

METRONORTH REGION

WRITINGS AND RECOLLECTIONS

Foreword

One of the greatest challenges in recording the history of an organization is the absence of prior written histories and the inability to gather memories from those who are no longer with us.

This history has been compiled from the recollections, records, and writings of former Region and Branch leaders. We have endeavored to present a picture of the culture, accomplishments, and activities that have shaped and defined the MetroNorth Region and its Branches.

The preservation of this history is due in large measure to the perseverance and dedication of Gaye Altman. Through countless phone calls, emails, and Zoom sessions, Gaye devoted many hours to gathering and organizing the information contained in these pages. Without her efforts, this document would not exist.

It is with deep gratitude and appreciation that we present this history to our readers and acknowledge Gaye's invaluable contribution to preserving the legacy of the MetroNorth Region.

Cory Schneider
Archives Chair 2020-2026
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

MetroNorth Region

Writings and Recollections

Table of Contents

Jewish Communities of MetroNorth Region	4
Branch and Region Presidents	6
Westchester-Rockland Branch	7
Evelyn Henkind, Founder & First President (1960).....	7
Marge Wise, President (1984-1986 & 1986-1988)	9
Rhoda Bloom, President (1988-1990).....	11
Mary Ellen Sher, President (1990-1992)	12
Sally Greenstein, President (1992-1994).....	13
Barbara Schreiber, President (1994-1996).....	14
Hudson Valley Branch	15
Miriam Suchoff, President (1996-1998)	15
Pamela Loeb, President (1998-2000).....	16
Gaye Altman, President (2000-2002)	17
Judi Dickstein Kenter, President (2002-2004)	21
Jackie Walzer, President (2004-2006)	27
Ilene Kirschner Madwed, President (2006-2008).....	28
Metropolitan Branch	30
Sandy Koppell, President (2002-2004)	30
MetroNorth Region.....	35
Susan Orlando, President (2011-2013)	35
Claire Gondelman, President (2013-2015)	37
Mindy Steinholz, President (2015-2017).....	38
Gaye Altman, President (2017-2018).....	40
Linda Klempner, President (2018-2021).....	42
Lisa Green, President (2021-2024)	45
Judi Dickstein Kenter, President (2024-2026)	47

Creative Handcrafts Projects	48
Westchester Rockland Branch	48
Metropolitan Branch.....	49
Hudson Valley Branch.....	53

Jewish Communities of MetroNorth Region

A Brief History

The Jewish communities of Manhattan, Hudson Valley, Westchester County, and Rockland County form a continuous yet diverse tapestry shaped by immigration, suburbanization, and religious change. Within this history, the Conservative movement played a central role in defining American Jewish life, and women—through both formal organizations and individual leadership—were crucial in building and sustaining its institutions.

Manhattan: Foundations and Women's Leadership in Conservative Judaism

Jewish life in Manhattan expanded dramatically with Eastern European immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Jews adapted to American society, Conservative Judaism emerged as a middle path between Orthodoxy and Reform. Its intellectual center, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), became a training ground not only for rabbis but also for educators and communal leaders.

Women were instrumental in shaping this movement. The Women's League for Conservative Judaism, founded in 1918, mobilized synagogue sisterhoods across the country. It promoted Jewish education, supported JTS, and strengthened communal life through programming and philanthropy. In Manhattan congregations such as Park Avenue Synagogue, sisterhoods organized educational events, charity drives, and cultural activities that helped define synagogue life.

Individual women also transformed the movement. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, celebrated the first American bat mitzvah in 1922 in Manhattan—an event that helped pave the way for women's expanded ritual participation across Conservative Judaism. Later, figures such as Gerson D. Cohen supported the eventual ordination of women, culminating in the historic ordination of Amy Eilberg in 1985, a milestone rooted in decades of advocacy by women within the movement.

Westchester County: Suburban Expansion and Sisterhood Influence

As Jewish families moved to Westchester after World War II, Conservative Judaism became the dominant suburban affiliation. Synagogues like Temple Israel Center of White Plains grew into large community centers, and women's groups were essential to their success. Sisterhoods affiliated with the Women's League organized religious schools, holiday programming, and social services, often serving as the backbone of synagogue life.

Women in Westchester also played leadership roles beyond auxiliary organizations. By the late 20th century, women were serving on synagogue boards, influencing policy, and advocating for egalitarian practices. The spread of bat mitzvah ceremonies, women's Torah reading, and eventually female clergy reflected both grassroots activism

and institutional change. These developments helped redefine Conservative Judaism as a more inclusive movement while maintaining its commitment to tradition.

Rockland County: Continuity and Changing Dynamics

Rockland County's Jewish population expanded later, initially reflecting patterns similar to Westchester, with Conservative and Reform congregations such as Congregation Sons of Israel. Women's organizations there mirrored those in other suburbs, fostering education, philanthropy, and community cohesion.

As Rockland's demographics shifted toward a larger Orthodox and Hasidic population, the relative influence of Conservative institutions declined. However, Conservative women's groups continued to serve their congregations, preserving traditions of volunteerism, education, and leadership. Their earlier contributions helped establish the county's Jewish infrastructure, including schools, social networks, and interfaith initiatives.

Broader Impact and Legacy

Across Manhattan, Westchester, and Rockland, Conservative Jewish women's organizations were not merely supportive bodies; they were engines of institutional growth and cultural continuity. Through fundraising, education, and advocacy, they sustained synagogues, influenced national policy, and advanced gender equality within Jewish religious life.

Individuals such as Abraham Joshua Heschel worked alongside women activists who pushed the movement toward greater inclusivity, linking religious values with broader social justice causes. The eventual ordination of women and the normalization of egalitarian practice in many Conservative congregations stand as enduring outcomes of these efforts.

The history of Jewish life in Manhattan, Westchester, and Rockland cannot be fully understood without recognizing the central role of Conservative Judaism and the transformative contributions of women within it. From the founding of national organizations like Women's League to local sisterhoods and pioneering individuals, women helped shape the religious, educational, and social fabric of these communities. Their legacy continues to influence Conservative Judaism today, ensuring its adaptability and vitality in an ever-changing American landscape.

Branch and Region Presidents

Metropolitan Branch

?	Rose Keisler
?	Anita Levine
?	Selma Rappaport Pressman**
?	Helene Wagenhein
?	Selma Weintraub**
1966-1968	Frances Unger
1968-1970	Marian Weisenfreund
1970-1972	Irene Goodman
1972-1974	Sarah Weinreb
1974-1976	Millie Olewitz
1976-1978	Sara Schlesinger
1978-1980	Florence Berkowitz
1980-1982	Miriam Korman
1982-1984	Miriam A. Korman
1984-1986	Miriam A. Korman
1986-1988	Gill Sherrid
1988-1990	Gill Sherrid
1990-1992	Beatrice J. Dulberg
1992-1994	Beatrice J. Dulberg
1994-1996	J. Cynthia Weber
1996-1998	Sharon Steinberg
1998-2000	Sharon Steinberg
2000-2002	Sue Press
2002-2004	Sandra Koppell
2004-2006	Elinor Blash
2006-2008	Carol J. Green

Westchester-Rockland Branch

1960	Evelyn Henkind**
1976-1978	Shirley Mosner
1978-1980	Norma Mann
1980-1982	Ruth Rosenfeld
1982-1984	Elaine Schanzer
1984-1986	Margery Wise
1986-1988	Margery Wise
1988-1990	Rhoda Bloom
1990-1992	Mary Ellen Sher
1992-1994	Sally Greenstein
1994-1996	Barbara Schreiber

Hudson Valley Branch

1996-1998	Miriam Suchoff
1998-2000	Pamela Loeb
2000-2002	Gaye Altman
2002-2004	Judi Dickstein Kenter
2004-2006	Jacalyn Walzer
2006-2008	Ilene Kirschner Madwed

MetroNorth Region

2008-2009	Dr. Reva Gershen Lowy
2009-2011	Dr. Reva Gershen Lowy
2011-2013	Susan Orlando
2013-2015	Claire Gondelman
2015-2017	Mindy Steinholz
2017-2018	Gaye Altman
2018-2021	Linda Klempner
2021-2024	Lisa Geffen Green
2024-2026	Judi Kenter
2026-2029	Sandy Gruenberg

** Became a Women's League International President

Westchester-Rockland Branch

Evelyn Henkind, Founder & First President (1960)

Westchester-Rockland Branch



In memoriam written by Selma Weintraub and Barbara Schreiber

Evelyn Henkind, founder and First president of Westchester-Rockland Branch of Women's League for Conservative Judaism (now known as Hudson Valley Branch), who served on the board of the Jewish theological seminary and spearheaded numerous fundraisers for the Rabbinical College, died on November 24, 2000, in the Hebrew Hospital home in Valhalla, New York. She was 88.

From 1966 to 1970 Evelyn served as president of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism. From the end of her term six weeks before her death, Evelyn supervised the League's investments and expenditures. In 1980 she received the Women's League "Most Valued Volunteer" award.

Evelyn never allowed her numerous achievements and honors to distract from her modesty. Whenever she had to identify herself as a conference or a meeting, she quietly said, "I am Evelyn Henkind, a member of the Westchester Rockland Branch of Women's League," modestly keeping her national office in the background.

Evelyn's volunteer work for JTS spanned 30 years, including 20 years on its Board of Directors. From 1970 to 1978, she served as National Chairperson of the Torah Fund/Residence Halls campaign and as chairperson of the Patrons Society.

In recognition of her service, Evelyn received numerous honors from JTS. In 1974 she was awarded the Louis Marshall award for outstanding work on behalf of the seminary. In 1986 she was elected to a committee charged with writing "Emet V'Emunah," the official statement of ideology for the Conservative Movement.

She was also named a Seminary trustee and was inducted into the Society of Seminary Fellows in 1987. She received an honorary degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1996

Evelyn also served on the board of the Jewish Braille Institute of America and made recordings for the blind.

She is survived by her husband, Saul, of Scottsdale, New York; a daughter, Eli, Henkind Katz, of Jerusalem; a son Lewis of Westchester County, NY and six grandchildren.

