

Cynthia "Cyndy" Friedland, "founder extraordinaire"

Overdue homage to founder of Congregation Sha'arey Ha-Yam



Cyndy Friedland

By Rosalie Donadio

Born and raised in Binghamton, New York where her work ethic and business acumen developed as a result of involvement in the family business: a small chain of ladies' apparel stores. Cyndy graduated from Binghamton Central High School and Stevens Business College in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Her administrative skills lead her then to Supervisory and Customer Service positions in major companies in the New York and New Jersey area.

Cyndy then entered yet another phase of management; this time as a mother. Cyndy's son, Justin, was born in Teaneck. She became an active member of Temple

Emeth and as their Chairperson of the Early Childhood Center, she utilized her business skills, revamped the pre-school, hired a new director, staff and as a result, the school evolved to become one of the top pre-schools in the area.

Cyndy's temple involvement was a training ground, unknowingly at the time, for the eventual development of Congregation Sha'arey Ha-Yam of Southern Ocean County. Having been an active member of Temple Emeth, she participated in the early childhood program as well as the finance, ritual, religious school, house and youth committees: these were her first steps in learning of the Reform Movement

of Judaism. Cyndy's conversion to Judaism in 1991 was a serious commitment; could anyone doubt that today?

The move to Southern Ocean County became a reality for the Friedland family and Cyndy experienced separation anxiety in parting with her spiritual family. Finding a new home of worship in Southern Ocean County proved a difficult task so a seed was planted and Cyndy embarked on a quest. There was no Reform Congregation in a 20-mile area and the Days of Awe were approaching; where could she worship? On a mission, she founded the Reform Jewish Community of Barnegat, now known as Congregation Sha'arey Ha-Yam (translation: Gates of the Sea). Cyndy is the founder and was president of the congregation for seven years. During this time she has brought many people a spiritual home which provided several friendships and sense of community that, of course, would not have come to pass without her devotion and her vigor in single-handedly creating and maintaining this congregation.

Another facet of her life has been spent as an active member of Business and Professional Women of Southern Ocean County. Serving as Vice President and President once again constructed the path for Cyndy's nomination as the Business and Professional Women of New Jersey's Vice President. While diligently working for women's rights and assisting with phi-

lanthropic endeavors, this association has become an important element in Cyndy's life. Currently Cyndy is an active Real Estate Associate with Oceanside Realty on Long Beach Island's Harvey Cedars and Surf City offices, promoting rentals and sales on Long Beach Island and mainland towns from Tuckerton to Forked River.

But the most important factor to Cyndy and to the Congregation was its creation. For in the year 2003, Cyndy Friedland, Jew by choice, initiated the first construction of a Reform Jewish Congregation in Barnegat. Cyndy pursued her quest of creating a congregation and focused on a search for unaffiliated Jews in the area. This was a difficult accomplishment for a single parent raising an adolescent male and working in real estate, in of itself, a demanding profession.

Undaunted, she continued with a relentless purpose and she did find them. Thus from an inauspicious beginning, this congregation (Congregation Sha'arey Ha-Yam) was born. Despite economic setbacks, trials and tribulations of dealing with the myriad of things going awry in creating any organization, the membership growth continued. Cyndy, her investigatory power no less than that possessed by Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Dick Tracy, "found" a site for which no fee would have to be paid. An important point given the

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Cynthia

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fact that there were but a handful of members: the nursing home in Barnegat on West Bay Avenue. Within a few years, she found the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in Manahawkin. Amateur history buffs are usually aware that most houses of worship, from ancient Greece and Rome throughout medieval Europe are constructed on sites of prior religious faiths, i.e. the churches of Palermo were built as mosques and their minarets became bell towers. And like synagogues in Cuba, and other areas without Jewish sites, services were held in their church.

We meet together, we pray together, we commiserate together, we support each other through *simchas, mitzvoth, shivas*, etc. We are a community and this is a very "Jewish thing" continuing from the sands of the Sinai; the *mullahs* of Algeria; the golden years of Toledo; the *shetels* of Eastern Europe; to America, provider of opportunity and hope;

and also to Israel, the "home-land", the answer to the Jewish agony of the 20th century. Our community was created by use of the telephone, letters, contacts, networking via Cyndy Friedland, first President and *founder extraordinaire*, who remains an incredible figurehead still, "the go to" person for all forms of tsoris.

Cyndy still retains that special expertise in fund raising: *diplo-macy*; organization; *diplo-macy*; public relations: *diplo-macy*. In a Jewish organization, *diplo-macy* is THE factor. She juggles all this with a proficiency not even witnessed in the United Nations. In fact, they could really use Cyndy, but she would never leave us. Born to a Jewish American father and a Russian (non Jewish) mother, her son was born and found profound joy committing to a Jewish life. How fortunate we are to have her. She always has time for everyone; their problems, their ire, their issues and never displays con-ternation or impatience (she may feel it, but doesn't show it!). A dynamo is our Cyndy, an *eshet chail*.

National summit

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ran and reservist in the Israel Defense Forces, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, Senator Joseph Lieberman, Steven Emerson, American journalist and author, David Brog, Executive Director of CUFI, and Pastor John Hagee, Founder and National Chairman of CUFI.

A bus organized by the Church of Grace and Peace in Toms River and filled with 40 people traveled to Washington, D.C. for the Summit.

Ivan Picollo said, "This was my second year attending the Night to Honor Israel in Washington D.C. It has been a great honor to be part of such a life changing event. I know there are many challenges ahead for Israel, but I take great comfort to see how The Lord is raising thousands of voices, army-ready to stand alongside Israel."

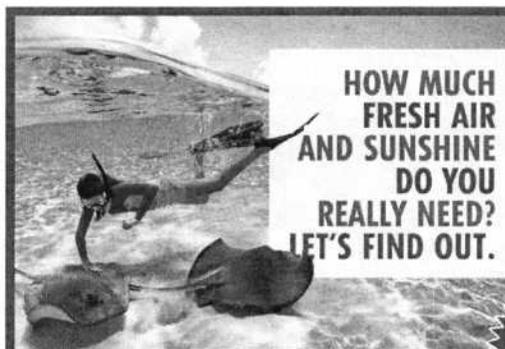
Debra McGrath said, "I support Israel because of the Jewish people and I truly believe that when we bless Israel and her people, we are blessed from God. It is very exciting to see the prophecies of the Bible coming alive today, but is sad that the government of Israel cannot fight back when those missiles are landing all over their land hurting and even killing many people, whether they are Jews or not. I just want the Jewish people to know I love them and believe that God's hand is protecting them and He has never left them!"



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL WHARTON PHOTOGRAPHY
Congresswoman Michele Bachmann was the keynote speaker at the "Night to Honor Israel" event on July 17, 2012.



Toms River's residents Ivan Picollo (left) and Pastor Carlos, national Latino representative for CUFI.



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