



*The Rabbi's Desk:*

*Strategic Planning: It's About Community Conversations*

If you will it, it is no dream! When Theodor Herzl intoned these famous words, he helped push forward a process that ultimately resulted in the establishment of the State of Israel. Our goal is a bit less lofty but no less important. The Orangetown Jewish Center community wants to ensure our spiritual growth and stability into the next decades. If we will it, it is no dream!

How do we will it? The technical term is Strategic Planning. See the first monthly update on the OJC Strategic Planning program written by Chair Nohra Leff later in this *Shaliach*. Contact Nohra if you want to be involved now. Strategic Planning leads an organization to implement a vision through phases of task force work: data gathering, community conversations, creating strategies, and prioritizing goals.

**Community conversations** – that's where you come in! A meaningful plan will be created only if we are informed about the motivations, passions and needs of our synagogue community. Maybe you do not think about these categories – motivations, passions, needs – very often. You belong to a synagogue that meets your requirements and you are satisfied. But what if you went a bit deeper? What if you could be a part of a conversation in which you were asked to add your ideas to the development of a plan for the OJC?

We think that two important things would happen. First, we would benefit from knowing your opinions; after all, that is how we formulate a foundation of who we are now and who we need to become. Second, you might benefit from articulating what your religious community means to you. In both of these benefits, you would be creating a positive, forward-looking story, for the OJC and for yourself and your family.

The OJC has a multitude of easily identifiable strengths: 1) a warm and dynamic *ruach* (spirit) based on a sense of welcoming among our multigenerational community; 2) many pathways into participation that include prayer, learning, *Tikkun Olam*, and attachment to Israel; and 3) strong relationships of congregants with clergy and staff members. As in any community, we have challenges as well: engaging the uninvolved, enhancing our financial stability, being proactive in the ways we communicate, and maintaining intimacy in a fairly large synagogue community. We do not want to rest on our accomplishments. The vision of the Strategic Plan is to move from good toward great!

Our congregation has a meaningful legacy and tradition. We dream big in the best possible way: honoring our history while also planning for the future. Join us, feel the excitement, tell us your story! Join a motivating, energizing process. Answer **yes** when you are asked to attend a Community Conversation in the home of a congregant in your neighborhood. We cannot wait to step forward into the future together!

*Beydidut, Rabbi Paula Mack Drill*

## *From the President's Pen*



Shalom Chaverim!

***Hope is not a strategy.*** This was the theme of my Kol Nidre appeal at the start of the Jewish New Year. Now, at the start of the New Year 2012, I am thrilled that the OJC has started a strategic planning process that will put this idea into action. This is a very exciting time for us as a community. The New Year, secular or religious, is often a time for us to reflect on our lives and to assess what we can do better in the coming year. We are fortunate that the OJC can look at itself from a place of strength, and build on all that is good, as we look toward an even better future.

The OJC Strategic Planning Committee has begun its work to set out our short-term and long-term dreams, visions and goals. This is the beginning of a year-long project. Nohra Leff is the coordinator of this Strategic Planning Committee. I would like to thank Nohra for her commitment to this project and for her endless enthusiasm and dreaming. She will be keeping our congregation apprised of the work of the Strategic Planning committee each month in the *Shaliach*. In fact, Nohra's premier article is in this edition, so please read it for a more complete description of the Strategic Planning process.

I encourage each of us to be part of this unique process and opportunity. This is a community effort. Please respond to inquiries regarding task forces, parlor meetings, surveys and discussions that will be taking place as part of this process. Feel free to contact me or any of the task force chairs with question, comments, concerns or suggestions. We want your input. Together we can successfully evaluate who we are and who we want to be, and we will create the plans for our future success and growth.

In the coming year may all of our hopes be realized!

B'Shalom,  
*Kim Lori Sokol*

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## SHALOM OJC 5780 (2020)

**Imagine it is now 5780 on the Jewish Calendar--2020 in the U.S.  
STOP EVERYTHING . . . Did you hear me? IMAGINE IT IS NOW 5780!**

**We have now been transported to the year 5780:**

In 5780 the OJC is now engaged in strategic planning for the year 5790. What a great way to continue the great legacy of the OJC by having so many new congregants involved in the process. We have hired the best strategists and consultants to help predict all the rapid changes that will be occurring in the next 10 years. We are grateful to those who led the way back in 1997 and again in 2012 when, looking back, change seemed to be so much slower than now. (But was it? It certainly seemed very rapid back in 2012.)

