

Women's League for Conservative Judaism FLORIDA REGION

SPRING 2010

5770

Reaching Out

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We're on the Web!

www.wlcj.net/flr

Women's League for Conservative Judaism

To plant and to preserve
לעבודה ולשמירה

Florida Region Conference

April 25-26, 2010

11-12 Iyar 5770

Holiday Inn

Orlando International Airport

Rita Wertlieb - WLCJ International Consultant

Genie Green Blaher - Florida Region President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello everyone,

This is supposed to be an article for our spring Bulletin, but it certainly isn't looking very spring-like outside. Peering out the window I see that quite a few of our plants didn't make it through the cold weather. It's also still chilly and somewhat dreary, but I suppose that we have nothing to complain about ... we could be up in the northeast with all of that snow and no place to put it! They woke up that poor groundhog Punxatawney Phil to see how many more weeks of winter we're in store for, but I think there's a much more scientific way of checking it out ... a method so reliable that I'm surprised the meteorologists haven't figured it out yet. Just ask any Jewish woman when it's spring and she'll tell you that when you see Pesach food in the supermarket, it's spring, or close to it. Despite knowing that we're in the countdown 'til Pesach, I guarantee that I'll be moaning and groaning at the end of the month saying that it snuck up on me and that I'm not ready. Some things don't change!

We are so pleased to welcome **Congregation Sha'arei Kodesh Sisterhood in Boca Raton** to Florida Region of Women's League! We had a lovely visit and brunch in February to meet and greet our newest sisters and to answer questions about our organization and region. Thank you to **Carolyn Kianofsky, Norma Schoenberger** and **Ellen Jadd** for making it happen. We hope to have a long and pleasant relationship with all of you.

It's been a good (calendar) year so far. The year started out with a splash as 87 intrepid cruisers set out on the first ever **Florida Region Wheels on Water**. This was the first time in a long time that we mounted a program over Shabbat, and it was a great success. Thanks to Terry, Etta, Julie and Roz for the arrangements and everyone who participated. If we do it again, we'll try to order better weather next time!

One of my favorite occasions on the calendar is Women's League Anniversary Shabbat, AKA Sisterhood Shabbat. I'm always so proud of our women when I have the opportunity to attend these celebrations. So many of Florida's finest are adding to their synagogue skills, and it is always such a joy to see that look of accomplishment on their faces. Thanks to the sisterhoods of **Temple Beth Torah in Tamarac, Temple Beth Am in Margate** and of course, to my own sisterhood, **Congregation Ohev Shalom in Orlando** for giving me this opportunity. I hope to be able to join more of you next year, and I look forward to seeing you all on the bimah.

Obviously, Women's League is a very important part of my life and I appreciate all of the resources that are available to us. I would like to make a plug for one of the most valuable programs, the wonderful **Women's League Leadership Institute**. Twenty-five women from Florida Region have taken advantage of this three day workshop since its inception and I would like to see many more of our women graduating from this wonderful training. The skills you learn will benefit you not only in your organization life, but your private life as well. Don't let the cost of the institute and transportation scare you off - Florida Region has dedicated monies in the **Linda Blum Leadership Institute Scholarship Fund** for this purpose. The training is open to **ALL** interested sisterhood women, not just current officers and Board members. The next Institute will be held in **New York City from July 25-27**, and it's not too early to start planning for it. Please speak with your president for more information and application forms. I would like to see many more of our wonderful women at Institute reunions that are held at International conventions.

And while you're planning for great things, if you haven't done so already, please put our **Florida Region**

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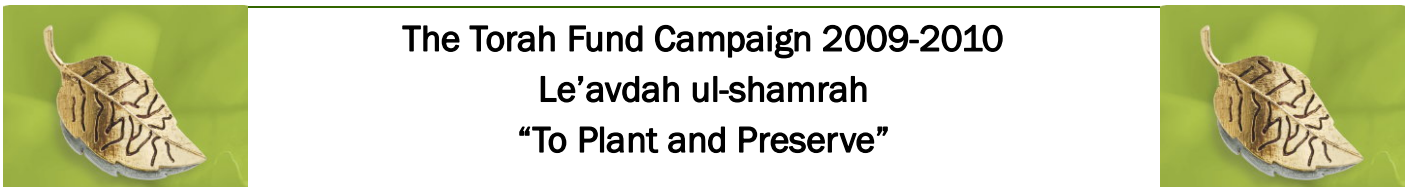
Conference on your calendar. It will be held on **April 25-26** at the Holiday Inn Orlando International Airport. We are experimenting with a shorter conference and have chosen a hotel near the airport. We want to see if the location will make transportation easier. The Torah Fund theme *le'avdah ul'shamrah* - To Plant and Preserve is going to do double duty as the Conference theme. We have an interesting line-up of speakers, programs and exhibits for you. And of course, it's always good to get together with our region buddies. Please join us – we look forward to seeing you there!

