boundless energy in revitalizing the Men’s Club and helping it to become a more vibrant and youthful organization.”

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