



Our Sisterhood Mitzvah

**Hanukkah with the women of Congregation B'not Or
(The Jewish inmates at the California Institution for Women)**



Presenter: Fran Sherman

Sisterhood: Temple Beth Sholom of Orange County

Santa Ana, California

Award Category: Program for Communities



Program Description & Purpose



This Tikkun Olam project was triggered when several Sisterhood women attended a Passover Seder at the California Institution for Women. The Jewish inmates commented that they were left out when the Christian groups provided Christmas packages to the other prisoners. Our Sisterhood decided to remedy the situation. All Sisterhood members were encouraged to donate money or purchase toiletries. We packaged them and arranged for them to be brought into the prison.. We required a maximum of 45 bags. Then, at the Hanukah celebration at the prison, the Sisterhood representatives handed out a gift bag to each lady. The affect was most inspiring as the women were moved by the generosity and caring of a group of strangers. Later, at the request of the prison, we were asked to consider note cards, because of security concerns.

These women are a forgotten and ignored part of our community and our Sisterhood felt the need to correct that.



Program Involvement



Members of the Sisterhood as well as members of the congregation purchase the packets of note cards and bring them to the Temple to be collected, sorted and put into clear plastic bags. Each bag must have an equal amount of cards in it. The bags are then picked up and taken to the prison to go through security once the appropriate paperwork has been filled out, well before Hanukkah. Then at a set time during Hanukkah, I, as the liaison (between the Sisterhood and the Residents), and my husband and sometimes a Sisterhood member or our Rabbi participated in a lovely Hanukkah celebration with singing and the lighting of the candles and enjoying Latkes and cookies, sponsored by the Residents and their Rabbi. Then the packets of note cards are distributed.

While many of the Sisterhood women participated, only a few were able to be cleared to enter the prison.



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Temple Beth Sholom Sisterhood gave thirty-six Jewish women at the California Institution for Women in Corona gifts for Chanukah. The women are members of Congregation B'not Or-Women of Light at the prison. Members of the TBS Sisterhood were asked to contribute toiletry items to create the gift bags. Chairwoman Sylvia Borovay was moved to action when visiting CIW during Shavuot. "The gift bags brought joy and happiness during the holiday season," said Bonnie Wenneberg, Temple Beth Sholom Sisterhood president. Women of Reform Judaism Pacific District Past President Fran Sherman and Chairwoman Sylvia Borovay show the Chanukah gift bags.





Program Involvement

***Our Sisterhood Board after assembling
all the gifts***



2013

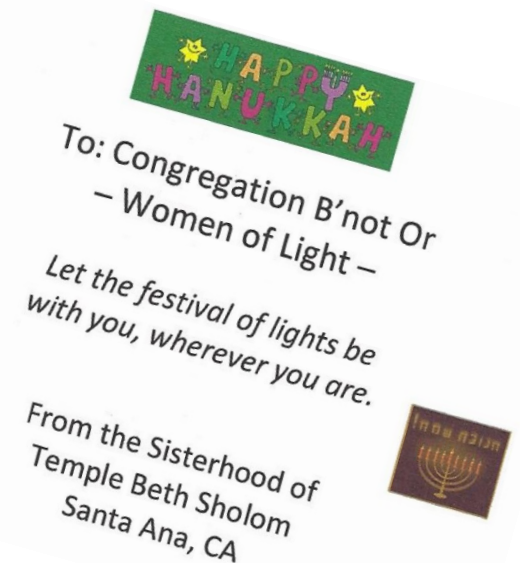


The Request to the Sisterhood Members (2018)



NOTE CARDS FOR CONGREGATION B'NOT OR (Women of Light)

As in years past, TBS Sisterhood has been asked by Congregation B'not Or (Women of Light) at the California Institution for Women in Corona/Chino to donate items for the women during the Hanukkah season. This year the request has been made for stationary note cards that the women can use for their correspondence. The note cards should be blank inside, so the women can write their own messages. The opportunity to write notes to their friends and family is especially appreciated by the women. If you would like to donate a packet of note cards, please bring them to the Membership Event on October 28 where they will be collected. If you have any questions about this caring Mitzvah, please contact Fran Sherman.



(The card on the right was included in every gift bag.)



The Request to the Sisterhood Members (2019)



Dear Sisters,

We have once again been asked to continue with our Mitzvah project of providing Hanukkah Gifts to Congregation B'not Or - Women of Light at the California Institution for Women located in Corona, CA

We have been participating in this Mitzvah for the past 6 years.

