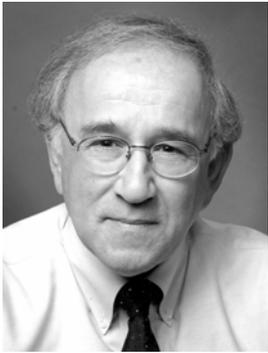


Beth EI's Future is Based on the Strategic Plan

By Elisabeth Wechsler



The volunteer/staff partnership at Congregation Beth EI is one of five key initiatives designed to strengthen the congregation in the years ahead. "It defines who does what, with whom, and why," said Mike Austin, who served as the pro bono

consultant to the Beth EI Strategic Plan Committee that spent all of 2010 developing the plan. In fact, the strategic plan logo (see below) intentionally places this volunteer/staff relationship at the center because it helps to turn all the other gears. With staff assistance, volunteers are responsible for building financial stability and membership growth. In turn, with volunteer assistance, the staff of Beth EI provide the leadership in program development as well as internal and external communications.

According to the Strategic Plan (see Executive Summary on the Beth EI website), there has been a long-standing need for a system to recruit and sustain volunteers that identifies congregational needs and the interests/talents of our members. One of Mike's views is that "Members need to remember that half of their commitment is the dues they pay, but the other half of the commitment is volunteering their time and expertise to Beth EI." For example, he noted that the volunteer (Ruach) form sent out last summer with the dues statement produced only 25 responses to a specific list of needs, and most of those were the same people who are already very active at Beth EI.

"We need a system to recruit volunteers and a systematic way to sustain and train them," he said. The occupational profile of our membership represents a "potential talent bank of members who could help us." With Board approval, Mike recently volunteered to develop a new Beth EI Leadership Manual that will include important congregational documents as well as profiles of the

responsibilities of committee chairs and other leadership roles at Beth EI, making it easier for those moving into new leadership positions. Mike is the Mack Professor of Nonprofit Management at the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare.

Mike's parents were part of the original 40 families who founded Beth EI in the mid-1940's. His mother, Gay Austin, helped the synagogue start the nursery school in the then new synagogue at Arch and Vine Streets in 1951. (For more information about the Beth EI's history, read "A Leap of Faith: A Brief History of Congregation Beth EI," compiled and written by Sue Austin, located on the new website)

Mike's career in academia took him to Pittsburgh, Tallahassee, Seattle, Philadelphia, and eventually back to Berkeley in 1998. Upon his return, his first big volunteer involvement was serving on the Rabbi Search Committee in 2007 followed by serving as Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee. He recently shared the Marian Magid Award for Community Service with Kathryn Haynes Sanstad.