One of our presidents told me that she perceives that the role of Region president is a difficult and/or thankless one. Quite the opposite – Florida Region is a wonderful place to be president, and I thank you for all of your kind words, friendship and hospitality. I appreciate you taking the time to write or email, and I am very thankful to have all of you in my life!

Chag sameach v'kasher,

Genie

Genie Green Blaher
President, Florida Region



Greetings. This is Amy Hymes and I am proud to be the Torah Fund Vice President for the awesome Florida Region.

In Genesis 2:15, after God completes creation and places humans in the garden, a first command is to “plant and preserve” their bountiful home. This divine directive to protect the environment is as appropriate today as it was at the beginning of recorded time. As the recipients of God’s command, *le'avdah ul-shamrah*, we became and continue to be partners in the ongoing process of creation. God’s commandment to plant and preserve is even more relevant to us today as we face multiple ecological threats to our environment. Air pollution, water pollution and global warming are just some of the problems we are faced with on a daily basis. It is now socially relevant to “go green”. We all need to do our part to follow God’s command to plant and preserve.

Remember, in keeping with our theme, a donation to Torah Fund is the “plant” that will “preserve” the next generation of rabbis, cantors and educators for your children and grandchildren.

This year’s Torah Fund theme, “To Plant and Preserve” has generated much excitement around the country and has been the inspiration for many interesting Torah Fund programs. I would love to showcase some of the Torah Fund events that Florida Region is planning, so I would appreciate it if the Torah Fund chairs of the various Sisterhoods could please e-mail me with any information about your upcoming programs. My e-mail is arzh1212@aol.com (initials and birthday-so original!)

The Torah Fund campaign is in full swing and I am proud to announce that the national Torah Fund campaign is currently at **\$1,247,350** and of that Florida Region is responsible for **\$118,328** as of January 15th. Thank you to everyone for the outstanding results we have achieved so far. I know that I can count on all of you to support Torah Fund as you always have. I thank you in advance for everything that you are doing and will continue to do to make sure this year’s campaign is the best one ever.

EDUCATION

Education is many things – learning about literature, torah, ritual. I bring up two separate topics for your interest. First – Judaism is traditional and evolving. We went from sacrificing animals to God in the Temple, to prayer, or as Janet Mishkin so eloquently taught us, self reflection – looking into a mirror. Learning who we are, and who we want to be and how to be a better Jewish woman. Just as our books have evolved – from the Jerusalem Talmud to the Babylonian Talmud; we have used the Siddur Sim Shalom, Siddur Hadash, The Hertz Chumash and the Etz Chaim Chumash. Always changing and improving.

I share with you a new updated prayer. The Eschet Chayil, Woman of Valor was written hundreds of years ago. It is interpreted as the woman doing everything, being someone to everyone, the perfect wife who is put on a pedestal. The Temple Beth Sholom Sisterhood of Sarasota's Rosh Chodesh decided to recreate this prayer and bring it into the 21st century. With the astute guidance of Carolyn Kaplan, below you will find a new version of the Eschet Chayil.

WOMAN OF VALOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Carolyn Linz Kaplan and
The Rosh Chodesh Group of
Temple Beth Sholom, Sarasota, Fl.

Who can find a woman of valor?

We can find her.

Where can we find a woman of valor?

She resides in the framework of the 21st Century.

How do we define today's woman of valor?

She is an ideal woman in her own right, in multiple facets, exploring new expanded horizons along with traditions rooted in holiness.

She stands upright, steeped in fairness, giving of herself. As her predecessors before her, she is giving and kind, her virtues are recognized by family and community. Her worth is far beyond limits of imagination.

Her role has broadened with boundaries reaching far beyond home and hearth encompassing Tikkun Olam, caring for and nurturing the needs of the world.

Who is today's Woman of Valor?

Every woman whose deeds are grounded in God's love.

