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Guatemalan Basket-weavers

I have nothing against Guatemalan basket-weavers. I'm sure they're all lovely people. And I like hearing about Bar and Bat Mitzvah kids who create *tzedakah** projects to support them. There's a warm, and kind message about generosity, warmth, and *tikun olam***

But I worry about the next generation of Jews, too. And the widespread impact of non-sectarian *tzedakah* programs is a great opportunity for us to think through how we talk about philanthropy and community.

For one thing, if we don't raise the next generation of Jews who care about supporting Jewish organizations and Jewish philanthropy, then in 20 years' time there won't be enough people who care about the basket-weavers. Or the Jews. If we don't raise the next generation of Bar and Bat Mitzvah kids (and their parents) who learn about giving to Jewish causes, we won't have strong synagogues, or '*tikun olam*' programs, or a vibrant Jewish community life.

It's one of many interesting conversations I've had with our rabbis and leaders these past few months. We have a useful and unique role to play here. Federation can help create places for dialogue between rabbis and synagogues, learning opportunities and ideas. We've created a Synagogue Leadership Initiative, to provide programs and workshops that help strengthen our synagogues. On March 25 we'll host two open 'town hall' meetings for synagogue leaders, lay and professional, to brainstorm together the programs that synagogues would like to see.

These past six months I've met with many community rabbis to talk about how we can partner together to help the most vulnerable in our community. I've met with synagogue leaders to think through how we build programs and ideas together. Our Foundation's "Create a Jewish Legacy" program has already helped nine of our synagogues to secure an estimated \$6 million in future gifts to keep their programs strong and relevant: the estimated future value of all the 143 legacy gifts so far is almost seven million dollars! We're trying to help our synagogues and agencies create a new concept of legacy fundraising: to encourage their own supporters to remember them in their wills and retirement plans. It's a really powerful tool for the long-term health and vibrancy of their organizations and the community.

But I keep coming back to the basket-weavers and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah kids.

Because what I've learned is that many of our rabbis and educators don't have enough *time* to create the opportunities that would serve the kids and their families. How can you sponsor a Jewish organization working with Jewish and non-Jewish refugees in Europe? How can you create a program that would send Israeli doctors to help African kids? How can you sponsor Jewish-run employment and education programs for Jewish and non-Jewish at-risk families in our area? How can you learn about *tikun olam* – and do it – with text sources, fundraising ideas, a sample list of

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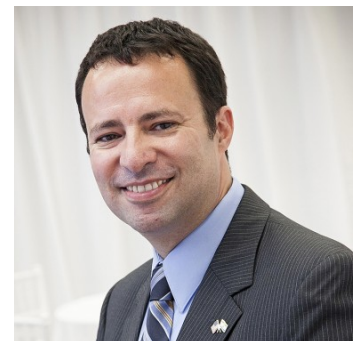
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people to call and interview, the funding mechanisms, and the way to transfer the funds efficiently and appropriately?



I think there's something we can do here. I think that federation can play a role in helping shape these ideas, guide our children and their parents, and provide a useful service for our rabbis and educators.

Over the coming months I'm going to deepen this conversation and I'll be looking for feedback, ideas, guidance and comments. Yours, too. Because to feed the basket-weavers in Latin America we're going to need to nurture the Jewish hearts in Greater MetroWest, too.

* literally 'justice' but used in this context to mean 'charity'

** repairing the world, literally, but usually meaning a Jewish outreach to the wider world with a charitable and 'mending' intent

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- Center for Volunteerism
- Global Connections
- Holocaust Awareness and Education
- Leadership Programs
- Missions
- Synagogue Leadership Initiative
- Teens
- UJA Campaign
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- Young Families/Couples/Singles

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- Careers
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