Marge Wise, President (1984-1986 & 1986-1988)

Westchester-Rockland Branch

(Excerpts from her 1988 discharge speech)

My love affair with Women's League for Conservative Judaism and with Branch began at the Spring Conference in 1978 at the Lincoln Park Center in Yonkers. It's hard to believe that it was 30 years ago that I began that little affair. Although getting involved with WLCJ was, innocence, a continuation of my 10 years of activities in the Conservative movement – I was a product of USY – it was a lot more!

It is no exaggeration to say that the Branch and Women's League helped me evolve into the Jewish woman I am today. In 1978, I was a young rebbitzin with two small children – one in first grade and one about to enter kindergarten the following September. I was very involved teaching and doing “keruv” in the shul that my husband served as Rabbi of, and in the Sisterhood of my synagogue. But I was also ripe for a connection to something that would give me an opportunity to give more and to grow more, to learn and to teach, to develop my skills in order to give back to the larger Jewish community.

In a nutshell, that spelled Women's League and Branch for me!! From that first spring conference on, I met women who inspired me, taught me, offered me opportunities to grow and expand my knowledge base, helped me actualize my potential to lead others, and showed me how to hone my abilities in the areas of public speaking and leadership skills.

My first mentor, and my friend to this day, was Selma Weintraub, who, along with the late Helene Wagenheim came to our sisterhood at Northeast Jewish Center in the spring of 1978, to explain how affiliation with Branch could benefit us. We were convinced, and I became the sisterhood president a few weeks later! Selma installed me, using, in addition to her elegant words, a script from Women's League – it was very moving, and I remember feeling that this was the start of something very special for me, personally, and for our sisterhood as a whole.

Delegations from my Sisterhood attended national conventions and we returned totally committed to sharing what we learned and to spreading our excitement and newfound knowledge to our members. Carloads of our women would attend Branch meetings several times a year, as well as annual JTS study days, spring conferences, and more – we learned so much and we loved it!

I was determined, in the months and the years that followed, to “soak up” everything that Branch had to offer – and there was a lot! Leadership training and speakers training. Getting to know and work with, and form friendships with the women was a privilege. Forming these friendships and being inspired by them and their spirit enriched my life and was a joy.

I was honored to serve as Branch president for two terms, 1984–86 and 1986–88, working my way up the ranks and enjoying every minute. I had great teachers all the way!

During my terms as Branch president, I sat on the National Board, and what a fabulous ride that was! I met, interacted with, and was inspired by the many “movers and shakers” of our Movement. I was privileged to learn at the feet of great Rabbis and scholars and I also got a flavor for what was “rocking” the Jewish world beyond Westchester. Those years proved to be an amazing experience and they helped prepare me to assume the position of executive Director of a large synagogue in our Movement, Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor, a position I have held for more than eight years now.

As our Branch begins a new chapter, combining with the Metropolitan New York Branch, I would like to extend my best wishes to those who will assume the presidency of our newly merged Branch and to all the officers board members. May we go from strength to strength – as we continue the work of strengthening our ourselves, our sisterhoods, our synagogues in our communities, as we reinforce and teach the values and the beauty of Conservative Judaism.

There have always been formidable challenges facing our people – today is surely no exception – in the United States, in Israel, and throughout the world – may we meet them successfully and may we emerge strong – “Kol Yisrael arayvim zeh-ba-zeh” – the Jewish people collectively as a nation, as well as individually, has responsibility to each other – may we have th “zehut”, the privilege of fulfilling that responsibility, so that we may always be a beacon of light to our people into the communities in which we live.

So, in closing, thanks for the memories – Branch and Women’s league have helped mold what I am today. May we all build on our memories and experiences in Branch and in Women’s League, and may we be inspired by them, as we chart the future!

Rhoda Bloom, President (1988-1990)
Westchester-Rockland Branch

Rhoda Bloom was in an *eishet chalyil*, a woman of valor, in every sense of the word. She reached out to others and opened her home on Shabbat and Yom tov, emulating the long-standing Jewish tradition of *hachnaset orchim*, welcoming the guest.

Rhoda was equally dedicated to Branch and to furthering the goals of educating sisterhood women to take their place as pillars of Judaism – in the home, in the synagogue and in the community. Her work in the Kosher Food Pantry of Rockland County resulted in Jewish Family Service renaming it the Rhoda Blum Kosher Food Pantry.

Rhoda left a rich legacy of Torah (learning), *Avodah* (service), and *Gemulit hasadim* (acts of lovingkindness) to all.

Mary Ellen Sher, President (1990-1992)

Westchester–Rockland Branch

My most important memory of being president of Westchester–Rockland Branch is the friendships I made. What a wonderful group of women – kind, compassionate, devoted, knowledgeable, and truly dedicated to the work they were doing to advance Judaism in our lives.

In the middle of my term, I was diagnosed as having cancer. I told my board and had an executive committee meeting and said that I had to resign. However, they would not allow me to do this. They offered to pitch in to help me in whatever capacity I needed them. I replied, we would try it, and due to their commitment, we continued our year successfully.

I was known as the “purple” lady, as all my letters were printed on purple paper (no email in those days). Communication was not as easy then so we formed an emergency phone list to notify the board members (including sisterhood presidents) of important messages. I remember regularly writing to Sisterhood Presidents and Sisterhood to Rabbi emails to inform them of upcoming events.

In those days, Women’s League conventions were held at the Concord Hotel in the Catskills and we had around 125 people from our Branch attending. We put on skits at our branch parties and I will never forget Syd Musikar playing the part of Mathilde Schechter. Our programs were varied such as Passover Potpourri, a Jewish Wedding (from A-to-Z), Body Language in Shul, and The Fun in Parliamentary Procedure.

After my term of office, I was honored at a Branch Benefactors dinner during the jubilee year celebration for Torah Fund. I was truly elated at the turnout of people and the memorable program performed.

I enjoyed Women’s League board meetings, which I attended for more than 10 years including Torah Fund Council and Cabinet meetings. I was National Bikkur Holim chair and National Treasurer.

The lifetime friendships were and still are important to me, and I will treasure every moment spent on the board.

Sally Greenstein, President (1992-1994)

Westchester-Rockland Branch

(excerpts of speech when honored at a Torah Fund event)

I am very proud to be one of the presidents being honored at the annual Torah Fund celebration at Hudson Valley branch this year. I was president of the Westchester-Rockland Branch from 1994 to 1994 before we became Hudson Valley Branch.

One of my first introductions to Torah Fund was at a sisterhood function where Rhoda Bloom, of blessed memory, was the guest speaker. She spoke about the preservation of Conservative Judaism by supporting the Jewish Theological Seminary, the school that educates future, Rabbi and teachers of our next generation. Her words were inspiring and informative. I was hooked! At my first contributions were small but important, just the same. In 1988, I became a benefactor by putting my small change into a Torah Fund tzedakah box. Through my husband's employer, I was also fortunate to be part of a matching gifts program and became an Associate Patron. I have continued this category to the present day.

Through my affiliation with sisterhood, branch, and Women's League for Conservative Judaism, I have "stepped up Jewishly" by taking advantage of the many seminars, programs, and courses they have sponsored. I became an adult bat mitzvah 10 years ago. Although I may have left Rockland County for the sunny, warm climate of Georgia, a part of me still remains with "y'all". I applaud our honorees and you, our volunteers, for your good deeds and all that you do.

Barbara Schreiber, President (1994-1996)
Westchester-Rockland Branch

It was during my term as branch president that the name of our Branch was changed from Westchester-Rockland Branch to Hudson Valley Branch to better reflect the geography of the Branch. I don't remember a whole lot of detail, but I do remember that there were differences of opinion, tension, and angst. I don't deal with those things happily so when the vote was taken and the name of the Branch, finally changed, I breathe the deep sigh of relief.

Another long-standing change in my life resulted indirectly from my Branch presidency. After my term finished, I was elected to the Women's League Board of Directors, and served as chair of Israel Affairs. Again, I don't remember the details, but the obvious connection between Israel's affairs and MERCAZ, the Conservative Movement's Zionist arm, catapulted me onto the MERCAZ board. I have maintained that seat ever since. My husband, Jack and I traveled to Israel for one of the Zionist Congress meetings and, to this day, when we are in Jerusalem, and we pass or see in the distance, Binyanei Hauma, the building where the Congress was held, I say to myself, "We were there!"

Just yesterday, on my way to what was my last meeting as a Women's League board member, I needed a large and rainproof bag to protect papers and personal items from a predicted rainstorm. I went upstairs to a closet where I store old souvenir bags, and there, so evocative of past fun and exciting happenings, were two such bags: a blue bag from Biennial Convention 2004 in Orlando and a purple bag from the Biennial Convention 2006 in Philadelphia. Big changes from the Concord days... but great!

It has been a wonderful run that is still going, although in vastly changed roles. I say thank you to all who helped me become involved, to Jack for patiently driving me around, and I thank God for everything.

Hudson Valley Branch

Miriam Suchoff, President (1996-1998) Hudson Valley Branch

Miriam's involvement with Branch and Women's League for Conservative Judaism began with her sisterhood, where she served as Publicity Chair, Vice President of Program, Vice President of Ways and Means and then President for two terms. She served in various capacities on the Branch level, serving as Bulletin Editor, Spring Conference Chair, Vice President of Torah Fund, and as the first Hudson Valley branch president, 1996–1998.

Miriam served on the International Board of Women's League for Conservative Judaism, and has served as the Calendar Diary Chair, on the Torah Fund Marketing Committee and a member of the Torah Fund cabinet, a Trainer, Convention 2002 Seminars Chair, a Consultant, Convention 2004 Program Chair, and Leadership Institute Curriculum co-creator and Trainer.

Pamela Loeb, President (1998-2000)
Hudson Valley Branch

Women's League's Mitzvat Torah Project

The 613th mitzvah, according to our sages, is derived from the verse in Deuteronomy (31:19): "write yourselves this song and teach it to all the children of Israel." This is the mitzvah Torah – the Commandment that obligates every Jew to write a Torah scroll.... The writing of the Women's League Torah began at a Convention 2000 as the sofer, Zarach Greenfield, wrote the first letter.