Second, during our Water on Wheels trip, which was truly WOW, I was asked different questions in regard to ritual. One stood out, because it has been asked many times. "Why do I raise my little finger in the air, while holding my tallit, when the Torah is being raised?" I have two answers that have been given to me as explanation. 1) We raise our finger to help support holding the Torah and, 2) we point at the Torah in recognition of its' importance and meaning in our lives. Pick one or use both – they are both appropriate and meaningful.

Hope to see everyone at conference.

B'shalom,

Anne Schimberg

VP of Education FL Region WL



Executive Committee—Florida Region

PRESIDENT	GENIE GREEN BLAHER	genieblaher@embarqmail.com
AREA VICE PRESIDENT	JACKIE FINE	fineinmiami@aol.com
EDUCATION VICE PRESIDENT	ANNE SCHIMBERG	aschimberg@verizon.net
MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT	LARA WERWA	lawerwa@gmail.com
TORAH FUND VICE PRESIDENT	AMY HYMES	arzh1212@aol.com
COMMUNICATION SEC'Y	ESTELLE BECKERMAN	grammyone_98@yahoo.com
FINANCIAL SEC'Y	ROSALIND CITRONOWICZ	rozcitron56@aol.com
ADMINISTRATIVE SEC'R'Y	ETTA FIALKOW	ettafialkow@aol.com
TREASURER	ROBIN REILLY	flbirdie@aol.com

FLORIDA REGION

Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Reaching Out Newsletter

Genie Green Blaher, *President*,
genieblaher@embarqmail.com

Patty Rose, *Newsletter Editor*, pvered@gmail.com

Estelle Beckerman, *Communications Secretary*,
grammyone_98@yahoo.com

Anita Helfand, *Newsletter Editor Emeritus*

Website: www.wlcj.net/flr

Contributors

Sue Bengele, WLCJ Jewish Studies Chair
Nicki D'Amato, Temple Israel, Winter Springs

Amy Hymes, Torah Fund Vice President

Julie Risisky, Ritual Chair

Anne Schimberg, VP of Education

SISTERHOOD HAPPENINGS



BRUNCH WITH LISA KOGEN AT RODEPH SHOLOM, TAMPA

This photo is from a lovely brunch hosted by Rodeph Sholom Sisterhood in Tampa on December 8, 2009. In attendance were women from all the area sisterhoods.

The event was Lisa Kogen's (WL Education Director) talk about her book

With Strength and Splendor Jewish Women as Agents of Change.

Pictured from left to right are Carol Simon, Genie Green Blaher, Susan Forman Laura Kreitzer and Lisa Kogen (seated). Carol, Susan and Laura were chairs of the event.

WELCOME CONGREGATION SHA'AREI KODESH, BOCA RATON

This Photo was taken at the Women's Voice - Kol Isha event at Congregation Sha'arei Kodesh in Boca Raton on February 07, 2010. This is when their sisterhood signed up as part of the Florida Region. From left to right are Genie Green Blaher, Amy Grossblatt Pessah, Carolyn Kianofsky and Elise Repath.



Temple Israel, Winter Springs

Temple Israel Winter Springs, in keeping with this year's theme of "To Plant and Preserve", had a meeting with a "green" craft project. The project was to decorate your own shopping bag, to be used in place of plastic bags. There were iron-ons, fabric paint, decals, sparkles and baubles, ribbons and buttons galore and a whole lot of creativity. There were some terrific looking shopping bags created by the end of the meeting.

In January our sisterhood meeting was held at a local assisted living center where we hosted a Tu B'shvat seder for the Jewish residents. One of our sisterhood members magically folded dozens of green napkins in the form of a flower and placed decorative little bags on top that held the nuts and fruits that would be eaten during the seder. Several members read through the service and another member sang familiar Jewish and Yiddish songs to the residents. It was a wonderful time that included reconnecting with former sisterhood members who are no longer able to attend services.



This is a photo of the Wheels on Water Orlando area participants. They are from Temple Israel in Winter Springs and Congregation Ohev Shalom in Orlando. From left to right are: Phyllis Kamenoff, Genie Green Blaher, Arlene van de Rijn, Edie Fenster. Sandy Oser, Nicki D'Amato, Miriam Cohen, Debbie Meitin, Patty Rose, and Janet Friedman.

Nicki D'Amato, Co-President
Temple Israel Sisterhood, Winter Springs

Congregation B'nai Torah, Boca Raton

REGION WOMEN ATTEND WOMEN'S LEAGUE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Penina Bredoff, Racheal Isan and Lisa Newman (from Congregation B'nai Torah in Boca Raton), recently attended the Women's League Leadership Institute in Las Vegas, NV, January 24-26,2010.

