

Our community is beginning to recover from the horrors of the coronavirus. We are starting to re-emerge and return to many of the activities that we hold dear. We look forward to the day that our beloved Young Israel will open its doors to us once again. In the interim, however, we must find ways to continue living and celebrating occasions and events that deserve to be celebrated. One such event is our annual Young Israel of New Rochelle Dinner. Even though we cannot gather person to person, we can gather virtually, and that is exactly what we are doing this evening! So, lift a glass and appreciate that we can come together and enjoy.

This year we are honoring three people who have worked for our community and for the Jewish people diligently with aplomb, grace and creativity.

Gary and Rachel Berger are synonymous with hard work and dedication. Gary is a busy surgeon who still finds time to donate. He has served as a board member and was very instrumental in the installation of our sound system. Gary loves videography and we have delighted in his many videos at *smachot* and other occasions. He is known to many more people as the well-dressed host of Panoply, which is one of the most successful of our shul's functions. He works literally for a year to put together those eclectic subjects, themes and questions. We anxiously look forward to the next Panoply. Gary is also engaged in humanitarian efforts. He volunteered in Haiti after the country was hit by a natural disaster. His humanitarian effort within our own community is legendary. None of his patients here have evidence that he ever worked on them because he leaves no scars! As a resident Kohen he and his entire family take their priestly duties very seriously. We thank Gary for all he has done.

Rachel is a woman of many talents. As a lawyer, she has helped the shul with legal work many times. Rachel served as a hands-on President of Women's League and was responsible for many of their innovations in our community. She also has been very much involved in the annual "Bake Sale" to raise funds for our mikvah. She generated so much excitement about this and did it with flair and great attention to detail and presentation. She is our Kosher Dinner Lady and has brightened up our seclusion with baking and cooking demonstrations. Individually and as a couple we are fortunate to have the Bergers as our prominent members. Mazal tov!

Tonight, we are honoring Yvette Finkelstein for her overarching innovations in our community and well beyond. Yvette and Dr. Jack are longtime members of our shul. Yvette has served in many roles and capacities. As a member of the board her sagacious and well thought out opinions and sentiments were respected and sought after. Her grace and dignity are ever-present. In times of difficulty Yvette reacted with positive and inventive groundbreaking ideas. The Women's Learning Initiative, WIJS, was founded by her. She felt this was a necessary and long overdue project. She conceived of it and launched it and is constantly on the lookout for new scholars to enhance this most successful program.

In the wake of personal tragedy Yvette again used her personal anguish in a positive way. She developed, against great odds and naysaying, a program that would bring joy and light to young people who suffer loss and illness. The "I-Shine program" of Westchester, a branch of Chai Lifeline, is a testament to the character and greatness of Yvette. She stands tall in her accomplishments and spirit of giving. Her creativity, persistence and compassion are qualities we can all learn to emulate. Thank you for all you have done. But most of all thank you for being you! Mazal Tov!