

Donating Is Important, But So Is Investing Time

Giving of oneself to help the less fortunate, not just donating money to a worthy cause, is considered so integral to Jewish life that it's viewed as a very special mitzvah. It requires a higher-level investment.

Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) teaches how "the practice of charity is one of the pillars on which the world rests."

It's easy to donate money; and most worthy causes welcome a cash infusion. It's harder to give of oneself; a commitment of time and a willingness to fail come into play.

Jews historically have dug deep into their spiritual soul to find a way to supplement financial gifts with personal outreach.

The Feb. 18 issue of the *JN* reported on two wonderful examples of Jews building charitable bridges of outreach

between suburbia and Detroit:

- "The Joy Of Reading" told about Friends of MacDowell efforts to build literacy at their former elementary. The article relates that "the volunteer group has been one piece of stability in a school that seen its share of turmoil" and how alumni tutors enjoy being with the kids — nurturing a love of reading and literature, sharing memories of "their own school days at MacDowell" as well as doing a little fundraising.

A similar script has played out over the years, to varying degrees, between other Jewish alumni and their Detroit elementary schools, notably Pasteur, Bagley, Glazer, Schultz, Hampton, Vernor, Vandenberg, Winship and others. Enough volunteers and sustained energy is always a challenge, though.

- "Spreading The Love" recounted how Project Healthy Community, a

Temple Israel and Melvyn Rubenfire family initiative, assists families down on their luck in the neighborhoods surrounding the Northwest Activities Center in Detroit, once our Jewish Community Center.

Project Healthy Community helps elevate the standard of living, from nutrition to education to health to camping and more, for qualifying families. Over the past 3½ years, the inter-community, interracial and interfaith nonprofit has brought in sharp relief how we as a Jewish community can inspire a team approach to turn grass-roots dreams into productive reality.

Not every act of giving reaps a big dividend. But standing pat won't yield even a small return. Successful outreach clearly requires stepping up — conscientiously, even daringly — and not fearing having to regroup and try once more. ✱