Penina, Racheal and Lisa were selected as candidates for the three-day Leadership Institute based on their volunteer experience, their desire to serve her community, and their participation in Sisterhood and congregation.

Together, the 23 women from Sisterhoods across the United States, participated in lectures, seminars and study groups that combined acquiring both leadership skills and Jewish knowledge. They studied with Rabbis Vernon Kurtz and Aaron Melman, and Educator Barbara Barnett. They defined their own leadership styles in dynamic inter-active workshops and created personalized leadership paths for the future.

The expectation is that those who attend this and future Leadership Institutes will forge a new generation of leaders for the women of the Conservative Movement, women who are well prepared and Jewishly knowledgeable. "The purpose of the Institute," said Cory Schneider, Women's League International President, "is to strengthen the foundation of leadership in the organization as well as to empower Conservative Jewish women to assume active roles in their communities."



Ramblings from Ritual

Are you coming to Spring Conference? Would you like to read Torah? How about participating in services on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning? We even have an English reading or two. Come on board and notify me at 954 426 8470 or jgrisisky@bellsouth.net

We are also trying to get Siddurim to use on Conferences and Wheels. We are going to use Siddur Sim Shalom. If your Congregation has switched to the 2 separate versions and they have some of the other version that they would like to give us, please use the same contact information listed above. I look forward to greeting you at conference.

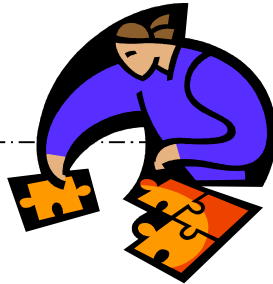
Julie Risisky
Ritual Chair

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

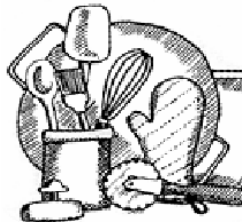
It's not too early to start planning for the next Leadership Institute. Participation is a proven way to prepare the next generation of leaders in your sisterhood.

When: July 25-27, 2010

Where: New York City



Yom Yarok, Green Day is more than just a Tu B'Shevat celebration. Included in the kit is material to use throughout the year for engaging and informative environmental programming for sisterhoods, congregations and families. Members of Women's League can download all of the material other than the children's match game from the website, www.wlcj.org.

**LOVE TO COOK?**

Women's League is hosting an online fundraiser you won't want to miss, featuring products from The Pampered Chef, March 1-31, 2010, just in time for Passover.

Just follow these easy steps:

During the month of March, log onto
www.pamperedchef.biz/cookstools

Select Shop Online

Enter WLCJ as the Fundraising Host in question #1

LISTSERVE JUST FOR JUDAICA SHOPS

Women's League has just inaugurated an on-line discussion group for Judaica shop chairs. Moderated by Chair Jacki Stevens and Lois Silverman, internet services coordinator, this is an opportunity to share questions, concerns, and achievements with other gift shop chairs across the continent. Post your questions to: wjudai-cashop@googlegroups.com

IMAGE PLUS**Public Relations Handbook**

Entirely redone, this new sisterhood guide from Women's League focuses on all aspects of public relations that sisterhoods can use today, from how to create a sisterhood brochure to using public service announcements. Brand new is a chapter on social networking: how to market sisterhood through new technologies such as Facebook and Twitter.

Every sisterhood president will receive a copy at spring conferences. Members of Women's League can download the handbook from the Women's League website, www.wlcj.org.

**NEW FROM WOMEN'S LEAGUE**

Count Your Blessings has been updated with a beautiful new cover by artist Susan Leviton. This popular Women's League publication presents the most frequently recited *berakhot* (blessings) in Hebrew, with translations and transliterations.

This book would make a wonderful present for hostess gift or welcome to new sisterhood members.

The book is available by calling the Women's League office at 212.870.1260, extension 7150# or online at orderdept@wlcj.org.

Cost: \$10.00 Kol Ishah Society members receive a 10% discount.

KERUV

The sisterhoods affiliated with Women's League--both by design and by practice--provide the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to foster a Jewish home and lifestyle. Every sisterhood should be a warm and welcoming gateway into Jewish life for all women, including the non-Jewish woman. Those already contemplating or in the process of conversion, as well as those married to Jews, and/or raising Jewish children, will find the support and encouragement that sisterhoods can provide.

