

*Liotte Greenbaum, a graduate of Hebrew Union College, has been a beloved religious school teacher and B'nai Mitzvah tutor at The Village Temple since 2007, as well as the director of our Madrich program for teens and Youth Group. Last year Liotte took on the additional responsibility of Director of Engagement, reflecting her deep connections to so many families in the community.*

*Could you describe the Director of Engagement's role at The Village Temple?*

As Director of Engagement of The Village Temple, I work with clergy, staff and lay leaders to create welcoming, inclusive synagogue programs and events for social and learning opportunities for children, families, and adults of the congregation. The job requires listening to our members and prospective members to figure out what different groups are interested in concerning Jewish life and how the Village Temple can meet those needs.

*Liotte also leads our Madrich and Youth Group programs for teens. What is the difference between the programs?*

The Madrich program invites 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders to come to temple for dinner, followed by discussions and activities related to Jewish values, ethics, current events, and leadership skills. Many of the Madrich participants are TAs in the classrooms of our religious school. All 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders can also participate in Village Temple Youth Group (VTYG), a social program for our teens, which includes activities like Broadway shows, Six Flags, bowling, laser tag, trampoline park, ropes course, etc, as well as social action projects within the community.

*What is the aspect of each program that gives you the greatest sense of fulfillment? What are the biggest challenges?*

How do you keep post b'nai mitzvah teenagers (and their families) involved in synagogue life? Engaging teens at the Village Temple is one of the biggest challenges, and also one of the most rewarding aspects of my job. I begin teaching students in the Religious School anywhere between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, though I know most of the younger kids as well. I work with students on Hebrew and Jewish studies, holidays, b'nai mitzvah preparations, and even spend the night in the sanctuary with them at shul-ins (sleepovers). It's great to build strong connections with kids when they are young, and instill within them a love for Jewish life and the Village Temple. By the time the students become b'nai mitzvah, they have a sense of belonging at the VT. It's their second Jewish home. They want to come back as teaching assistants to work with younger kids; they want to participate in Madrich and youth group; they enjoy the connections with their temple friends, and with me as well. I've gotten to teach and encourage so many students as they grow in our community.

*Could you describe your own Jewish journey?*

As the daughter of a Reform rabbi, I grew up in the reform movement. I attended Jewish Day school, Jewish summer camp (as both a camper and staff), served on my temple's NFTY youth group board as president and on the board of my college Hillel and spent a year abroad in Israel. Jewish education has been a lifelong interest, first as a student and then as teacher. I've worked in Jewish institutions ever since high school. I love being a positive Jewish role model.