

VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

A powerful collaboration between Judea Reform, Beth El Synagogue and Kol Haskalah is making a difference in the lives of our poor and homeless neighbors.

Jewish congregations in Durham have been collaborating to serve a monthly meal to hungry and homeless neighbors in what is now UMD's Community Café for more than 22 years. It all began back in 1992 when Erica Rapport Gringle, on the Board of Beth El Synagogue, facilitated a discussion on the homeless and hungry. There was a young interfaith couple participating who had been serving at the homeless shelter in Durham for a while. They said they noticed a number of faith groups that were involved, but where were the synagogues? Erica thought it was a very appropriate question and a terrific challenge.

Erica got some of the people involved in the discussion to sign up to support a program of providing a monthly meal. She also reached out to Marcia Gottfried, Social Action Chair of Judea Reform. And this tiny group got the thing launched. Kol Haskalah joined the partnership about 10 years later and these three organizations divide the work load in thirds. Each month, Judea Reform is responsible for gathering the food; Kol Haskalah is responsible for organizing the prep crew the day of the meal; and Beth El Synagogue is responsible for organizing the servers. They have had the 4th Sunday Dinner of the month the entire 22 years. In Erica's words *"It's been an amazing experience. I have felt lucky to have this as one of the fairly unvarying rhythms of my life."*



Judea Reform Congregation and Beth El Synagogue serving Sunday evening dinner at Urban Ministries of Durham. From left to right: Michaela Davidai and La and Howard Bomze from Beth El synagogue and Kay, Diane, Jen and Eric Youngstrom from Judea Reform Congregation.



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