Therefore, Women's League recommends that sisterhoods offer full membership to women who support the above mission of Women's League. However, only Jewish women may serve as officers and members of the board of directors.

The rabbi of the synagogue is the mara d'atrah (religious authority) for each sisterhood and must be consulted before instituting any change in membership policy.

Look for keruv programming ideas in the near future. Download the Conservative movement welcoming keruv brochure from www.wlcj.org.

TORAH FUND

Passover is just around the corner and it's time to get rid of those unwanted articles in your home and support Torah Fund at the same time. eBay for Torah Fund is an easy way to help you accomplish both goals. You can donate anywhere from 10 to 100 percent of your selling price to Torah Fund. Your sisterhood gets credit, and you get the tax deduction.

Just gather your treasures and go onto eBay; click on Giving Works and T for Torah Fund. If you need help, contact eBay chair Marjorie Fuhrmann, at mfuhrmann18@gmail.com. She is ready, willing and able to help.

As you think about Passover, please remember our students. If you are near one of our schools, and have a place at your seder table, extend an invitation to a student to join you. Also, consider the students who could not complete their

studies without the help of our Torah Fund Scholarship Project. If you have fulfilled your pledge, but would like to add a bit extra toward the Scholarship Project ("plus giving") send a check to Carolyn Baron (Torah Fund, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027); call or email Sherrill Solomon (212.678.8877, shsolomon@jtsa.edu) or donate online at www.jtsa.edu/torahfund.

It's quick, it's easy, and it can make all the difference in the world. The Torah Fund Scholarship Project supports students at the Jewish Theological Seminary (New York), Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (Los Angeles), Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem), and the Seminario Rabbinico Latinoamericano (Buenos Aires).

Thank you for your continued support of these projects and the Torah Fund Campaign of Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

Good Shopping + Searching = Benefits for Women's League

Support Women's League every time you shop or search online, without spending an extra penny! Do your online shopping via the easy access websites GoodSearch and GoodShop.

GoodSearch.com is a search engine with a unique social mission. Each time you search, GoodSearch makes a donation to Women's League!

GoodShop.com is an online marketplace that donates a percentage of your purchases to Women's League every time you shop. Choose from hundreds of merchants and the experience is exactly the same as going directly to a retailer's website.

Add the new Women's League for Conservative Judaism GoodShop.com logo to your toolbar. Once added to IE or Firefox, each time you shop at the more than 1,300 stores (from Amazon to Zazzle) a percentage of your purchase automatically will be donated to Women's League (and you may save money since the toolbar provides hundreds of great coupons and deals!). By using the toolbar's search box each time you search the Internet, about a penny is donated to Women's League. To upload your new toolbar, go to:

www.goodsearch.com/toolbar/womens-league-for-conservative-judaismclick

Pass this along to your friends. The two minutes it takes to add the toolbar to your browser can make a lifetime of difference for the thousands of women who benefit from the programs of Women's League for Conservative Judaism!

PLAN TO ATTEND
WOMEN'S LEAGUE CONVENTION 2010
DECEMBER 12-15, 2010
MARRIOTT WATERFRONT BALTIMORE

New for Convention 2010

- Gala Vashti's Banquet on Tuesday evening (unlike any party you've ever seen!)
- Hands-on interactive drop-in presentations of Women's League programs
- A virtual journal that will be online for a full year, which will reinforce the Women's League commitment to the environment
- Installation of 2010-2012 officers on Sunday evening
- Installment payment plan
- Online registration and registration team

New Sisterhood Initiatives for Convention

The Jewels in the Crown: A three-level award for sisterhoods that demonstrate commitment, excellence and creativity in programming and in the use of Women's League materials. Information for every sisterhood to participate and be recognized at convention will be available soon.

Books for Baltimore: Creating Community One Child at a Time: To demonstrate our tangible commitment to the convention theme, Women's League will be presenting a new reading book to every third grade student in the system (approximately 7,000 books). Sisterhoods and regions are encouraged to participate to their fullest ability.

And don't forget the hallmarks of every Women's League biennial convention

- Fascinating speakers
- Inspiring services
- Valuable workshops
- Region meetings and parties
- Great shopping
- Delicious food
- Wonderful camaraderie

RESOLUTIONS

Women's League has been engaged in creating and acting upon public policy and social action resolutions for over 60 years. We have individually and collectively made our voices heard on contemporary issues that affect Jewish life and the greater welfare of the world. The body of resolutions provides the authority for Women's League's support of a wide range of public policy issues. Resolutions are presented to the delegates at convention for approval and action. Any member of Women's League who would like the convention body to address an issue is invited to submit her idea for consideration. For information, contact Rita Altman, Public Policy & Advocacy chair, at altmanrc1@verizon.net.

