

## "Be the First"

The Hebrew word "*gabbai*" means "elevated one." A community leader of lofty skills and stature is certainly needed to ensure that the synagogue service run smoothly, someone whose consistent presence and wise counsel raise the observance of a family simcha or holiday ritual to a plane that the entire congregation can share.

Nat is all this and more. But it is the greeting that our beloved gabbai extends that makes Nat so treasured by all of us. A Nat welcome is filled with the "*middah*," the virtue, of "*sayver panim yafot* — a pleasant demeanor." Our rabbinic sages encouraged the practice that comes so naturally to Nat: "Greet every person with a pleasant face," they tell us. "Receive every person in a cheerful manner," "Be the first to extend greetings to every human being." (*Pirkei Avot* 1:15, 3:16, 4:20).

Beyond "pleasant" and "cheerful," a Nat greeting is a heartfelt embrace, a warming smile, a kind word, and, of course, an encounter with sweetness — and not just from the treats the "candy man" so happily disperses to our delighted youngsters.

A greeting from Nat makes everyone who enters the glow of his presence feel appreciated and welcomed; makes them feel they really belong. A Nat greeting enhances each individual's spiritual experience in the synagogue.

And a special "thank you" to my student and dear friend, Bea, who provides the "honey" that increases Nat's sweetness.

With much love and gratitude to all that you do,

Susan Werk

Education Director