To quote Janet Tobin, president of Women's League: "by participating in fulfilling the 613th Commandment, as Jewish educated laity, members of Women's League will, in fact, be able to live the words of Torah. This project will enable us to greatly enhance our educational programs and opportunities and to expand our leadership training so that all of our members will have the opportunity and capability to share God's dream as knowledgeable and committed Jews

As soon as Hudson Valley Branch learned of this project, we rushed to bring it to the women of Hudson Valley. At Our fall conference in September 2000 we presented a program with the renowned sofer, Rabbi Vinas. We learned so much about what goes into the creation of a Torah that night. We could have listened for hours longer.

Come to Spring Conference on Sunday, May 6, 2001, where we will present the next part of the Mitzvah Torah project. Make your commitment then and there and you will be presented with your Mitzvah Torah pin symbolizing that you have fulfilled the 613th Commandment.

Written by Pamela Loeb (Spring 2001)



Hudson Valley Branch Presidents – Montebello Jewish Center 2000

Gaye Altman, President (2000-2002)
Hudson Valley Branch



Gaye Altman Installation, Spring 2000
Installing Officer: Evelyn Seelig, Past International President

Gaye Altman Opening Remarks Fall Conference 2001

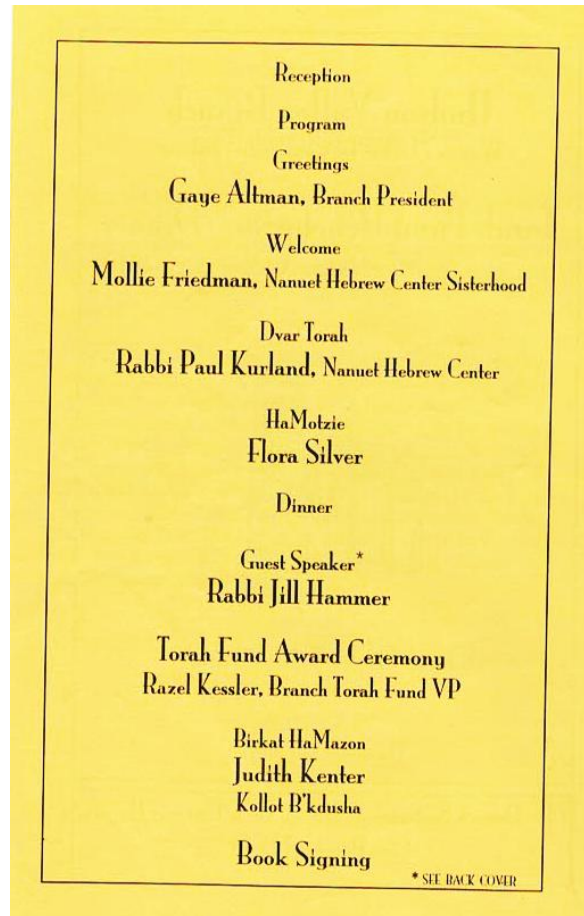
For our Fall Conference, Hudson Valley Branch has chosen to link together branch, community, synagogue, and sisterhood, and address several issues from biblical, political, legal, and moral perspectives. They are spousal abuse, and women's shelters, women in Israel: politics, power, and powerlessness, how new legislative initiatives affect issues of gender bias in research, insurance and hiring practices, and Judaism and sexuality. Our goal is for our members to study, listen and learn, and bring back information, understanding, ideas and programs that will enrich and enhance their daily lives. It is to empower our Jewish limit to live a life filled with *kedusha*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*. At this time, it is imperative we continue to maintain our Jewish family – in our home, synagogue, and community and continue our support of Israel. Tonight we come together to share our knowledge and experiences.

I would like to acknowledge the growth of the Hudson Valley Branch's family over the past several months. We have two new sisterhoods, Congregation Ahavath Israel in Kingston, New York and Congregation Anshe Emeth in Hudson, New York. They were previously part of New York State Branch and the feeling was that, geographically, we were closer and this would make it easier for their membership to participate in Branch programming. We look forward to meeting Barbara and Elaine and their sisterhood membership in the near future. I also want to wish Montebello Jewish Center Sisterhood a *yasher koach* for a dynamic and productive first year. May you continue to go from strength to strength in the coming years.

Here are some reminders for upcoming events: Women's League is sponsoring the Second Annual Women's Health Forum at New York University Medical Center on Monday, November 12, 2001. The fee is \$30 and should be mailed to Women's League.

Branch Torah Fund Benefactors Dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, December 19 at the Nanuet Hebrew center. More information will follow.

Enjoy the evening. Thank you.



United Nations trip by Razel Kessler

On November 8, 2000, a bright Wednesday morning, 16 women from our Hudson Valley Branch were at the United Nations building for a private guided tour. We were met by Judi Horowitz, the Women's League N.G.O. (non-governmental observer) and then given over to our tour guide, a lovely and knowledgeable young woman from Senegal.

For some of us, it was a second visit having first come on an elementary school trip. Others had been on tours through other organizations. It was commented that depending on the group and the guide you were with, your tour will have a different flavor. Our guide enlightened us on the growing number of women representatives to the U. N.

After our tour, which included viewing some international meetings in progress, we were again met by Ms. Horowitz in a private room. She introduced a representative from the Israeli consulate who spoke to us about the current situation in the Middle East. After a very informative talk, he took questions. When our session at the U. N. concluded, most of us went to lunch at a restaurant, a brisk walk from the U. N. We were able to enjoy each other's company while enjoying a delicious lunch.

Endings and Beginnings by Gaye Altman

(Excerpts from “Branching Out” closing article, Spring 2002)

It's hard to believe that two years ago, I accepted the position of President of the Hudson Valley Branch of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. My goal, as stated, was to continue the outreach efforts of my predecessors and to help create and implement, innovative and challenging programs that would increase our members participation in Branch activities and in the Jewish communities both in the United States and in Israel. I focused on the inclusion of women from multi-generations with the use of multi-communication methods. As a proponent of the committee process and consensus, I worked with the executive committee and members of the branch board to create unique and diverse programming. Through “Branching Out”, letters and flyers, email, fax and telephone, we communicated and connected with our sisterhoods.

We traveled to the United Nations, we offered training to our board and sisterhood presidents through the use of Women's League training consultants and the expertise of our past branch presidents. Our Fall and Spring conferences provided workshops, speakers and information, focusing on membership, Torah Fund, ways and means, Israel, community service, social action, and youth. Our Branch created a forum to encourage participation in the Mitzvat Torah project by inviting Rabbi Vinias, a sofer, to educate our members in the writing of a sefer Torah. We publicized the importance of Mercaz and Masorti and voting in the recent World Zionist Congress election. Hudson Valley Branch welcomed two sisterhoods: Congregation, Ahavath Israel in Kingston and Congregation Anshe Emeth in Hudson.

Our continuing commitment to the Jewish Theological Seminary was demonstrated through our Torah Fund Benefactors events – a luncheon honoring our sisterhood's Tower of Strength and a dinner acknowledging our “Unsung Heroes”. We outreached into the community by collecting sundries and toiletries for a women's shelter and clothing to help the Coalition for the Homeless for their First Step program. We celebrated Passover for Branch Education Day and traveled to our sisterhoods to bring Hudson Valley Branch into their communities. We served as the link between sisterhood and Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

To the Hudson Valley branch, I wish to thank you for asking me to assume this position. It has been a wonderful two years, filled with many memorable opportunities to study and learn and interact with women who share similar lifestyles and values.

In conclusion, I would like to share some thoughts from Iris Lasky, from Pacific Southwest Branch. “We, as volunteers, feel a strong bond and need for our continue commitment to Israel, the land we call “ours”. This commitment is more than just saying that “we will”, and having good intentions.” Genuine commitment on the part of those volunteers who have come before us has brought our world – our communities, our people and our heritage - to where it is today, enabling us to live lives, filled with knowledge, possibilities, and promises. It is a priceless legacy and one which we must, and will, continue to grow in our hearts and with our involvement.

Judi Dickstein Kenter, President (2002-2004)
Hudson Valley Branch

From our Incoming President



SMILE. SMILE. SMILE. SMILE. SMILE.
SMILE. SMILE.

I have found that this definitely helps. It certainly can't hurt.

As I had been anticipating assuming the position of president of the Hudson Valley Branch of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, I had been smiling, worrying, dreaming, contemplating, trembling, laughing, etc., etc. I bring many attributes to this office, some positive, some less so. I will share what I think are my greatest strengths. Number 1 is my husband. Number 2 is my entire family. Number 3 is all of the Sisterhood, Branch and Women's League members and leaders that have come before me. Number 4 is our incoming Hudson Valley Board - Officers, Chairs, and Sisterhood Presidents. I am lucky enough to have support from all of these people, with their support it should be impossible for me to do anything but stand upright. I care about Conservative Judaism. I care about Israel. I care about Branch. I care about Sisterhoods. I care about Jewish women. I care about doing my part to help all of these stand upright. I will bring a positive attitude. I hope to bring Jewish women to Sisterhoods. I hope to bring Branch to Sisterhoods and Sisterhoods to Branch. I hope to utilize Women's League in accomplishing our goals. Please join me. **SMILE.**

