

Society Hill Synagogue Extraordinary Service Honorees

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Each year, the Society Hill Synagogue Board of Directors has the pleasure of nominating certain members to receive an award for their extraordinary service to our community. Eligible candidates must be members in good standing who are not current Board members or past Hatan Torah or Kallat Bereshit honorees. These individuals have shared time and/or talent that have had a significant impact on our community and/or they have demonstrated an extraordinary level of commitment to SHS over time.

We are so pleased to announce that this year's Extraordinary Service Award recipients are Doug Smullens, Larry Goldfinger, and Terry Graboyes.

Doug Smullens

Doug, his wife, Deborah, and their son, Josh, have been members of our congregation since summer 2012. Josh was starting first grade, and Doug and Deborah were interested in our Hebrew School and synagogue community. They quickly began experiencing and enjoying synagogue life while Josh thrived in Hebrew School. Josh continued past his Bar Mitzvah through Hebrew High and Confirmation. We're delighted that Doug and his family are part of the SHS community.

Doug worked with Hazzan Jessi extensively a few years back to raise our Sanctuary sound system to a whole new level.

As Hazzan Jessi shared, "This is a long overdue thanks for all the sound tech support Doug offered during my first two years as Hazzan: He spent many volunteer hours assessing our old sound system (which was then on its last legs), researching new equipment for us to install, and facilitating our switch to an entirely new system and new sound company. Doug also volunteered a lot of labor as our in-house 'sound guy' during our first couple of years with this system – listening and tweaking controls during services, and running sound for concerts." Having wanted to officially thank Doug for some time, Hazzan Jessi is thrilled that Doug will be honored this year for his extraordinary service to our community.

Doug, Deborah, and Josh, who has grown up before our eyes, are integral members of our community. Over the years, one special memory I have is seeing them standing by the river each Rosh Hashanah, engaging in the beautiful *Tashlikh* experience, casting away our sins for the new year. A special and memorable experience.

Doug, we are so appreciative of your commitment and service to SHS and wish you and your family mazel tov on this belated but well deserved recognition.

Larry Goldfinger

We are so fortunate to be in community with Larry, Jackie, and twins, Hava and Ezra. I have fond memories of the family, when the twins were just crawling, attending a New Members Lunch in 2012, and am thrilled to see the children grow up at SHS.

In Larry's own words:

"We moved to Philly in spring of 2008 and came to SHS for the first time soon after. I recall that Jackie and I both felt immediately welcome and comfortable. In particular, we felt a connection with Rabbi Winokur's famous aphorism on theology and religion, as its spirit so obviously permeated the religious and social life at SHS, and it represented something we had been seeking for a long time but had never yet found. Although our twins – now in fourth grade – have been coming here since preschool, my own involvement deepened more recently, in no small part as a result of Hazzan Jessi incorporating music more and more as a fundamental part of synagogue life, from Playschool to Hebrew School to services. As a lifelong admirer of Jewish music, I had often found it frustrating in other places when music was made precious and segregated from synagogue life, rather than the integral part of it that music can be. We had enjoyed – on our sporadic synagogue visits when the kids were little – the musical guests at **TGISH**shabbat and the uplift they always brought to Friday night services. So when Hazzan Jessi asked me to be a part of the new weekly **TGISH**shabbat program, I felt honored to have the opportunity to contribute my small part to those services. Adding support to the voices of the congregation and feeling those voices lift up has brought me back each week, and I'm looking forward to starting up again in the fall!"

As Rabbi Nathan shared, "In addition to being an absolute mensch, Larry – whose wife, Jackie, is on the Hebrew School Committee, and whose kids, Hava and Ezra, are in the Hebrew School – is on the Bimah with us almost every Friday night playing absolutely gorgeous clarinet, and doing so as a gift to the community without any expectation of financial remuneration. His talents and reliability are the equivalent of a substantial in-kind donation, but more than the financial aspect, his talents, flexibility, reliability, ability to quickly learn any melody with little notice, his ability to complement and work well with musicians and clergy alike, serve as a real anchor and cornerstone of the Friday night experience."

Larry, you have given our community the extraordinary gift of your talent and time. We were uplifted by your music on our Zoom High Holiday services during COVID, your musical contributions during **TGISH**shabbat services, and very recently to celebrate Rabbi Avi's retirement. Your gift to SHS keeps on giving.

We are grateful for your extraordinary service and extend a hearty mazel tov to you and your family. We too look forward to seeing you on the Bimah this fall.

Terry Graboyes

A 43-year member of Society Hill Synagogue, Terry maintains her enthusiasm and love for SHS, generously offering her time and talents to enrich our community. Moving back home to Philadelphia in 1980, Terry quickly fell in love with her neighborhood synagogue. Coming from a traditional Conservative background, Terry was delighted to see a female on the Bimah reading from the Torah and a female synagogue President. She was “blown away” at the level of women’s engagement.

Terry has enjoyed many special life cycle events at SHS, including her wedding to Ron Herman in 1982, Playschool and Hebrew School for their son, Noah, and Noah’s Bar Mitzvah. Terry came to our community with an open heart, dedication, and eagerness to serve. Early on, Terry served two terms on the Board of Directors and was chair of the Facilities Committee. This was a busy time, addressing a major water leak, purchase and installation of our lift, repairing and purchasing cushions for our sanctuary pews. Fast forward many years, and Terry played an integral role in our Construction Oversight Committee’s work to create the Paula Kline Learning Center, upgrades and renovations to our main building, and the creation and maintenance of the Ferst Family Courtyard. Terry has a wealth of knowledge regarding contractors and construction process, having founded and run her business – Graboyes Commercial Window Company – for 33 years. We are thankful that she continues to work hard and offer her expertise and can-do attitude on behalf of our synagogue community.

Terry is grateful for SHS’ role in Noah’s Jewish learning and journey. She loved watching Noah and his Hebrew School friends grow up at SHS. As an adult, Noah worked for two years in SHS’ Playschool, and he led several iterations of the Purim Cantata, as our Purimspiel was known for many years.

Terry is reflective about the incredible support she received from Rabbi Avi Winokur during the most joyous and most difficult times in her life, the friendship they continue to share, and how thrilled she is with Rabbi Nathan Kamesar and the comfort she feels knowing that her religious beliefs and that of all others are “OK” at SHS. In Terry’s words, “It truly is a Jewel of a Shul.”

Our first gender inclusive prayer books were gifted to SHS after the death of Terry’s mother, Shirley Graboyes, of blessed memory, in 2005. Thank you, Terry, for your heartfelt generosity of time, talents, and treasure. To this day, Terry – first alone, then with Ron, of blessed memory, and then with Noah, even as an infant – has never missed a High Holiday Service. We always know where to find Terry and Noah, on the center left aisle toward the rear of the Sanctuary. Noah now lives in Swarthmore with his wife, Ashley Kerns, and their 4-year-old daughter, Anabelle Rose Herman.

Terry, you are part of the fabric of the community, whose spirit and love for SHS are contagious and enormously appreciated. Mazel tov from the bottom of our hearts.