

Program: Mitzvah Mavens

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

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When it comes to The Jewish Federation, involvement in one thing tends to lead to another. Which is how Sophie Buslik, a young adult just starting her Federation leadership journey, and Susan Schor, one of its veterans, found themselves working together, learning from each other and spreading good deeds.

Sophie had long been passionate about volunteer work, routinely cooking breakfast at Miriam's Kitchen, for example, through her work at Booz Allen. But she became involved with The Federation more recently, after attending local events with her future husband, Bradley. Together, the couple enrolled in NeXus, a leadership-training program for young adults, and she was excited to soon thereafter take on her first leadership position as co-chair of The Federation's Good Deeds Day in 2012. A year later, she went to Israel on The Federation's mission for Birthright alumni.

Meanwhile, Women's Philanthropy was developing a new project called Mitzvah Mavens. It sounds like what it is—multi-generations of women with know-how doing good deeds. Given the enthusiasm of some of the young women returning from the Birthright alumni mission, Women's Philanthropy thought an intergenerational effort integrating women of all ages, involvement levels and knowledge of The Federation would further enrich the experience.

Susan was vice chair of Women's Philanthropy at the time—one of many roles she's held in her nearly 20 years of involvement with The Federation.

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"Once you become known as someone who's willing to get involved, the opportunities are just endless," she says.

These days, as co-chair with Sophie of Mitzvah Mavens, she describes the effort's broad and deep impact. Whether we're packing food for hungry kids to take home from school over a long weekend or holding a luncheon for Holocaust survivors, the program provides a hands-on experience that has volunteers coming back for more. "They don't want to just give money," Susan says of participants who consider the program an easy access

point into The Federation. "They want to do good as well as give good."

At the same time, Mitzvah Mavens' intergenerational element has proven powerful.

"I'm just wowed by them," Sophie says of her more seasoned fellow volunteers. "I see these women who have families and children and grandchildren and all these things that they're doing, but they still make time for volunteering and still enjoy it, still take more and more leadership roles," she says. Eager for more intergenerational experiences, Sophie

and Bradley will be co-chairing the 2015 community-wide Israel Your Way mission along with Melanie and Larry Nussdorf, seasoned volunteers and leaders from the community.

For Susan, a recently retired attorney, working with younger Jewish women through Mitzvah Mavens gives her a sense of connection to the younger generation and assurance about the Jewish future. "Sophie and her cohort give me hope."