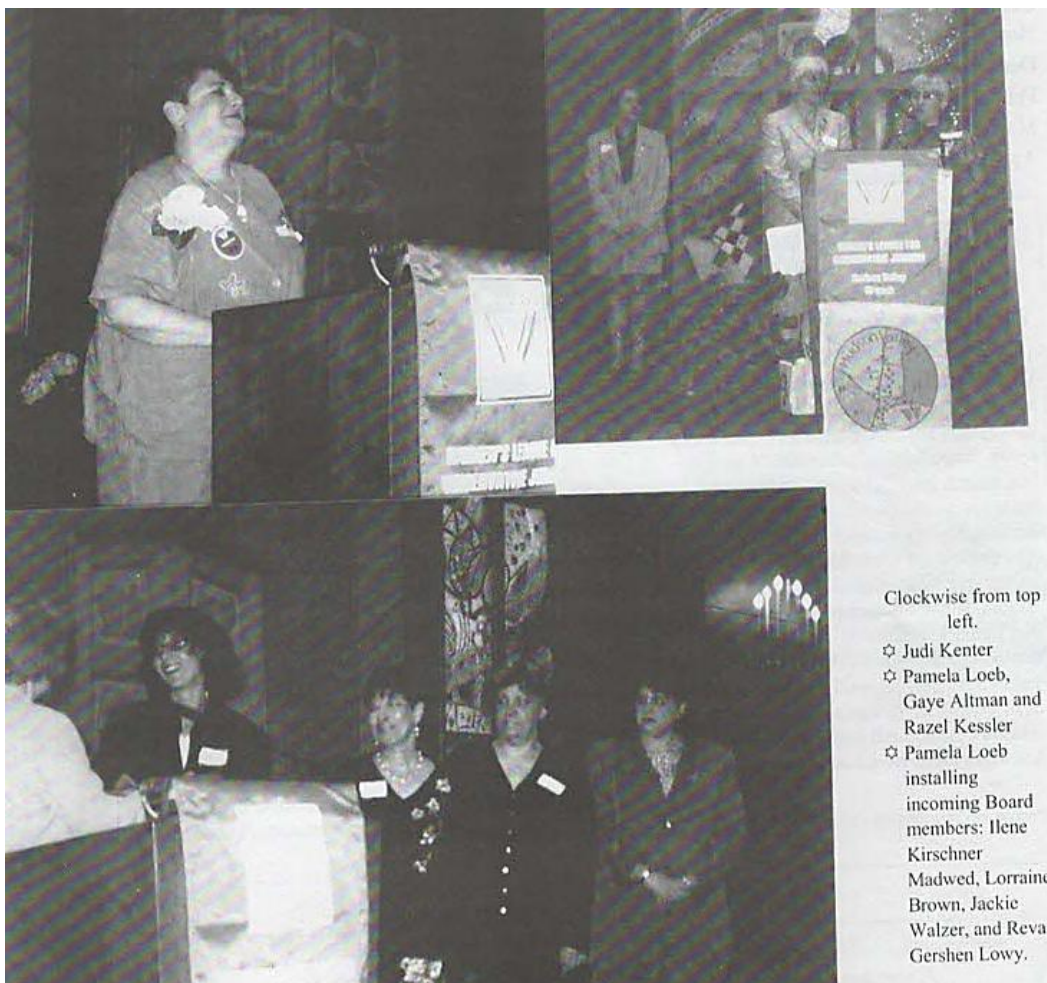
Shalom
Judi Kenter



Reflections written in 2024

I was never going to be president. I had been about to come off the Branch Board twice. Once I was pulled back in when the woman who was to be Torah Fund Chair declined the position at the last moment. Once I had been on the Executive committee a number of years and had said that I would never step up to be president, so I was off. Well, there was no one else ready and/or willing to step up, so Judi became president.

It actually was a lot of fun and I definitely received more than I gave. The times were so different as was the job (as was I), twenty-two years ago when I served as Branch President. In 2002 there were 28 Sisterhoods, we included Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Riverdale, Ulster, and two Sisterhoods in Connecticut. Our Executive Committee meetings were in my house over a homemade dinner. All of our meetings and programs were in person. Our Bulletin was sent through the mail.



Clockwise from top left.

- ✧ Judi Kenter
- ✧ Pamela Loeb, Gaye Altman and Razel Kessler
- ✧ Pamela Loeb installing incoming Board members: Ilene Kirschner Madwed, Lorraine Brown, Jackie Walzer, and Reva Gershen Lowy.

אדם קרוב לעצמו

Adam Karov L'Atzmo

"Take care of yourself
...so that you are able to take care of others."



Hudson Valley Branch

Women's League for
Conservative Judaism

A Day For You!

SPRING CONFERENCE

Beth-El Synagogue
New Rochelle

Sunday, April 27, 2003
25 Nisan 5763

Hudson Valley Branch Spring Conference Sun., April 27, 2003

Beth-El Synagogue, Northfield Rd. at North Ave., New Rochelle

Adam Karov L'Atzmo "First take care of yourself...in order to help others"

אדם קרוב לעצמו A Day For You

A Day for You to....Learn

10:00-12:30 President's session

Share ideas & techniques with our Women's League consultant, Sandy Myers.

10:45-11:45 Torah Study with Rabbi Bernstein (for early birds)

A Day for You to... Socialize

12:30-1:00 Lunch Another chance to get together--

A Day for you to....Branch Out

1:00-1:30 Conference registration & Activity Showcases

Sign-in & view the great resource materials to take back to your Sisterhoods

1:30 Conference Opens

Sisterhood Milestone Awards



2:00-3:00 Choice of 3 concurrent workshops

A Day for You to...Reach In

Membership/Zahava (Zahava is for our women 45 and under)

See how an active recruitment campaign will bring new members & retain members of long standing

A Day for You to...Reach Out

Community Service

Help others while engaging your women to get involved.

A Day For You to...Take Notes

Program (Books Libraries Periodicals & Music + discussion)

Jot down some great programs ideas that entertain and enlighten -- This is a special sharing session for women who are involved with programming for their Sisterhoods.

A Day For You to....Reflect..Introduction to Jewish Meditation..Ellen Berkovitch
3:00-4:00

A Day for You to....Share Vital Movement for the Jewish Soul.. Judith Rose
4:00-5:00

A Day for You to....Celebrate the good we do

5:00-5:30 Torah Fund Video and presentation

5:30-5:45 Women's League Consultant Keynote address, Sandy Myers

5:45-6:15 Minha led by Kolot B'Kdusha

6:15 Dinner Celebrating Israel & our Sisterhood "Bat Zion" Honorees

7:10 USY Ruah session Dessert Conference Close

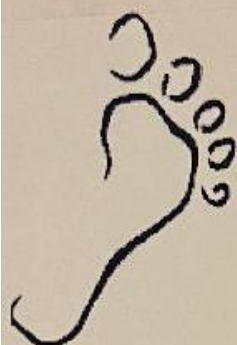
**A Community
Service
Activity**

for You

An Alternative session. Between 3:00-5:00 we will assemble "Welcome Kits" of sample size, new unopened, women's toiletries for MY Sister's Place, a women's shelter. Materials will be provided.

I remember: driving to Riverdale going through flooded underpasses, attending an amazing program about Organ Transplants (a panel that included a doctor who harvested organs, a doctor who implanted organs and a heart recipient), in the dark of night finding my way to Port Jervis, attending various Sisterhoods' Board meetings, and meeting my friends at the International Women's League Board meetings. I had a fabulous class of Branch Presidents and love connecting with them, whenever that happens.

Women's League is an amazing organization offering educational opportunities, leadership training, support for our Sisterhoods and all League members. But most of all it is all about – THE WOMEN. We are a fantastic group of dedicated women who support each other, care about the future of the Conservative/Masorti Movement and the State of Israel, who offer and give to each other. The best are the hugs.



All Synagogue Women

Start off on the Right Foot

With Hudson Valley Branch Women's League For Conservative Judaism

Fall Conference Sunday, September 25th

10:30am-5:00PM

Nanuet Hebrew Center

411 So. Little Tor Road New City, NY 10956 Tel : 845-708-9181

hop aboard  *jump right in*  *step up*  *plant your feet*

*Issues of Importance
Services to Sisterhoods
Celebrating 20 years of Women's Ordination
Tefilla & Israeli Dancing*

I Have A Dream

By Judi Kenter

I have a dream - My house is completely clean and it is not even erev Pesach.

I have a dream - Three women want to become the next Sisterhood President.

I have a dream - I am organized and I can put my finger on any piece of paper that need.

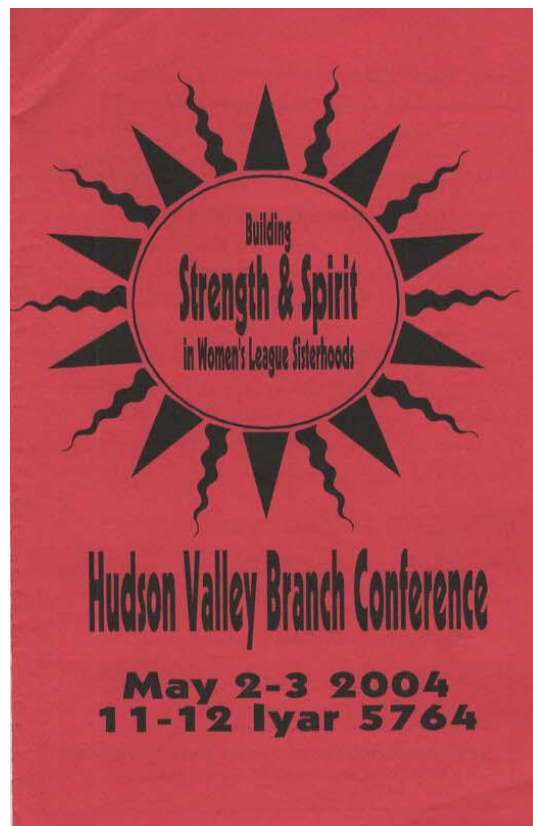
I have a dream - Women attend morning and evening minyanim (following, learning, and leading).

We are living in a time of tremendous opportunity. WE CAN MAKE OUR DREAMS COME TRUE. (Well maybe all of them except the three women wanting to be Sisterhood President.) Today, in our Religious Schools, girls are taught the same things as boys. In many synagogues women MAY participate in ritual life equally with men. Our challenge is to encourage as many women as possible to be able to lead services, to read Torah, to lead Birkat Hamazon and to be able to prepare and deliver divrei torah. Know that there are synagogue professionals and volunteers that are willing to teach these skills. Our Sisterhoods can make these opportunities to learn available. But we must avail ourselves of this privilege. If your synagogue is egalitarian - you will be able to utilize your skills in the regular services, if not, some things may be possible within the regular service and you can always have Women's Services (possibly on Rosh Hodesh), plus Women's League Conferences are always looking for new women to help in religious ritual.