We are chatting with both our local and our global followers. The first of several sets of questions we are asking is: "How do you think we reached where we now are in 5780?"

1. Rabbi Scheff's influence has grown throughout the world. Thanks to the advanced computerized communication system installed by the OJC in 2012, he now communicates, teaches Torah, and gives sermons that reach over 100,000 people worldwide each week.

2. Rabbi Drill's Tikkun Olam campaign to reach out to others in need continues at great momentum. Our original Mitzvah Day is now a combined effort, not just in Rockland and northern NJ, but, thanks to our ability to travel long distances at fast speeds in our modern "flying cars," throughout the states of NY, NJ, CT, and other locales. "Mitzvah Day" has grown to be not just a day, but a daily event, with congregants leading activities throughout the region on a daily basis. Our Tikkun Olam efforts have reached as far as Israel, which certainly needs our help as a thriving power in the world today. It has become so easy to travel that visiting Israel is like going to visit Grandma--in fact, Grandma has made aliyah to Israel!
3. Back at our original Orangeburg site a lot has happened:
  - a. Our professional team has expanded to meet the huge and sophisticated needs of our congregants and seekers. We have a magnetic Cantor, an Executive Director, adult educators, and child life experts for our thriving nursery and day school.
  - b. Our in-house caterers delight all with their extensive life cycle support capabilities. The meals turned out by our new expanded kitchens on the second floor of the Simcha Room building are the rave of kosher connoisseurs for miles around.
  - c. Our marketing database is complete, allowing us to spread our branding as "The Place to Be." Our advertising slogans are "The OJC loves children" and "The OJC cares."
  - d. The OJC's use of technology has us now communicating seamlessly and personally with congregants, seekers of a meaningful Jewish experience, and even just the curious throughout our community and the world, providing previously unthinkable very personal connections to the OJC, to Judaism, to Jewish learning, to Jewish action and to so much more. We continue to be a house of Worship, Study, and Learning but the reach of our house is so much farther than in the past.
  - e. Our endowment, whose raising was one of our great successes of the past ten years, is now able to pay the vast majority of our staff and infrastructure costs. This allows us in 2020 to employ the very best in both staff and tools while eliminating our year-to-year scary dependence on dues and fundraising to meet our operating needs. This also allows us to invest very strategically and tactically in helping others and strengthening and perpetuating the OJC.

So, you ask, "How did all this happen?" That's a great question, especially because we want to learn from it and do it again and again, aiming even higher for 2030 (5790). Well, let me tell how we got so far:

Way back on September 11, 2011, 27 OJC leaders gathered at Camp Ramah as the OJC 2020 Strategic Planning Committee to kick-off the process of moving the OJC into the next decade. The meeting was facilitated by Robert Leventhal, a leading Jewish institution strategic planning consultant. It was a magical training meeting in which the members were totally immersed. They left eager to get on with planning for the OJC of 2020. The Committee decided to recruit task forces to begin the detailed data gathering and initial planning in major areas. After the kick-off meeting, Rabbi Scheff, Rabbi Drill, OJC President Kim Lori Sokol, First VP Amy Nelson, and Strategic Planning Chair Nohra M. Leff met to choose key task forces (seven were identified), identify task force leaders, and plan more of the next steps.

Then on November 22, 2011, the planning task force leaders met for training and adjustments, as necessary, of the task force alignments. The task forces and leaders:

Organizational Behavior/Leadership—Andy Blau

Marketing—Andrea Weinberger

Finances—Lloyd Fishman

School and Youth—Pam Berg and Staci Gelb

Welcoming and Engagement—Larry Rosenberg

Technology and Engagement—Howard Price

Planning for Jewish Life (Worship, Education, Programming, Remote Davening, and Learning)—  
Ken Leff

The Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, aided by senior staff, were the major decision makers throughout the process.

**Okay, you are now transported back to 2012:** Watch this column next month for more of the story of how we reached 2020 so successfully and to learn about what you can do to help us to plan and build an even more wonderful future for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, the OJC, and the Jewish community.

*Nohra M. Leff Chair, Strategic Planning Committee*