

An Open Letter to our HIWP Families, from Talia Metson

Dear Friends,

Growing up the daughter and granddaughter of shul presidents, the tone that shul leadership sets is something I value. I spent most of my childhood being playfully kidded from the bima by my Dad and other leaders of Fleetwood synagogue in Mt Vernon, where I grew up. I associate that relaxed, familial atmosphere with a warm, welcoming, haimish community - one where everyone is on a first name basis and thoroughly involved in the daily lives of their shul family.

Given this background, I was pleasantly surprised when during my first week of shul two Augusts ago, then vice-president David Kahn called me out from the bima to not only welcome me and my family to White Plains, but more importantly to make fun of me (and really all of you) for the fact that I was the first person to sign up for high holiday seats that year. Me, a new member, had beaten everyone else to the tickets. Needless to say I was a little over eager about joining a new shul. It was right then and there, that I knew my husband Marc and I had made the right decision in moving to White Plains and had found our new community.

In the last 2 years HIWP has truly become our home and you, the members of this shul, have become our family. Whether it's the fact that my kids race downstairs to their amazing youth groups, the countless Shabbat and holiday meals we've shared with new friends, the hand-me-down clothes, couches, bikes, you name it, that people have shared with us, the generous baby meals and well wishes when our daughter Hannah was born and the list goes on and on. My initial instinct that first Shabbat has proven correct time and time again; we could not feel luckier to be a part of this very special community.

But being a part of this community means engaging in the give and take of shul membership - services, programs and classes are offered while dues and volunteering are requested in return. When a new family moves into the community, members welcome them with their first Shabbat meal and God forbid, when a member loses a loved one, people rally around the mourner, providing meals, paying Shiva calls and helping to make a minyan. As a member of the Board this past year, I witnessed countless individuals invest huge amounts of time and effort to ensure each and every decision made on behalf of the membership was done in the most thoughtful and inclusive manner.

All of that being said, when the ReBuild HIWP Campaign Committee asked to meet with Marc and me to discuss a potential donation to the building campaign, we knew we wanted to make a meaningful contribution to reflect the impact the shul has had on our lives and that we know it will continue to have for years to come. As the parents of three young children and the owners of a new home, the decision to donate and the amount we ultimately agreed upon, was a difficult one. The key for Marc and me came down to, meaningful for us. And that's the point. In order to continue to foster this amazing community, every single one of us needs to be a part of the ReBuild effort. Whether you come every week or once a year, whether you are a brand new member or a long time fixture, whether you live in White Plains or visit occasionally, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to improve our shul and ensure the future of our community.

At a congregational meeting On November 20th, you will all have an opportunity to see the updated plans, or if you can't make the meeting you can call to schedule a meeting with a member of the ReBuild committee. We all need to feel as though we contributed to the ReBuild effort to ensure buy-in for the future - so services can be held in a beautiful new sanctuary, programs can be offered in new classrooms, strollers and wheelchairs can easily access the building through new entrance ramps and most importantly, the warm familial feeling I got on my first Shabbat, can continue for many years to come. No matter how big or how small (although the bigger the better) if the donation is meaningful to you, then it will make an impact. The time is now, to invest in our community for the future. Please join me in contributing. Please join us on November 20th to hear more about the ReBuilding of HIWP.

Thank You.

Talia Metson