To publicize the importance of these skills and to honor those of our women who are capable of acting as *baalot t'fillah* (leaders of services) in both weekday and shabbat nusah and women who are capable of being *baalot kriah* (torah readers) Women's League for Conservative Judaism established *Kolot BiK'dushah, Learn and Do*. **Please share our dream.**

*Sisterhood Presidents please take advantage of the opportunity to honor your women for their Jewish learning and leadership. Submission for membership in Kolot BiK'dushah should be to Edya Arzt at WLCJ. Please include the woman's name, address, phone number, Sisterhood affiliation, and whether she is being submitted as *baalat t'fillah* and/or *baalat kriah*, as well as the name and phone number of her rabbi and/or cantor who can verify her ability.

We had a paper directory which included the information listing our entire Board – 10 Executive Committee members, 21 Chairs, as well as the information for each Sisterhood- (address, phone number and rabbi of shul, as well as all of the information for the Sisterhood president). Also listed in the Directory were our 18 International Board members, 21 past Branch Presidents – with address and phone numbers for 18 of them. At that time we had a Torah Fund Cabinet - 19 women who supported the Torah Fund VP. The 5764, 2003-2004 Directory also included a calendar listing the dates to save – Branch Training (Stamford, CT), Sukkah Decorating at JTS, Broadway show: Golda's Balcony, Shabbat Fair (New City, NY), Women's League Mission to Madrid & Israel, regional Torah Fund Events, Women's League Capital Conference (Washington, DC), Repairing the World Stitch by Stitch, Women's League Shabbat and Spring Conference. The back cover listed Branch Services to Sisterhoods: Branch Conferences, Branch Board Meetings, Branch Study Day, Branch Bulletin, Branch President's Visits, Consultation with Parallel Chairs, Leadership and Management Training course, Mailings from Branch Activity Chairs. Also on the back cover were listed National Services to Sisterhoods: National Activity Conferences, Accredited National Trainers, Field Services, Consultants to Branch Conferences, National Biennial Convention, National Publications, Guides and Directives, National Materials, Mailings from National Activity Chairs, Outlook Magazine (sent to every member of Women's League Sisterhoods four times a year).



Excerpt from article in Branching Out at the end of Judi's term in 2004

As our Branch begins a new chapter, combining with Metropolitan New York Branch, I would like to extend my best wishes to Riva Gershon-Lowy who will assume the presidency of our newly – merged branch, and to all the officers in board members. May we go – from strength to strength – as we continue the work of strengthening ourselves, our sisterhoods, our synagogues, and our community as we reinforce and teach the values in the beauty of Conservative Judaism.

There have always been formidable challenges facing our people– today is surely no exception – in the United States, in Israel, and throughout the world. May we meet these challenges successfully and may we emerge strong. The Jewish people, collectively as a nation as well as individually, has a responsibility to each other – may we have the privilege of fulfilling that responsibility so that we may always be a beacon of light to our people to the communities in which we live.

So, in closing, thanks for the memories – Branch and Women's League have helped mold who I am today. May we all build on our memories and our experiences in Branch and in Women's League, and may we be inspired by them as we chart the future!

Jackie Walzer, President (2004-2006)

Hudson Valley Branch

Gaye Altman said, "Jackie, we would like you to be president of Hudson Valley Branch of WLCJ." That began a two-year journey that I will never forget. I had never planned to be president, especially after an animated dialogue with my husband, but everything worked out in the end.

During my presidency, I had the opportunity to meet many Women's League members committed to the Conservative Movement. These friendships have continued to the present time. I spoke to the 31 Presidents in the Branch and made lots of phone calls. This experience gave me the opportunity to grow as a person.

I learned to speak to a large group of women and now do so effortlessly in my professional career. With the help of my husband, I became proficient in writing articles for "Branching Out". My convention experience as president was initially overwhelming. By conference end, I was extremely confident in my position and responsibilities. I was self-assured in my term as president.

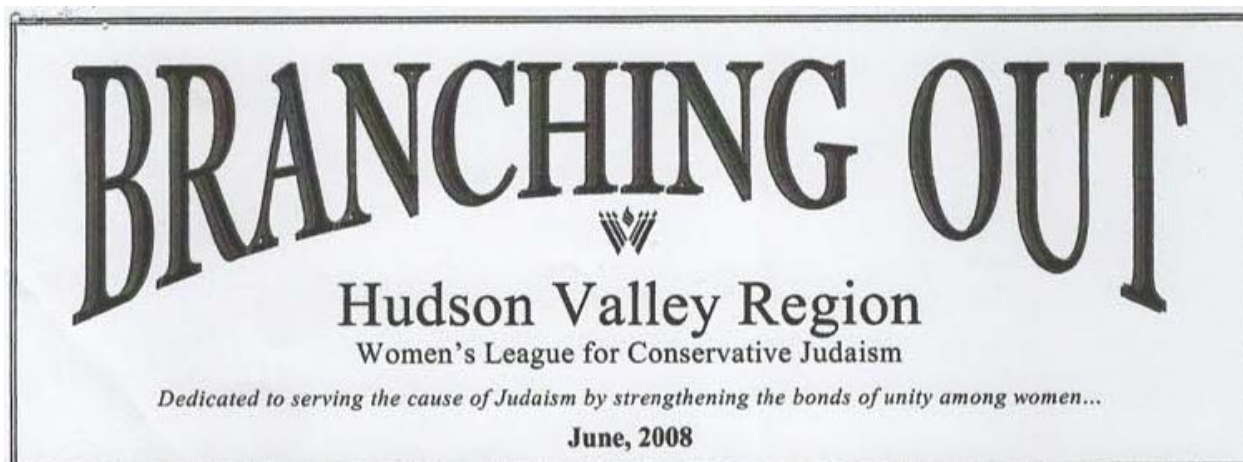
While president, we planned a knitting and crocheting activity and a Rabbi from Port Chester called me and said he had yarn for me for the program. Expecting a few skeins of yarn, I drove across the Tappan Zee Bridge and to my surprise, he filled my car with yarn. Unfortunately, we had a snow storm and although we were unable to do the project as a group, I was able to call women and distribute the yarn.

Our Torah Fund events drew a large number of women and our speakers were always informative. As usual, the food was delicious.

At that time, we had fall and spring conferences which were 2 days. Of course, we had the usual breakout sessions of Torah Fund, membership, presidents, programming and we always did some kind of craft. The conference always included a light breakfast, snacks, and lunch. I was lucky to have great women working on the conference.

My term as President was an extremely worthwhile and a character-building opportunity. Hopefully the Sisterhood membership felt the same way.

Ilene Kirschner Madwed, President (2006-2008)
Hudson Valley Branch



Ilene Kirschner Madwed, Region President

Barbara Schreiber, Bulletin Editor

FROM OUR REGION PRESIDENT, ILENE MADWED:

Shalom Chaverot,

On June 22, Hudson Valley Region will merge with Metropolitan Region and become MetroNorth. On that date we are holding the first Conference of the new Region. "Together . . . New Beginnings," is the theme of our Conference, being held at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The new Region Board will be installed, Sisterhood Presidents trained, workshops held, and friendships made. It is a very exciting time, with new officers and programming to look forward to.

This merger took two years of planning and organizing by many in this Region as well as at Women's League under the leadership of Cory Schneider and by the WL Board. Hudson Valley Region has 26 Sisterhoods, with almost 4,000 members. Our Region includes Sisterhoods in the Bronx, Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Putnam and Orange Counties in New York and lower Fairfield County in Connecticut. It will now include 8 additional Sisterhoods, from the Bronx and Manhattan and have over 4,500 members

In this final issue of *Branching Out*, I thought it was important for us to look at who we are and remember many of our wonderful programs and accomplishments of our Region (Branch) and of our Sisterhood women. Over the years, we have had interesting, informative and fun programs on many issues and topics. Conference Themes from 1977, and Torah Fund events from 1984 are listed. Past Presidents were asked to write as well and it is very moving to read what they wrote. Many of their memories will be similar to yours and mine.

In the past two years, I had the chance to meet and work with many wonderful women, committed to their families, synagogues, sisterhoods and ideals of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. I thank you for your enthusiasm, warmth and friendship. To the officers and board members of Hudson Valley Region, WLCJ, thank you for your support and hard work to make the past two years what they were to me and to so many. Have a wonderful summer, keep in touch and stay active in your Sisterhoods and MetroNorth Region activities.

Shalom V'Lihtraot,

Ilene

Ilene Kirschner Madwed, President
Hudson Valley Region

HUDSON VALLEY BRANCH
Women's League for Conservative Judaism



Hallel - Song of Praise

As Miriam and the women sang at the
Yam Suf, so today do Jewish women dance
and rejoice when saying this prayer

DIRECTORY
5767
2006-2007

Last Hudson Valley Branch Directory

Metropolitan Branch

Sandy Koppell, President (2002-2004) Metropolitan Branch

I have been a member of Women's League for over 60 years. I became a member in the 1960's and was involved in Brooklyn Branch of National Women's League. I was a stay-at-home mom and upon joining Temple Sholom of Flatbush I became involved in both Sisterhood and the Branch. My crowning achievement there was chairing a Spring Conference on Women in the Rabbinate. It was at the dawn of the Women's Movement and I had two high school students, my daughter, Bonnie and Douglas Aronin together with a rebbetzin, Miriam Shapiro and a Women's League leader, Jessica Waxman. They discussed the possibility of women being admitted to The Jewish Theological Seminary as rabbinical students. It was an amazing discussion with two strong opinions for and two against. I remember Jessica Waxman saying it would happen, but we were still 10 years away.

My children grew up and I went back to work full time, so I was no longer able to participate in Branch activities, as their events were in the daytime. I was able to stay involved in Sisterhood.

