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## Homes & Lifestyle

### Congregation B'nai B'rith Marks Hanukkah With Eight Days of Good Deeds

Mitzvah Week activities could include donating food or clothes for community members in need

SOURCE: ANNI PIERAMICI FOR CONGREGATION B'NAI BRITH

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Members of Congregation B'nai Brith work to spread joy to the local community even in time of a pandemic. (Courtesy photo)

Like most events in this pandemic year, Congregation B'nai Brith's annual Mitzvah Day has been transformed from a large, day-long social gathering, where generations came together to give back to the local community, into a week-long giving event.

Mitzvah Week kicks off this year on Thursday, Dec. 10, coinciding with the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

"The pandemic forced us to find new ways to stay connected to each other and engage in community in ways we didn't know before," said Mariela Socolovsky, director of community engagement at Congregation B'nai Brith.

"We were inspired to reimagine our Hanukkah festivities as well as Mitzvah Day, combining both into a week of giving to our Santa Barbara community," she said.

Hanukkah, often called the Festival of Lights, is celebrated for eight days and nights by lighting a candle each night in a menorah (a special candelabrum). Holiday festivities include playing dreidel (a four-sided top with Hebrew letters on it), and eating homemade latkes (potato pancakes).

Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and the miracle of how a small quantity of oil, meant to last just one night, miraculously burned for eight days.

Congregation B'nai Brith will bring light to the world and celebrate each of the eight days of Hanukkah by fulfilling the commandment to perform acts of human kindness, known as "mitzvot" in Hebrew.

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"You could say that instead of waiting for miracles to happen, we are creating them ourselves," Socolovsky said.

There will be eight days of mitzvot overlapping with the eight days of Hanukkah. Temple members are encouraged to visit the Congregation B'nai Brith website to learn more about the mitzvah described for each day.

Some of the events include being neighborly by writing cards or delivering home-baked goods to those who live nearby; donating blood through the Vitalant blood mobile; giving gifts to the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation; donating food to the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission; or giving coats and blankets to PATH.

Those seeking hands-on activities are urged to create scrapbook pages for the Dream Foundation, or knit blankets for seniors and veterans. The temple website provides Torah text corresponding with each mitzvah, and shares ideas on local organizations in need.

While most of the events take place off-site, the community is invited to come together every night via Zoom for the holiday's candle-lighting ritual. The community is also invited to drive through the temple parking lot to gather materials.

The sixth annual, yet, first-ever virtual Hanukkah Cabaret, featuring the talents of the temple teens, will be livestreamed to homes on Wednesday, Dec. 16.

"We hope we are bringing much needed light to the world," said Rabbi Daniel Brenner in a video message sent to congregants. The temple has also invited its community members to capture their good deeds through a short video that will be compiled and shared.

The Mitzvah Day planning committee is co-chaired by Annie Kempe, Ashley Goldstein and Debbi Spungen. For more information, visit <https://cbsb.org/mitzvah/>.



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Welcome to Noozhawk Asks, a new feature in which you ask the questions, you help decide what Noozhawk investigates, and you work with us to find the answers.

Here's how it works: You share your questions with us in the nearby box. In some cases, we may work with you to find the answers. In others, we may ask you to vote on your top choices to help us narrow the scope. And we'll be regularly asking you for your feedback on a specific issue or topic.

We also expect to work together with the reader who asked the winning questions to find the answer together. Noozhawk's objective is to come at questions from a place of curiosity and openness, and we believe a transparent collaboration is the key to achieve it.

The results of our investigation will be published here in this Noozhawk Asks section. Once or twice a month, we plan to do a review of what was asked and answered.

Thanks for asking!

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