

## Caring & Community

BY DONALD COHEN-CUTLER

### NORTHWESTERN STORIES

“In every time and place, there is commentary to help us understand our world—Jewish and non-Jewish, spiritual and secular,” says Wendy Marcus, music director of Temple Beth Am in Seattle, Washington. The latest commentary for Jews in the Northwest is *Drash Northwest Mosaic*, a new Jewish literary and artistic journal in which, *Drash* editor Marcus explains, “writers, poets, photographers, and other artists comment on Jewish, Northwest, and universal themes, to illuminate and provide connection in our Jewish lives.”

Submissions to *Drash* are evaluated by thirteen volunteer peer reviewers. Temple Beth Am provides space, time, and resources for the submission process; distributes *Drash*; arranges regional summer readings; and has allocated \$1,000 toward the journal’s production.

For more information contact Wendy Marcus at [wendy@templebetham.org](mailto:wendy@templebetham.org).

### CREATIVE CONGREGATIONAL CARING

Temple Oheb Shalom in Baltimore has teamed up with Beth Israel Synagogue, a nearby Conservative congregation, for what Rabbi Steven Fink calls the only program of its kind in North America: “Shleimut (wholeness) is an interdisciplinary team approach to help our congregants in times of physical, spiritual, or emotional need.”

Members of the congregations’ clergy, a congregational nurse, and a social worker team up with members of the *Chevrat Mitzvah* (Caring Committee) to provide twenty to thirty congregants in need with personal and social services on a daily basis. Using a software program called “Hineinu,” both congrega-

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**A TEMPLE OF PEACE:** What do you get when a Jew from the Northeast meets a Muslim from the Middle East in northwest Arkansas? Answer: A beautiful partnership and new building for Temple Shalom of Fayetteville.

Boston native Bill Feldman, 62, arrived in Fayetteville three decades ago to teach math at the University of Arkansas. He’s been Jewishly active ever since. Now he is president of Temple Shalom.

As for Fadil Bayyari, the 55-year-old Palestinian Muslim and general contractor has been active in the region’s civic life since he arrived in 1980.

Even before Feldman and Temple Shalom announced the plans to build a synagogue on an undeveloped plot of land in town, Bayyari—in solidarity—helped pilot them through a year’s worth of contentious zoning hearings. Bayyari then offered to take on the building project at cost and saved the congregation another twenty percent through his skillful management.

“Being from that part of the world, I realized early in my life that I needed to do something to bring the Muslim and Jewish communities together,” Bayyari says. “Building Temple Shalom is the right thing to do. As I built a mosque to help my people, so I should help other people.”

The groundblessing ceremony drew Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Buddhists, and Sufis from across the region (*shown here*: Fadil Bayyari and Bill Feldman share a moment of joy). As a result, the small Jewish and Muslim communities of Fayetteville have drawn closer together. This past fall, for example, the two held a joint break-the-fast for Ramadan and Yom Kippur.

Bayyari hopes that this trend will spread beyond the small Arkansas college town. “It is really sad that we are fighting for the same piece of real estate,” he said, referring to Israel. “The leaders of the Arab countries and Israel are not doing what they need to do for peace, but hopefully we can start it here at the grassroots and bring it back to the old country.”

tions stay in constant contact with community members who have been hospitalized, live in long-term care facilities, or are in emotional or financial distress. The rabbi serves as team leader, assigning calls and visits to a cadre of trained volunteers. In addition, congregants receive flu shots, attend wellness classes, and participate in various health-related educational programs.

“We are now regularly and intensely



involved in the daily needs of our congregants,” Rabbi Fink explains. With nurse Beth Philipson and social worker Anne Hughes on Shleimut’s staff along with members of Temple Oheb Shalom, the two congregations are able to provide a very high level of care. “Both the nurse and social worker are employed only ten hours a week—though they donate much more time,” says Rabbi Fink. “If we could, we would probably

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