Fast forward, I became an empty nester and moved to Manhattan. When I joined The East 55th St. Synagogue, I joined Sisterhood, but only as a dues-paying member as I was working full time. Then the Sisterhood dissolved. I couldn't be in a synagogue without a sisterhood so I reinvented it with a synagogue group called Women's League, with an entirely different format. We met in the evenings and focused on educational programs. From that point, I was invited to be on the Metropolitan Branch Board of Directors. I have been involved ever since.

Metropolitan became a very important part of my life. Even though I was working full time I was able to make many new friends, and participate in so many wonderful activities. There was an amazing group of women who headed Metropolitan.

A highlight of my administration as President of the Branch was Zahavah. We had a group of younger women who met in various homes throughout the year. My regret was we were not able to sustain this group for more than a couple of years. During that period many of our members opened their homes to host these women. I hope these women remembered us and went on to become leaders in Women's League. During my term in office, we established our first website which one of these Zahavah members kept updated.



Metropolitan Branch Torah Fund Event

Besides Torah Fund dinners and Spring Conferences, being near a Sephardic Community we were able to tour four Sephardic Synagogues and have a luncheon in a Sephardic restaurant. There were docent tours of several Jewish museums in Manhattan. One especially interesting program was a series, "Study with the Rabbis", when each Synagogue Rabbi took turns hosting us at their synagogues with some wonderful teachings. It was exciting going around and meeting many of the rabbis in our Branch. Our conferences were amazing. Notable conference speakers over the years, to name a few, included Edya Artz (Education Director of Women's League), Professor Anne Bayefsky, Dr. Judith Hauptman and Dr. Sharon Keller.

Being near The Jewish Theological Seminary we held conferences there, had luncheons in the Sukkah, and visited the Rare Book Room of the library. I was personally thrilled that my installation took place at JTS.

We had the advantage of having many past International Presidents join our branch when they moved to Manhattan. I was fortunate to have Audrey Citak and Selma Weintraub as my mentors.

Our Branch became part of MetroNorth Region in 2008, where I am still involved. I introduced our region to Sharsheret, a group that supports Jewish women diagnosed with breast cancer or at increased genetic risk. We participated in a walk in Central Park together with the American Breast Cancer Society to raise funds for them. Together with Florence Wolpoff, we continue to keep the Region updated on the United Nations and publicize Holocaust Remembrance Day at the United Nations since we represent Women's League as NGOs at the United Nations.



Metropolitan Branch Holocaust Remembrance Day at the United Nations,
(left to right) Lucy Becker, Florence Wolpoff, Sandy Koppell

It has been a privilege to be involved with Women's League my entire adult life. As with all volunteer work, I have gotten so much more out of it than I have given.

Sandy Koppell Outgoing President's Speech - May 2, 2004
(excerpts)

I feel like Juliet in Shakespeare's play – "Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow." Taking my leave of the Presidency is a bittersweet moment. It has been a tremendous honor to serve as your President the past two years. This coming week in the Parsha Emor, we read of the counting of the Omer. Today, we are in the midst of the Omer, counting the days till we can celebrate the holiday of Shavuot. Two years ago, I counted in eager anticipation the days till I could step up and serve as President of Metropolitan Branch. It is amazing to realize how swiftly the time has gone. I am grateful for the privilege I was given and the confidence you have reposed in me. I can't thank you enough for all the support you have given me. But now, it is time to turn over the reins to our new President, Elinor Blash. It gives me nachas to know that we will be in such good hands.

The saying goes, "My mother planted for me, I plant so my children may eat of the fruits." Sue Press and Sharon Steinberg planted our roots. They made Metropolitan Branch the place to be. I have been the recipient of their fine work. May Elinor continue to nurture the fruit that was planted and go on to plant her own seeds.

We belong to an international organization that has as a priority building leadership. When I took office, I attended President's school, where I met and made friends with 24 other newly installed Branch Presidents. We have rejoiced in simchas, laughed together and supported each other. Lo and behold, we found we shared similar problems and through the electronic age of e-mail were constantly in touch with each other. President's school helped us hone our leadership skills and learn what was expected of us as Branch Presidents. Then we were let loose, and given a Coach to help us. Metropolitan Branch and I couldn't have been more fortunate, as Audrey Citak walked us through these two years with her excellent advice, creativity and as hostess par excellence.

It is amazing just how many people it takes to make a Branch work. We have an executive committee that serves as a President's council. They were always ready, willing and able to help solve problems by telephone and group e-mail. We have gotten to be adept at pushing the "Reply to all" button. Their advice was a constant encouragement and made the past two years a breeze. Thank you, Jackie Berkowitz, Elinor Blash, Rita Friedman, Victoria Friedman, Eleanore Gerringer, Judy Sellner, Miriam Korman and of course our past branch Presidents and our Coach. It takes the cooperation of the Executive Committee, Activity Chairs, Past Presidents, the Branch Board of Directors and the two Past International Presidents with whom we have been blessed to make us a vibrant Branch. Sadly we lost Helen Goldstein this past year. As a Past International President she was always there for us.

Joyce Apfeldorf, our Bulletin chair worked diligently to bring you three bulletins each of the past two years. Our new kid on the block, and she is a kid, coming to us through Z'havah, Jennifer Stein, has become our Webmaster. We have come into the twenty first century, where even our bulletin can be seen on line, as well as be delivered to your home snail mail. As third class mail it is definitely SNAIL mail. Victoria Friedman had a productive year. Not only do we have Caleb, as our adopted Grandson, but she has nurtured our Z'havah and kvelled as our Z'havah members have taken leadership roles in Branch and in their study sessions. Esther Marcus as our Program Chair planned a spectacular day. We visited several Sephardic Synagogues and had a delicious lunch in Great Neck, during Sukkot. I still can't understand how she pulls this off without a telephone answering machine or a computer. Our incoming President, Elinor Blash, ran a wonderful Torah Fund program, where we honored all our Torah Fund Chairs, and today we are in for a treat, as Judy Sellner and Carol Green, who unfortunately couldn't be with us today, Chair this wonderful conference.

Of course there are two additional people to thank. One is my very understanding boss, Roberta Koeppel, who allowed me the freedom to go off on WL business during business hours and bear with my answering e-mails and phone calls during business hours while using the office fax machine as my personal fax. And then there is my husband, Leo, who worked quietly by my side, reading my articles and listening to my speeches and putting up with no dinner when there was a meeting. Todah Rabah.

When I accepted the President's pin, the symbol of the presidency at Spring Conference 2002 I pledged to give my time and whatever expertise I possessed to the cause of Conservative Judaism through Women's League and Metropolitan Branch. Little did I realize that now, at Conference 2004, I can tell you I have gained infinitely more than I have given. During the past two years I have been given the gift of friendship – the many new friends here in our branch and with the other Branch Presidents from coast to coast.

This Presidency has helped hone my skills as writer, and speaker, as I wrote bulletin articles and visited our affiliates. Sorry, I have still not learned to spell. This has been a term of great personal growth and development. Thank you so much for this opportunity. May God continue to bless all the works of our hands.

MetroNorth Region

Susan Orlando, President (2011-2013) MetroNorth Region

On July 14, 2011, I was installed as the second president of the Metro North region of Women's League for Conservative Judaism at Montebello Jewish Center in Montebello, New York. The evening included a conference. The installation was performed by our Rabbi Morris Zimbalist, and Canter Michele Rubin. Our Synagogue choir sang and refreshments were enjoyed.

There were many activities which our region sponsored. We had a tour of the United Nations and met with an Israeli delegate. We had an event in October for breast cancer awareness for the Gary Rosenthal project whereby we made dreidels, mezuzot, candlesticks, Chanukiot, and other Judaica. A portion of each item when sold went to Sharsheret, the Jewish organization that helps support women going through breast cancer treatment

Our two Torah Fund dinners were huge successes. At the first event in Manhattan, Lisa Siegel began the practice of having businesses donate items for raffle. This part of the evening brought in money for Torah Fund and added an extra level of enjoyment. This raffle was also adopted by the planners of the Hudson Valley event.

During my presidency, all the regions began using Constant Contact. Never claiming to be a computer expert, and with help from the people at Constant Contact, I did manage to get out messages to our women in the region. There were many late nights on the phone and computer. Also, at this time, on February 10, 2012, my granddaughter, Leah, was born at 25 weeks at 1 lb. 12 oz., and spent 97 days in the ICU at Maria Ferrara Hospital in Valhalla, New York. Those days were difficult. This event made the rest of my presidency very difficult. We had to watch Leah several days a week for her first one and a half years because she wasn't allowed to be with others. I managed to perform my duties as president to the best of my ability at a very trying time. Some sisterhoods contributed handmade blankets to our "Love, Leah" Blanket program. Leah recently celebrated her bat mitzvah at Orangetown Jewish Center. Our whole family took part in weaving her tallit and bag.

By Susan Orlando (2025)



Excerpts from Susan's Installation Speech (2011)

MetroNorth Region is one of 13 regions whose mission is to serve as the connection between Women's League, its affiliates (the sisterhoods) and their members, and to provide services for their strength and growth. A new initiative this year is support of the 2012 Koach Kallah, United Synagogues outreach program on college campuses, a place where our children and grandchildren are often bombarded with influences to the right and left which might pull them away from Conservative Judaism. Koach provides college students the opportunity to maintain and develop connections to Conservative Judaism while nurturing a love of Torah, the Jewish people, Israel and God through a variety of social, religious, educational, cultural, and social action projects.

I hope each of your sisterhood's will contribute to this program which will have a lasting effect on our growth into the future. Also, Lisa Kogen's new Hiddur Mitzvah Project is rewriting the Jewish Home Beautiful for the modern woman. Please check these out on the Women's League website: www.wlcj.org. While there, also check out our revamped MetroNorth Region Website. With the help of our new webmaster, Harriet Spevack, I will send out periodic messages of inspiration and information.



At the Presidents' Conference which I attended June 12-15 at JTS and the Women's League office, Carol Simon, Region Services Chair, gave us a homework assignment: write a 3 minute elevator speech of what would you say to someone who saw a tag affixed to your clothing saying you were a member of MetroNorth. Here is my elevator speech.

