

# StudioCityPatch



Faith & Charity

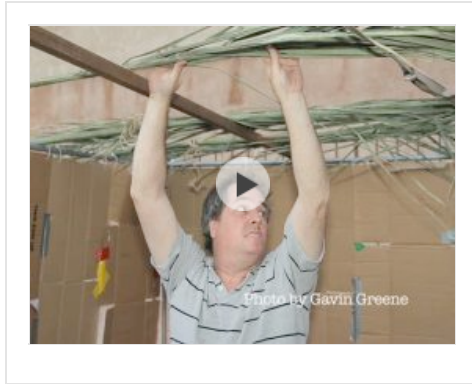
By **Linda Rubin** September 29, 2010

OPINION, VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

## Family Promise Earns \$9,000 for Homeless with Box City Fundraiser

Adat Ari El builds a sukkah for their shelter. You might not expect to find a traditional Jewish sukkah erected in the parking lot of a Presbyterian church, but this year that was the perfect spot for congregants from [Adat Ari El](http://www.adatariel.org/) (<http://www.adatariel.org/>) in Studio City to build their hut.

Among their number were nine teens from the temple's United Synagogue Youth group along with their leader Julie Levine, and her assistant Matt Chesler, Abraham's Tent chairperson Ruth Devine and her daughter, and the congregation's rabbi, Deborah Silver.



During the week of [Sukkot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot>), the Feast of Tabernacles, Jews are expected to build a temporary dwelling with a roof of flora through which the stars can be seen at night. It was fortuitous that this year Sukkot coincided with [Family Promise](http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/about/index.html) (<http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/about/index.html>)'s major fundraiser, Box City.

The temple's Box City sukkah is made from cartons that once held Kedem Kosher wine and Gold's Horseradish; the roof is covered with palm fronds. (See the sukkah going up in the video.)

Adat Ari El is one of 23 faith communities who feed and house up to 20 families a year in cooperation with Family Promise. All the families served have children and are temporarily suffering through hard times.

According to Family Promise Board President Jennifer Greene, the average time it takes a family to recover their footing with help from the agency's intense social work, job training and housing referrals is 60 days.

Box City allows supporters and their children to experience for one night the hardship entailed in sleeping on the street.

Says Greene, "It makes you think and be grateful for what you have."

On the steamy evening of Sept. 25, more than 200 congregants of participating churches and synagogues converged on the parking lot of First Presbyterian Church of Burbank to erect temporary shelters in which half of them would dwell overnight, to raise funds and raise awareness of the plight of homeless families in the East San Fernando Valley. It's a serious issue but there are also some fun and games. The movie *Blind Side* was screened, kids participated in raffles for prizes, and the Laker girls signed autographs.

Awards were handed out for best shelter with first prize going to the Martinez family for *Sponge Bob's Under the Sea* home.

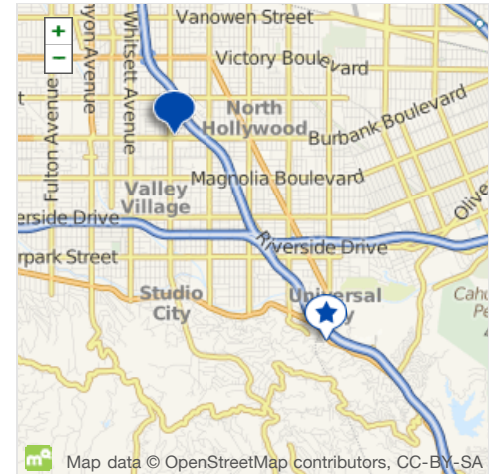
(See the designs and listen to my interview with Jamie Martinez on the video.)

Jared Taylor raised the most money at \$600 and became the Mayor of Box City. Bob Nicol won a gift certificate for being the oldest participant spending the night. And [Adat Ari El](http://studiocity.patch.com/listings/temple-adat-ari-el) (<http://studiocity.patch.com/listings/temple-adat-ari-el>) and Bellarmine-Jefferson High School Key Club tied for most participants.

As the sun went down Rabbi Silver and Rabbi Richard Flom of Burbank Temple Emmanu El invited all assembled to participate in a havdalah service, marking the separation of the Sabbath from the rest of the week.

With Rabbi Silver on guitar and Rabbi Flom explaining, and three of the younger kids enlisted to hold up the traditional braided candle, wine and spice box, the community formed a circle and hummed along to the prayers and singing.

After their soup kitchen dinner and a night on the hot hard asphalt of the parking lot, Box City residents had to be up and out of there by 7 a.m. "and you could not tell we had been there!" reports Ruth Devine.



Says Julie Levine of her USY group, "They...really enjoyed being able to celebrate Sukkot in a new way this year, by actually sleeping in the Sukkah and extending hospitality to the other residents of Box City.

The event raised about \$9,000 for Family Promise according to event organizer and board member Linda Taylor and donations will probably keep flowing in for a while, practically all of it profit since expenses for the event were almost all donated.

Jennifer Greene sees another bright spot, "There were quite a few people there, coming from all different walks of life and yet enjoying each other—sometimes that is more of an accomplishment in and of itself in our divisive times. It is a victory whenever people with different backgrounds and convictions can come together in unity over the same issue."

**Were you there? Tell us about it. [Tell us in the comments.](#)**

Interested in a follow-up to this article?

***About this column:** This column highlights the activities among all the various and diverse faiths located in the area. Linda Rubin will not only include highlights of the temples, churches, synagogues and houses of worship, but also the charity organizations and volunteer opportunities in the neighborhood.*

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