Last year we provided "note cards" with the inside being blank so the note cards can be used for any occasion.

The women were so thrilled to receive the note cards especially for many who cannot afford to purchase any stationary.

Last year Rabbi Cohen and I handed out the Hanukkah gifts to the women, and the year before, Denise Silberman and I handed out the gifts. They couldn't thank us enough for our concern and generosity.

A requirement from the Prison is that they have to be new and in their original package from the store.

Our Paid-up Membership Brunch on Sunday, October 27th provides a wonderful opportunity to bring your "note cards".

Yours in Sisterhood,

Fran Sherman





The Thank You's

Thank you
for thinking about
me. Love always,
Kara

Everything that
you do for this
community is
deeply appreciated
In Ourselves
Lito

Thank you for
your kindness

you are deeply
loved & appreciated,
always.
Moj Richardson

Your kindness is our blessing, Shalom
may G-d bless you
today and always!
Rebecca

Thank you!
Katie Taylor

Much
respect
Jen

My heart is touched
by the warmth
& kindness
you bring
to us women
& to our ORJ
Christine

Thank you for
your loving
generosity!
Sharon

Thank you for caring.
Doris

[a thousand
Thank you's
Dorota] thank you
- Amanda

God Bless you
Isaac 9:10

Making others happy
comes naturally to you,
and this is shown by all the things
that you say and do.

And so, for all your kindness
and for your warm and caring touch,
this special note's intended
to thank you very much!

Thank you!
Xiaoqin

Thank You

We are so very blessed
for your kindness,
Sam Randall

Thank you
a blessed Thandee
Charlotte Key

Xo Kimi
Buntyn

Dear Temple Beth Shalom Sisterhood -
I want to express my deep felt gratitude for
the pens and blue bags donated to CIW's
general population (G.P.)
July 4, 2015
Unfortunately, B'not Or gals were not informed
by the organizing body of the donation
from the Jewish community, that we, along
with G.P. received on March 17, 2015. We found this out
last Thursday!
Please know that I speak for all B'not
Or members that your gifts and care for us
are deeply felt.
Shalom,
Robyn Sotelo (Adina Sinche)



And more Thank You's

December 3, 2013

Thank you for
so much love
Sarah

Thank you for
thinking of us -
Sarah

Thank you for
your kindness -
Jody

We are Blessed
to have All of You
in Our Lives.
Debbie

Debbie
may G-d Bless you
Today and Always!
Katie Taylor & Rebecca W.

Chag Shemach!
Thank you
for being
all you all are!
To all of us!
- M. Lichardson

Thank you for
support for our
community friends
- M. Lichardson

Thank you for
sharing Hanukkah
with us Charbi Kay

Thank you!
Xiao

wishing you a
wonderful holiday season
You have blessed us, thank you
for your kindness, Sharon...

I am so very grateful
you've made this
smaller more fun
Thank you for being for us women at
CW, we are grateful for your support
Sarah Smith

Thank you
for
much of us!
Thank you
- Amanda

Ladies ~
Thank you for
your kindness and the
thoughtful gestures with
the gifts you brought to
the women at CW. Your
light forever shine in our
hearts!
mom

Thank you
our dear sisters
were very thankful
for your Hanukkah
celebration!

Jon
I've enjoyed
my time with you
Chag Samach

Sisters!
Your kind
words enlighten in
Thank you for your
gifts this holiday
season!
Hanukkah
Judy Shafar

Hoping
to be with
you next Hanukkah.
Thank you
- Jon

Dear Friends
Thank you for the
lovely gifts. I was
touched by your kindness.
Linda Sue

Thank you
for sharing with us
and for the Hanukkah
treats. Your presence
infuses my soul with
In appreciation,
Life
Dear Sisters
Your support and generosity
is so deeply appreciated. Knowing
you care brings additional light
to our lives
Thank you
Theresa (11)
Katie Taylor



In Conclusion

Inmates tend to be a forgotten and ignored part of our community. After attending a Seder luncheon at the California Institution for Women, the Sisterhood members became aware of the needs of our sisters in prison. They had the opportunity to sit and schmooze with the “residents”.

The mitzvah of gifts for Hanukkah became an important part of our social action program. Helping the women to realize that they are part of our community and we care has meant a lot to them and their rehabilitation. Contact with the community is important.

Also, with some assistance, the women of B’not Or (Women of Light) were accepted as Congregation B’not Or, an affiliate of the URJ, one of the few prison ministries in the Union.