"MetroNorth is one of 13 spokes in the wheel that is Women's League for Conservative Judaism, and a link to our 33 sisterhoods in Manhattan and the Hudson Valley. We hope to

motivate and inspire the women in these sisterhoods through programs, conferences, events, etc. to strengthen the bonds to our synagogue communities and Jewish traditions while at the same time bringing together these women so that they delight in each other's company, create friendships, boost membership, contribute to Torah Fund, feel an affinity to the Masorti Movement in Israel and develop a personal connection to Conservative Judaism and each other."



Convention 2011, Susan Orlando, President
Seated (left to right): ?, Judi Kenter, Sue Press, Susan Orlando, ?, Carolyn Barron Back
row: ?, Claire Gondelman, ?, ?

Claire Gondelman, President (2013-2015) MetroNorth Region

During my term I personally visited every sisterhood in the region, but one. And sometimes more than once. I called and emailed each sisterhood several times and went to many meetings and board meetings. I was extremely proud that I was at every sisterhood and had many presidents come to Region Board meetings.

We also had two Torah Fund dinners with raffles that were very good. It was the first time that we had raffles and it resulted in giving much extra money to Torah Fund.

Mindy Steinholtz, President (2015-2017)

MetroNorth Region

I don't remember who called and asked me to become president of the region. I said no at first. I think I then said I would think about it. Then, I finally agreed. I came into the position with little WLCJ experience. I had been an area director before hand and also a Sisterhood president. I was installed on June 4, 2015 at First Hebrew Congregation in Peekskill (my own congregation). A few days later, I was off to NYC for Presidents' training at the WLCJ office (in the Interchurch building) and at JTS along with our region TF vice-presidents. This was an intensive three days. I learned many things I did not have any idea about. One of the first things I found out was that the position was changing from a 2-year term to the option of a 3-year term. I already had committed to becoming my synagogue president as of July 1, 2017. So I immediately had to let them know that I could not go on to third year. The WLCJ international president then was Carol Simon and Randy Schwartz was region services team lead.

Working with them was a pleasure! I think I managed to get to nearly every Sisterhood affiliate during my term. I went to many Sisterhood Shabbat services, a few Torah Fund events, Women's Seders, and other programming. During my term, Carol Simon proposed visiting every region and meeting with Sisterhood leadership from several affiliates. Carol could not make that trip to MetroNorth so Randy Schwartz came in her place. I offered home hospitality to Randy and we visited Sisterhoods in Westchester, Rockland, and one upstate. We met in many diners and had many tuna melts for those lunches! It was really fun to do.

The other big item of that term was Carol's proposal for each region to work on its by-laws and organizational structure with something that was called a "Change Team". It was a recognition that each region had issues that were unique to themselves. I know that we had several meetings at Judi Kenter's home- a small committee of I think 5 people in total. One of the most important things for our region was to acknowledge the issues between the suburbs and New York City. Something I had not realized the extent of issues between the suburbs and the city- such as transportation! Those of us from the suburbs all go by car and need to account for tolls, traffic, and parking. (Trust me that I almost missed a couple of events because of horrible traffic). Those from the city, many don't have cars! And public transportation is good to Westchester, less good to Rockland. This was also early in the Uber era so getting to a location via train or bus then "car/service" was more complicated.

During my term, we also did Shabbat Messages every other week. Lisa Green was my communications person so she and I worked to get them done. Linda Klempner was the region Torah Fund VP so we worked very closely together too. I tried to keep my messages centered on my personal experiences. I figured that there were many other places to get D'vrai Torah for the week's parasha.

Our region has been doing two Torah Fund dinners a year and we continued that. We had one in the suburbs each year- in 2016 at Orangeburg Jewish Center and in 2017 at

Bet Torah. Both years in Manhattan they were at Sutton Place Synagogue. The two events had much in common but also much that was different. Since we had more honorees in the suburbs, the presentations were shorter. The dinners were presented differently- buffets in the suburbs, plated dinners in the city. However, in both places we had student speakers and great raffles! They were run by Lisa Siegel with donations of great prizes from local businesses and cultural institutions. We did them “penny social” style. During my term the special project of “She Plants a Seed” for Torah fund was going on. So we donated all the proceeds from the raffles to that special project (from both dinners each year).

I turned over the Region Presidency to Gaye Altman in 2017 for the “third” year. She was installed at First Hebrew as well, during a region open board meeting and dessert reception. I wish I still had documents from that time but I kept things in a file on my computer and I am now 3 computers past that one. I think we started with 18-21 affiliates when I began my term. I believe that we had several which disaffiliated that first summer/fall.

Really, the highlight for me was getting to meet so many fabulous women from my region president cohort, the region TF VPs from my term, the women in leadership in the region, and the women at so many Sisterhoods. I also met many women on the international level. I have stayed an active member of my region and international since then.



<i>Program</i>	
Welcome and Remarks.....	Harriet Blumencranz <i>Bet Torah Sisterhood President</i>
	Mindy Steinholz <i>President, MetroNorth Region</i>
	Debbi Kaner Goldich <i>WLCJ International Torah Fund Chair</i>
HaMotzi.....	Marcia Stone
 Dinner	
Introduction of Speaker.....	Linda Klempner <i>Torah Fund VP, MetroNorth Region</i>
Speaker.....	Benjamin Chaidell <i>Rabbinical Student, JTS</i>
Birkat Hamazon.....	Judi Kenter
Award Presentations.....	Gaye Altman and Nancy Scheff <i>Westchester and Rockland Torah Fund Area Directors</i>

Gaye Altman, President (2017-2018)

MetroNorth Region

Excerpts of final speech at Region Conference 2018

Communication and Committee have been my thing throughout this past year. Reaching out to the Region board members and sisterhood presidents has been a rewarding and energizing experience. I have had numerous opportunities to meet and engage with dedicated and innovative women, eager to share their sisterhood programs and projects as well as their individual sisterhood struggles. At Sisterhood Shabbat, Torah Fund events and Women's Seders, we engaged with each other on Jewish values and programs, as well as looked for ways to increase membership and participation in synagogue, sisterhood, and community.

The Region held a President's Workshop at my home, facilitated by a Women's League consultant which provided a great amount of information and ample time to answer questions

Our bimonthly articles through Constant Contact, offered our sisterhoods a platform to share their creativity as well as provide information to each other. In addition, each sisterhood member learned about women's league and all the programs and services available. WLCJ.org remains the "go to" for information regarding any portfolio and connects us to Women's League, the staff and board members.

Emails provided board members with the ability to share and review documents; create flyers and programs for events and to express their thoughts. Sisterhood presidents also benefited from these mailings as they connected them with our region and they were able to ask questions, share concerns, and receive responses in a timely manner. Personally, the telephone and I remain good friends. It is the quickest and most personal way to connect and respond to our members. Numerous phone calls were made throughout the year to connect with each board member and sisterhood president, whether around Jewish holidays and festivals or chat with each president to see what they may need.

Board meetings, with the exception of our first meeting, which was held at my home, were conducted through Zoom/telephone conferences. This format allowed far more participation as geography and travel were non-issues. It was through these online meetings and calls that the board was able to plan and expedite our Torah Fund dinners, as well as response to concerns regarding the region.

Committee work is responsible for our successful projects this past year. Our two Torah Fund dinners, hosted by Nanuet Hebrew Center and Sutton Place Synagogue, provided an opportunity for our board members to work together with the sisterhood presidents as well as their members. Reaching out for support allowed the women to share their

time and expertise in a warm and welcoming environment, encourage participation and train our future leaders. The same concept applies to board dynamics and our region conference.

Thank you to the region board and Women's League for your support and encouragement this past year. You have given me the opportunity to work with so many women dedicated to the ideals and values of Conservative/Masorti Judaism.

To Linda and, the incoming board, best wishes for a fulfilling, exciting, productive, and successful three years. You are dynamic, energetic, and organized. There is a supportive team waiting to help with the transition and we all look forward to working together

Excerpt from final bulletin article as president in May, 2018

As we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Women's League, we remember Mathilde Schechter, the founder of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. She stated "the purpose was to serve the cause of Judaism by strengthening the bond of unity among the Jewish people; to form a sister organization to the United synagogue founded by her husband, Professor Solomon Schechter. Her plan provided for service to be undertaken by women in their homes, their synagogues, and their communities." Mathilde Schechter fostered the Jewish tradition of volunteerism.

Our sisterhoods are strong participants in all aspects of Jewish living. We initiate and provide programs focusing on education, ritual, community service and social action, fundraising, and support for Israel. Our sisterhood's exemplify the ideal set 100 years ago.

We celebrate another step in fulfilling Mathilde Schechter's vision of the role of the Jewish woman in the home synagogue and community: here , in Israel, and around the world.

Linda Klempner, President (2018-2021)
MetroNorth Region

***MetroNorth Region Executive
Committee***

Linda Klempner, President
Susan Goodman, Metropolitan Area VP
Mindy Steinholz, Torah Fund VP
Dena Gordon, Administrative Secretary
Lisa Green, Communications Secretary
Dr. Reva Gershen-Lowy Parliamentarian
Cedine Issman, Financial Secretary/Treasurer
Vera Winitch, Metropolitan Area Torah Fund
Lucy Becker, Education Metropolitan Area VP
Lisa Green, Education Hudson Valley Area VP
Florence Wolpoff, Membership Metropolitan Area VP
Fran Olmsted, Membership Hudson Valley Area VP
Susan Orlando, Israeli Affairs
Sandy Koppel, Past President's Council
Lisa King Smith, Member at Large
Gaye Altman, Immediate Past President/Nominations
Jackie Walzer, Sunshine

Installation:

As I think back to my becoming President of MetroNorth it seems like yesterday but it was 2018. The installation took place at Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale in the Bronx. I had held a variety of positions in Women's League including; Spring Conference, Education Vice President, Membership Vice President and most recently Torah Fund Vice President. I felt it was appropriate for me to move up to MetroNorth President,

A week before installation I took part in three days of training at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Women's League office where I met and bonded with twelve incoming region presidents from all over the United States and Canada. Margie Miller, International President, Debra Green, International Vice President Region Service Leader and Rabbi Ellen Wolnitz-Fields, Executive Director led the sessions and truly inspired and educated us about Women's League.

