

Linda and Tom Sloan

Linda grew up in the midwestern town of Painesville, Ohio, and was skeptical about Greensboro when we moved here in 1970. She came with every prejudice a northerner could have about the South. But soon enough, we were both drawn into community life, and one of our first involvements was with the Federation Young Leadership group. This was our springboard into community service.

We were both raised in small Jewish communities. In Greensboro, my Sunday school class was comprised of nine boys, no girls. Linda went to Sunday school in Cleveland, Ohio, but back in Painesville she was the only Jewish student in her high school class of 176. She had a strong Jewish identity because she felt she needed to be the spokesperson for what was Jewish.

Both of our parents were active in Jewish community life. Although I felt I never received a full Jewish education in Sunday school, I did develop an early attachment to Jewish causes, and this came from my father's mentorship. Having escaped Germany in 1939, he lived his whole life with the regret that he was never able to rescue his father, my grandfather, from the Holocaust. He was very focused on Israel and the idea of a Jewish homeland. He was also very involved in the local community, gave generously to the campaign every year, and even chaired it once.



In my family, going to services at Temple Emanuel was sort of a routine; we went at least once a month. I still enjoy attending Friday night services, and in particular, I like going to the new Temple on Jefferson Road. I was very involved in the new facility—envisioning the project, raising money for it, helping design it; it is my proudest Jewish accomplishment and perhaps even my proudest nonprofit accomplishment.

In raising our children--three daughters--we wanted to give them an understanding of Judaism. We celebrated holidays in our home and at the Temple, they each were bat mitzvahed, and we spent considerable time with our extended family and their grandparents. When each daughter got engaged, we sat down with her and her fiancé and had a serious discussion about a number of topics, one of them being Judaism. We wanted our daughters and their fiancés to understand what being Jewish meant to us, how it had shaped the lives of our parents and us, and how we valued that Jewish heritage. We wanted them to understand how our families had come out of experiences that were very specific to Jews—the pogroms in Russia, the Nazi Holocaust. Even though two of the young men were not Jewish, we wanted them to understand why Judaism was important to us and why we felt it very important for them to understand, preserve and value Jewish tradition in addition to their individual religious beliefs. Subsequently, all three of our daughters' families and all nine of our grandchildren are being raised Jewish.

On occasion when our young grandchildren are with us on the holidays, I've made it a point to take the older ones to services. They ask earnest, insightful questions—what should we pray about? What makes Yom Kippur special? These spiritual learning moments are very important to me, and I think they are meaningful to our grandchildren, too.

We relish the opportunity to teach our sons-in-law, too. One in particular told us how he grew up in a family where, when someone came and asked for money, the reaction was “Ugh, they're at the door again...Leave me alone!” But he said recently that his outlook has changed a great deal since getting to know us and talking to us about the importance of both asking for money in a community, and feeling good about giving money.

Those of us who have earned more than we need to spend on a daily basis are really blessed with the opportunity to help others. Giving is not a burden; it is a privilege. For us it is also an opportunity because we have chosen to be actively involved in the organizations to which we have donated.