A Guide to Writing Public Policy Resolutions can be downloaded from the website, [www.wlcj.org/MyWLCJ/Public Policy and Advocacy](http://www.wlcj.org/MyWLCJ/PublicPolicyandAdvocacy).

MEMBERSHIP PURIM SPIEL, PASSOVER FOURSOME & SHAVOUT SUGGESTIONS

Once upon a time, in the land of Shushan, there was a Women's League sisterhood president, whose name was Vashti, who ran the sisterhood *her* way. She never looked for new members. She never asked the members what programs they would like. The executive committee could only do what she told them. Every meeting was the same old thing -- belly dancing, belly dancing, belly dancing. We all know what happened to Vashti: the king made demands; Vashti said no; she did not have the support of the members, and suddenly, Vashti was no longer in Shushan and no longer sisterhood president.

What was the sisterhood to do? They wept and they fasted but they couldn't find a president and the members were dropping quickly. But then the new queen, the lovely Esther, gladly lead the sisterhood to success. What did Esther do?

She read *Blueprint for Membership* and the *Z'harah Planner*. She called her region membership vice president for suggestions. She asked Women's League's training services to send someone to help increase membership, develop leadership and plan programs.

Share **your** success story with your membership vice president and you can write your own membership megillah.

Have you ever wondered what is going through the minds of successful membership chairs as they clean out their cabinets and wash down everything in sight before Passover? Since it is too overwhelming to figure out how to fit three more people at their seder tables, they instead take the time to review what is happening with their sisterhood membership. Take a cue from them and remember why this year is different than every other time you think about membership.

1. Every other year you review membership just three weeks prior to submitting your plans. This year plan your strategy early.
2. Every other year you concentrate on enticing new synagogue members to join. This year work on last year's new members as well.
3. Every other year you're concerned with bringing in dues paying women. This year concentrate on *invoking* more women.
4. Every other year it takes a phone call from the region asking why there has been a drop in membership. This year, recruit those who have not rejoined.

Shavout speaks to us about rules to live by. Membership offers rules (well, suggestions really) to make sisterhoods the place to be.

- Kindness and civility are catching. Practice being warm and friendly.
- Encourage women to work with you, not for you.
- Ask the women what they want and invite them to make it happen.
- Invite women to join or rejoin. Everyone wants to be asked.
- Meet or call all potential members. Don't use email as your only contact.
- Let women know the benefits of sisterhood, what's in it for them.
- If you can reach each woman at least once or twice a year, this is a success.
- Adjust the membership material on www.wlcj.org to fit your needs.
- Build teams and committees. Encourage new and long time members to participate.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated. Thank them and always smile.

If you have other suggestions, please do not hesitate to share your ideas with Women's League Membership Chair Harriet Merkwitz (harrietm18@comcast.net).

WOMEN'S LEAGUE SURVEY

Women's League is interested in knowing the extent to which its programs and services are valued by all Conservative women. Please take 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire in CJ Magazine or online at www.wlcj.org. The responses will guide the organization as it assesses the resources it provides. Invite women who might not be members of your sisterhood to fill in the survey so that Women's League can be the voice of *all* Conservative Jewish women. The deadline for filling out the survey is March 18.

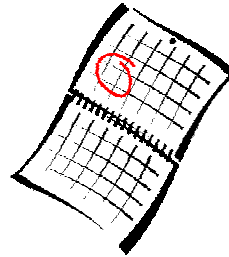
Women's League for
Conservative Judaism
FLORIDA REGION

341 Quail Point Drive
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

FLORIDA REGION CALENDAR

Sunday March 21, 2010
TORAH STUDY DAY NORTH
B'nai Israel, Gainesville

April 25-26 2010
REGION CONFERENCE
Holiday Inn
Orlando International Airport
Orlando, FL



WLCJ Biennial Convention 2010

It's not too early to plan to join hundreds of women from across North America and Israel for four remarkable days of sophisticated learning, interactive workshops, spiritual prayer, entertaining speakers, fabulous shopping, wonderful friends, and a few surprises. Give yourself the gift of a Women's League biennial convention!

When: December 12-15, 2010

Where: The Marriot Waterfront, Baltimore

More details about the convention, including registration information will be forthcoming . . .