Answering the challenge of relevance for today's Conservative Jewish woman as well as spreading the geographic representation of its leadership, developing an educated Jewish congregation, and appealing to younger women are all part of the challenges being met by Women's League today.

I look forward to traveling throughout the region visiting Sisterhoods for Simchas, Torah Fund events and Sisterhood Shabbats. Please be sure to communicate to me or Lisa Green, Communication Secretary, anything going on in your Sisterhood. "If I don't know I can't go".

My goal for the next three years was to fulfill the mission of Women's League for Conservative Judaism which is to strengthen and unite synagogue women, their members and individual members, support them in mutual efforts to understand and perpetuate Conservative/Masorti Judaism in the home, synagogue and community; and reinforce their bonds with Israel and Jews worldwide.

I know we will be able to Engage Enrich Empower each other as I begin the position of Metro North President for three years. I look forward to working with everyone. Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Covid 19 Struck

The first case of Covid 19 in New York City was confirmed in March 2020. I was driving to Beth El Synagogue in New Rochelle, New York to be the guest speaker at the Shabbat service. When I pulled into the parking lot there were no cars. I parked my car and went to security asking them "where is everyone!". Their response is something I will never forget "there is a pandemic everything is closed". I immediately got back into my car and drove to my Synagogue in Manhattan, Park Avenue Synagogue. On March 20 all non-essential businesses were closed.

Zoom

All indoor events had to be cancelled leaving MetroNorth to use our imagination for a Torah Fund event, A new modern means of communication replaced social gatherings. Zoom is a meeting application with video, chat and screen sharing capabilities. We caught on to zoom very quickly. In place of a Torah Fund event we took a tour of Zigler School of Rabbinic Studies in California. We could download zoom sign in to join a meeting, change settings and more all from your living room. We could see each other on our computer screens from our own homes.

Spring Conferences

As President I oversaw two Spring Conferences.

I finished my term on Wednesday, June 16, 2021.

Program Highlights:

Installation of MetroNorth Board of Directors Lisa Green, Nanuet Jewish Center
Incoming President Keynote Speaker: Rabbi Bonnie, Chaplain (Colonel) US Army
Reserves, Retired "The Rabbi Wears Combat Boots"

New Logo

One day I looked at the MetroNorth logo and felt it did not represent the region. I had a friend who was able to create on a computer. I asked him to use bright happy colors representing the metro north train. What he created was perfect. Whenever you see the logo on constant contact you will know its MetroNorth.

Todah Rabah

This is the last bi-weekly message I am sending....in two weeks you will begin hearing from our new President, Lisa Green. It has been an honor to represent the MetroNorth Region of WL for Conservative Judaism as president for the past four years.

Sisters Journeying Together was the theme of WLCJ Convention 2020. But life does what life does and the in-person celebration in Schaumburg, Illinois was replaced by an amazing Zoom get-together due to the pandemic.

What am I feeling tonight? Many things, but most of all gratitude. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity. I have been welcomed into your synagogues, meetings, and events and I have made many friends along the way.

Sisters Journeying Together truly describes our ongoing experiences as Women's League members, by'yachad, This is true not just during convention but as part of our remarkable network. It is true as we travel through so many of life's cycles, And sisters journeying together is the perfect way to summarize how I feel about these past three years,

Todah Rabah! Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as President of the MetroNorth Women's League. As my three years come to an end, I can say that it's enriched my life and hope it has enriched yours.



Lisa Green, President (2021-2024)

MetroNorth Region

The first thing to note for my term as president of the region is its historical timing. I took over as president in July of 2021, which was at the end of the Covid pandemic. There were many concerns about being in public at the beginning of my term, so my installation and training was all done online. It is surprising how close our group of region presidents became since we didn't meet in person until Convention 2023. We are still a close-knit group of women and have an active text chain.

The implications for being president during Covid were major. Since many of the women in WLCJ were in the "at risk" category for complications due to Covid, we were told not to see anyone in person. This was a strange request for a group that is social by design. We switched all meetings and programs to Zoom. In the previous year WLCJ did organize Makom B'Yachad which allowed people to gather for daily prayer on Zoom every day. Many people appreciated the ability to be social over Zoom and signed on early to say hi to friends.

I wish I could say that Covid was the only large historical event during my presidency, but it wasn't. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. This war is currently still going on today, with numerous casualties. Then on October 7th 2023 Gaza attacked Israel, killing 1,219 people, at least 810 of them were civilians. Hamas also took about 250 hostages, which led to many civil protests of "Bring Them Home Now"

Of course, with all these worldwide events going on WLCJ tried to do programming around it and started "We stand with Israel" series. In the region many synagogues brought in speakers including Nova music festival survivors. At the region level we did a Zoom with Rabbi Akiva Gersh who was preparing vegetarian meals for the soldiers. Overall, it was a difficult time for Jewish people and as the war with Gaza continued, antizionism and antisemitism spread.

Even though it was a difficult time to be a Jewish leader, I did enjoy being region president. I have always had the belief that if I am going to make a request of someone, I want to get to know them first, so my first goal as region president was to get to know the sisterhood presidents in the region. I tried to schedule individual Zoom calls with the presidents which was a useful tool. Ones that I couldn't schedule right away, I was able to meet in person after the Covid restrictions were removed. Since the region board was made up of many representatives of the synagogues in the area, I was familiar with some sisterhoods right away. I did receive many invitations to Torah Fund programs and sisterhood shabbats. Some of them I attended from the comfort of my couch.

Writing the bi-weekly articles is a difficult task for a president, but I did like being able to talk about current events. I also viewed the newsletter as a chance for people to get to know me better.

One of the things that I was most proud of during my presidency was starting a scholarship committee. The committee worked on Scholarship practices and scholarships forms and we were able to give out two scholarships to convention and one scholarship to Leadership Institute while I was president.

Overall, being Region President was a lot of work, but I truly enjoyed the experience, and I hope I made a difference.



Judi Dickstein Kenter, President (2024-2026)
MetroNorth Region

Although I had not thought that I would never be president of the MetroNorth Region, lo and behold, 22 years after I was president of Hudson Valley Branch, it happened. I have tried my best.

While we are a geographically small Region, the culture is very different from city to suburban. Each year we have had a Torah Fund dinner for the Hudson Valley and one for the Metro area. We have come together for Conference and zoom meetings. We have travelled to the Rockland County Holocaust Museum, we have co-sponsored a project to make beautiful wood boards decorated with resin, we will be travelling to JTS for a tour and educational program. We have raised money for Sharsheret through our dedicated Board Member and walker – Sandy Koppell.

I have tried to reach out to the Sisterhood presidents but have not had as much response as I would like. This is a goal. I am hoping that we will continue to reach into our Sisterhoods within the Region.

We currently have sixteen vibrant Sisterhoods in the Region. While there are fewer Sisterhoods because several synagogues have merged, each is an important part of their synagogue and community. The women on the Region Board have been a resource for the Sisterhoods. We have published our MetroNorth newsletter on a bi-weekly basis.

I want to thank all of the women, past, present and future who have helped to sustain and build our Conservative/Masorti community and supported each other.

Creative Handcrafts Projects

Westchester Rockland Branch

Nes Hakodesh Banner (1980)

Tevet

Westchester-Rockland Branch

טבת

Our hope is not yet lost, our ancient hope, to
return to the land of our fathers, to the city of David,
in which David rested.

Imber, Hatikvah

Design Artists: Francine Fierstein, Sylvia Wolff

Needle Artists: Jeanett Cagin, Beatrice Mandell,
Leah Slotnick, Ilisa Spatz



Metropolitan Branch

Nes Hakodesh Banner (1980)

Iyar Metropolitan Branch

אייר

We count the days that pass since the preceding Festival (Pesah) just as one who expects his most intimate friend on a certain day counts the days and even the hours.

Maimonides

Design Artist: Mickey Feld

Needle Artists: Mickey Feld, Gilda Hecht, Marilyn Lerner, Ellen Sheidlower



Huppah (1996)

FABRIC: unbleached muslin, cotton *tallit* (made in Ethiopia), silver ribbon

TECHNIQUE: ribbon to carry silver to border

HEBREW: none

THEME: beauty in simplicity

ARTIST: Miriam Korman, Chair



Torah Fund Pin (1998)



1957-58 Burning Bush - And The Bush Was Not Consumed



1981-82 Ner Tamid - Eternal Light

Mitzvat Torah Letter Project (2000)



Yud

Eishet Hayil Quilt (2006)

Each Branch was assigned one sentence from the Eishet Hayil poem (Proverbs 31) and asked to interpret it artistically. A variety of styles were used including painting, beadwork, embroidery and applique.



Hudson Valley Branch

Huppah (1996)

FABRIC: cotton

TECHNIQUE: applique, embroidery, computer

HEBREW: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine"

THEME: computer design in style of traditional "Baltimore Album Quilt" with scalloped border and each block being different; Jewish motifs: *Shabbat* candles, *kiddush* cup, *hallah*, *m'norah*, etc.; Biblical motifs: dove (Noah), rose of Sharon, lyre; blue of scalloped border is reminiscent of Israeli flag

ARTISTS: Susan Lazaroff, Chair; Lorna Saul; Roseann Lempke; Marianne Parnes; Barbara Horn; Mina Koslow; Tina Spergel; Betty Grossman; all of Temple Beth El, Port Jervis, New York.



Torah Fund Pin (1998)



1960 - 61 Keter Torah - Crown of the Torah



Tree of Life Logo - United Synagogue

Mitzvat Torah Letter Project (2000)



Het

Eishet Hayil Quilt (2006)

Each Branch was assigned one sentence from the Eishet Hayil poem (Proverbs 31) and asked to interpret it artistically. A variety of styles were used including painting, beadwork, embroidery and applique.

