

*Sunday mornings are my favorite part of the week.* This is something younger me never thought I'd say. However, that has been the case since I started working as a volunteer teacher for two hours every Sunday morning at my temple's Hebrew school five years ago. I worked with Kindergarten students for three years. After an incredible year during which I made close connections, I was invited to continue working with the class as they moved up to First grade, and again this year as Second graders. Over the past three years moving up with the same kids, I have enjoyed seeing the growth they've made and the relationships I have formed. Knowing that I have made an influence on their Hebrew School experience has made this volunteering even more import to me.

In addition to volunteering at the Hebrew School, I have had many amazing volunteer opportunities through my temple. I have taken part on two Midnight Runs, bringing tables of food, clothing, and toiletries to distribute to the homeless population in New York City. On the bus ride home after a long night handing out sandwiches and coffee on my second Run, I thought about a homeless man I met who I had bonded with over a shared love of coffee. It really personalized the issue of homelessness for me and taught me that even one person's actions can have a big impact.

Outside of my temple, I have volunteered through the UJA J-Teen Leadership Circle. I joined the Circle in 10th grade after participating in a J-Teen event at my temple putting together shalach manot (food gifts) for families in need for Purim. After becoming involved with the Circle, I served as Vice Chair on the Advocacy Team in 11th grade, and this year as Chair of Advocacy. At monthly two hour meetings throughout the year, I participate in numerous service projects for local organizations including HOPE Community Services' Food Pantry, the Edenwald School for students with learning disabilities, and more. Most recently, I volunteered with Afya over Martin Luther King Jr. Day to sort 2500 pounds of medical supplies that will be sent to help victims of the Los Angeles Wildfires.

Lastly, I have completed two mental health trainings. Through the Teen Mental Health First Aid training, I learned to identify warning signs and seek professional help for peers experiencing mental health challenges. In the Teens Saving Teens workshop, I discussed topics of suicide awarness and substance abuse along with undergoing a NARCAN training. During both of these trainings, I learned the most important thing I can do is to listen and be a good friend.

Volunteering has been an important part of my life and has taught me that even my small actions can have a large impact. I am grateful to have had all of these opportunities and look forward to continuing my volunteerism in the future.