

StudioCityPatch



Faith & Charity

By **Linda Rubin** September 23, 2010

OPINION, ARTS

Adat Ari El Members Reach out to Homeless Families

Parents and children participate in Shoes That Fit and Box City.

Brittany Waters, age 8, wears a size 3-1/2.

Lindsey Brown, 10, wears a 5. Her brothers Christopher, 11, and Ryan, wear 5 and 10-1/2.

These children and their families are homeless, living in transitional housing in the East San Fernando Valley. But thanks to members of [Adat Ari El](#)

(<http://studiocity.patch.com/listings/temple-adat-ari-el>) and their social outreach committee, Abraham's Tent

(<http://www.adatariel.com/index.php?>



PHOTOS (15)



[option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=38](#)), with some help from Shoes That Fit (<http://www.shoesthatfit.org/>), the kids will all have new tennis shoes and socks for the start of the school year.

The mandate of Abraham's Tent was set by its former chair, [Stephanie Klasky-Gamer](http://www.lafh.org/staff.html) (<http://www.lafh.org/staff.html>), president of L.A. Family Housing (<http://www.lafh.org/>), and the temple's senior rabbi, [Rabbi Jonathan Jaffe Bernhard](http://www.adatariel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=69) (http://www.adatariel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=69), to reflect the values of Judaism's founding patriarch and matriarch: "Just as [Abraham](http://www.jewfaq.org/origins.htm#Abraham) (<http://www.jewfaq.org/origins.htm#Abraham>) and [Sarah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah>) opened their tent to provide food and shelter to wandering strangers, so too does our Adat Ari El community open its hearts, minds, wallets, and doors to help Los Angeles respond to the housing crisis in our city."

According to the [Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority](http://www.lahsa.org/) (<http://www.lahsa.org/>), as of 2007 (<http://www.lahsa.org/docs/homelesscount/2007/Executive%20Summary.pdf>) approximately 83 percent of homeless people in Los Angeles County were unsheltered, sleeping in the streets, alleys, autos, encampments, overpasses, doorways, tents, unconverted garages, sheds and the like while only 17 percent were living in either emergency shelters or transitional housing programs. Near one-fourth of the homeless population were families.

Ruth Devine, the current chair of Abraham's Tent, takes the mandate to heart while also working to widen the tent flaps to encompass works in other crucial areas.

"Adat Ari El's membership is very diverse, having been drawn to our community by our schools, religious programming, and social activities. My goal is to provide projects with a broad range of appeal to our congregants so that everyone will find a community service, social action project, or cause that appeals to them. I am especially interested in activities in which families can participate together," she says.

This month, Adat families will have the opportunity to make a material donation through Shoes that Fit and also raise money for homeless services by living in a "[Box City](http://www.familypromiseseefv.org/news_events/box_city/index.html) (http://www.familypromiseseefv.org/news_events/box_city/index.html)" for one night.

After [Yom Kippur](http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm) (<http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm>) services, congregants will be asked to pick up a shoe card that will show the name, gender and shoe size of a youngster in need. Devine hopes young children will get involved in shopping for tennies and socks for "their" child. After all, they're the ones who know what kids like!

Shoes that Fit, a non-profit headquartered in Claremont, Calif., has supplied the temple with a start-up kit and a measuring chart but, says Lee Kane, Program Manager, "The folks at Temple Adat Ari El are the feet on the ground who do the work." Shoes that Fit has helped local [grassroots chapters](http://www.shoesthatfit.org/How-We-Work) (<http://www.shoesthatfit.org/How-We-Work>) supply 800,000 pairs of shoes to schoolchildren in 35 states. "Our main goal is to have school age kids in school be comfortable, focusing on their studies not their circumstances," says Kane.

