

On Sunday, April 14, 2019, 150 members of our community who have committed to making legacy gifts gathered together in celebration of LIFE & LEGACY at Mercantile Center, Worcester MA. Leah Shuldiner, the coordinator of LIFE & LEGACY, made the following remarks. We share them with you all. If you would like to discuss your own legacy, contact Leah at 508-756-1543 or legacy@jfmc.org.

I spend most of my work day thinking about what a legacy is. And really, not what it is, but why it is important, and how I convey that to other people. I've been working in philanthropy for over 25 year, and it's a journey, and what I think about most is how to bring others along on that journey. I read articles, I go to workshops, and then something happens in my life that makes it so simple.

Last weekend my Temple had a holy book burial. We gathered up old, worn prayer books and just like burying a loved one, put them to rest with dignity. We stood in a grove of pine trees that surround our temple. I learned that day that those pines were a donation from the state horticultural department and were hand planted by the children of our religious school 40 years ago. One or two of those students were there last Sunday, but most were not. Most have moved on to new places in the world. My temple is only 42 years old, built by a small group of people who wanted to stop meeting in each other's' homes and create something that would outlast them.

So here I stood, a woman who wasn't Jewish 7 years ago, standing with her son who became a bar mitzvah last year and her daughter who is studying now, burying sacred text that has been handed down in writing and by mouth for 5000 years, standing in a grove of trees planted by unknown kids 40 years ago on the grounds of a shul built for future generations. Now, that's legacy.

Now is the part of the speech where I should quote someone else, and who better to quote than Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote in the musical Hamilton:

"What is a legacy? I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone else will sing for me."

And that is the quintessential essence of legacy. I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone else will sing for me. No one is expected to write the whole song. Each of us writes a few notes. Each of us adds to the lyrics. Legacies are built, piece by piece.

Forty years from now, who will be standing here celebrating Jewish life in Central Massachusetts? Maybe a few of us. Maybe a few of our children. Maybe someone we haven't even dreamed into the picture yet!

You made 122 legacy commitments this year for 11 Jewish organizations in Central Massachusetts. That gets added to the 242 made last year for a total of 364 legacy commitments. Now what does that mean? Well, already those commitments have brought \$2 Million to our community, and we estimate that the total may be \$9.5 Million or more! You all did that. Each of you wrote a few notes in the song that is Jewish life in Central Massachusetts, and what an incredible symphony it is turning out to be. Thank you.