

Greetings Audrey,

I am thrilled to learn that Rabbi David Balto will be recognized as an outstanding and dedicated volunteer for Biker Cholim. Our family has been privileged to know David since he met us as a JSSA volunteer about 9 years ago. For 3-1/2 years, David regularly visited my father, Rabbi Jonathan Eichhorn, at the Kosher Home in Potomac, Maryland, providing a special companionship for my dad and much needed support to my mom.

My father, a congregational rabbi for more than 30 years and a leader of social justice in our community, suffered from a rare dementia disorder. Despite my dad's debilitating illness, David's connection with him was immediate and special. David was kind, thoughtful, and patient. He recognized the dynamic and compassionate person my father once was, and worked to engage him in any way that he could. David would listen to music with my father, pray with him, read to him, and sit quietly with him in peace. Like my father, David was a prison chaplain, and he used to share his experiences with my father. Even though my dad could not easily communicate with David, I know he must have been very touched by this connection.

David's dedication and service to my dad was so meaningful to my mom that she asked him to give a blessing at his unveiling in 2018. She proudly shared the news of his ordination last year with my siblings and me.

David used to say that my father was one of his teachers on his path to becoming a rabbi. The teaching went both ways - David taught us the value of caring, compassion, and presence. David's recognition is well-deserved, and I know both my mom and dad would join me in reciting the Shehecheyanu in appreciation and gratitude for David's many blessings to our family.

With much appreciation and gratitude,

Deborah Eichhorn