



*Congregation Beth Tikvah*

*Michael Hartman*

Hello. My name is Michael Hartman. I am deeply honored to be recognized at the Mens Club Federation Man /Youth of The Year award dinner by my synagogue, Congregation Beth Tikvah. I currently work with young Jews living with developmental disabilities. I act as both caretaker and companion to these wonderful people. I am also a practicing psychotherapist in Brooklyn Colleges Mental Health Counselor Program. When I graduate with my masters, I hope to practice psychotherapy with children and adults as I apply for doctoral programs in Clinical Psychology around the country.

I guess I'd like to start with where I come from because that is everything. My shul along with my family have taught me the meaning of Tikkun Olam, or as I like to call it, make the world a better place through your contributions. My mother and father are both special education teachers. They role modeled what it means to give to others with their time and effort. I remember many weekends coming home and seeing them laboring in anxiety. They needed to complete required paperwork the NYC Board of Ed. gave them for each of their students. Like clockwork, every three or four weeks I'd hear their "Oiy Veys" as they shuffled through papers and online forms. It's funny because you never know what cost you have pay to live your dreams until you get there. Now as a psychotherapist, I am facing the stark reality of paperwork. I try to channel my parents' strength as I now shuffle through my own papers and online forms. My parents showed me that with enough grit and practice, you can get through the hurdles and truly do work you love. Thank you Mom and Dad for that.

My shul has always been a home for me. My parents have served on multiple committees and other boards within the shuls operating government. When I was a preteen, my dad became one of the unofficial caterers who prepared special kiddishes, luncheons, dinners, and bar/bat mitzvahs for my fellow congregants. He actually did my sister's Bat Mitzvah kiddush which was beautiful. I spent many Shabbatim helping my father and mother as they toiled in the kitchen making sure everything was right; preparing the food, getting it onto plates, and making the spread look appealing. Without the shul, I would have never had the opportunity to learn from my parents and the lessons learnt watching them prepare these festive meals. During these times, I learned the joys of giving back to the community and the value of teamwork as well as the responsibility for contributing to your community. I also learned how important presentation and precision can be. Being with my family on Shabbat made me realize what my family as a unit does best: we help others.

Although it has gone through many names, my shul has only one that can never change: home. My shul has served me as a cocoon that has nurtured me throughout my young life. Now as I face the future, I'll take these valuable lessons learned and apply them to my future. I want to express my deepest gratitude for this opportunity and recognition. Thank you.