Last year members of Adat Ari El donated 88 pairs of shoes to children at the [Sidney M. Irmas Transitional Living Center](#)

(<http://www.lafh.org/facilities/irmas.html>) and [Comunidad Cesar Chavez](http://www.lafh.org/3events/dedicationcesar.htm), (<http://www.lafh.org/3events/dedicationcesar.htm>) an emergency shelter in downtown Los Angeles. This year shoes will also be delivered to [Family Promise](http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/about/index.html) (<http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/about/index.html>), which, with their [Interfaith Hospitality Network](http://www.familypromise.org/program/interfaith-hospitality-network) (<http://www.familypromise.org/program/interfaith-hospitality-network>), shelters families in houses of worship. This service perfectly reflects the values of Adat Ari El's Devine.

"For me personally the Shoes That Fit program allowed me to bring together some very important aspects of my life, my synagogue life, and my work life as the Donations Coordinator for L.A. Family Housing whose children will be receiving the shoes, and my volunteer life with Family Promise where some of the shoes will also go," she shares.

Adat Ari El is one of Family Promise's partners in the interfaith network along with [Faith Presbyterian Church](http://studiocity.patch.com/listings/faith-presbyterian-church-of-valley-village) (<http://studiocity.patch.com/listings/faith-presbyterian-church-of-valley-village>) in Studio City, and a couple of dozen other faith communities in the East San Fernando Valley, which share the responsibility for housing up to four families a year. Network Director Jacqueline White describes one family now in the program:

This family is typical of a growing number of East San Fernando Valley families who have full-time jobs yet do not have the savings to secure first month's rent and a security deposit. In order to have shelter, these families spend outrageous amounts of money on motels every night. Family Promise was very lucky to help this family before motel stays engulfed all of their money.

The congregations provide meals and shelter for the families who actually sleep and eat in the churches, synagogues and mosques while receiving social services, counseling and job training in a day center during business hours. The families stay in each location two weeks and then move on to the next.

To raise money for Family Promise and get the merest taste of what it feels like to be homeless, Adat Ari El families will be camping in a makeshift [Box City](http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/news_events/box_city/index.html) (http://www.familypromiseesfv.org/news_events/box_city/index.html) in the parking lot of [First Presbyterian Church of Burbank](http://www.burbankpres.org/) (<http://www.burbankpres.org/>) from 4:00 p.m. on Sept. 25 to 7:00 a.m. Sept. 26. Each group gets to erect a temporary shelter, funded by sponsor pledges, which they can decorate to their heart's content. Past shelters have included a tree house and a model White House. Adat Ari El kids will be erecting a [sukkah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkah) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkah>), appropriate for the week's [sukkot](http://studiocity.patch.com/articles/jewish-holy-days-where-in-studio-city-are-they-reflecting-repenting-rejoicing) (<http://studiocity.patch.com/articles/jewish-holy-days-where-in-studio-city-are-they-reflecting-repenting-rejoicing>) holiday. They expect Adat Ari El's new rabbi, [Rabbi Deborah Silver](http://www.adatariel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=70) (http://www.adatariel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=70), to join them.

The program of fun, games and movies may distract somewhat from the rest of the evening's experience when the kids and their parents line up for a soup kitchen supper and then hunker down for the night on the hot, hard asphalt crowded with hundreds of other families. By seven o'clock the next morning they will have to be out of there and their boxes gone.

This year's community work has only just begun for Adat Ari El. Says Ruth Devine, "The concept for Abraham's Tent is founded on the four principals central to Jewish life: *Tzedakah* (<http://www.ajula.edu/Content/ContentUnit.asp?CID=1526&u=5395&t=0>) - Righteous Giving, *Tikkun Olam* (http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Tikkun_Olam_Repairing_the_World_.shtml) - Advocacy, *Chinuch* - Education, *Gemilut Hasadim* (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/gemilut_hasadim.html) - Direct Service. These principals are studied, discussed, and lived by our congregation."

And she reminds me that Mitzvah Day is just around the corner.

What do you think about this unique charity? 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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