

# Dedicated donations

By **Ian Zelaya** - October 29, 2014



*Students at Temple Micah collect and sort packaged underwear for the homeless. Photo courtesy of Temple Micah*

Thanks to a close family friend, 13-year-old Dahlia Frier is aware of the damage Typhoon Haiyan wreaked upon the Philippines in 2013. So for her Oct. 25 bat mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Israel in Rockville, she raised funds to help rebuild a village school that had been destroyed.

Her mother's childhood nanny, whom Frier has known all her life and who now takes care of her great-grandmother, grew up in that Philippine village.

"We figured if we could raise enough money, we could rebuild" and even improve the school, said the eighth-grader at Julius West Middle School in Rockville.

Using a fundraising website and sending out emails to as many friends and family members as she could, Frier had

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Frier, who loves to read, participates in Girl Scouting and is trying her hand at knitting, is one of many young people who dedicate their bar or bat mitzvah projects to helping people they normally would never meet.

Liam Miller, whose bar mitzvah was Sept. 6 at Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold, raised money for an organization that matches wounded United States veterans with a dog of their own that is trained to help them physically as well as boost their spirits.

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The eighth-grader at Monarch Academy in Glen Burnie who loves Taekwondo raised about \$750 for Hero Dogs.

Temple Micah in D.C. has taken the bar mitzvah project to a whole other level. Students in the sixth grade there do a class project as they prepare to undertake their own b'nai mitzvah project the following year. This year's class hopes to collect at least 10,000 pairs of boxers, briefs, bras and thermal underwear for homeless people.

This all started back in 1999, when congregant Martha Adler was appointed Temple Micah's liaison with the Community Council for the Homeless, now known as Friendship Place. It is located on Wisconsin Avenue in the District.

Adler recalled speaking with officials there and asking how best her congregation could help. A nun told her that people are always donating shoes, coats, blankets and hats but rarely underwear. Adler recalls the woman telling her how difficult it is to have dignity without clean underwear.

For several years after that, Adler took it upon herself, often with the help of a bar mitzvah student, to collect as much underwear as she could during the High Holidays.

The first year they collected 1,000 items, she said.

As the project grew, so did the number of collections and the workload. That's when Temple Micah decided it would become a dedicated sixth-grade project. The 20 children in this year's class had a party as they stapled the flyers to

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The collection “is actually a very important community-building partnership we have at Friendship Place,” she said. Adler has led blood drives, been involved in many aspects of Temple Micah and is a synagogue board member. She calls the underwear drive “the one I am most proud of.”

Friendship Place is equally happy. Last year’s collection of 8,000 items was used up in 10 months, she said.

“The need is there,” she said. Beyond *tikkun olam*, there is Jewish text to support the project. According to Adler, Rabbi Daniel Zemel has repeatedly cited a verse from Mishnah Sukkot to congregants involved in the underwear drive. It reads, “They made wicks from the worn out underwear and girdles of the priests and with them they made torches and candlesticks and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect their light.”

[spollak@washingtonjewishweek.com](mailto:spollak@washingtonjewishweek.com)

@SuzannePollak

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