



TEMPLE BETH TZEDEK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 6, 2011, Amherst, N.Y. – Temple Beth Tzedek is pleased to announce the dedication of its new Rosen Family Lounge, designed as an enjoyable and educational meeting place within the halls of the synagogue for parents and young children.

The new Family Lounge, sponsored and paid for by the Rosen family, is located in the educational wing of the building, adjacent to the Klein-Amdur Library. The former kindergarten room has been carefully renovated and redesigned by Temple staff and volunteers, who sought to accommodate the needs and interests of young children, while also making it friendly and comfortable for their parents.

“My vision for the lounge is for it to be a meeting place for parents and children, providing the children with a Judaic type of atmosphere in which to play, in which the parents can foster some Judaic story or lessons and play and learn with their children, while socializing with other parents,” said Amy Rosen, who also led the planning and design work for the new room over the past year, along with her husband, Jonathan.

The Lounge includes an array of games, toys, play equipment, dress-up clothes, puppets, puzzles and other age-appropriate materials to both entertain and educate young children, with a particular focus on Judaism and their Judaic heritage. Puppets and dress-up clothes, for example, are intended to help children and their parents act out that week’s *parasha* (Torah portion) in a skit, to foster better understanding of the lessons of the Torah.

“That’s what I want my kids to get out of it. I hope they begin to emulate what they are observing and learning at shul through play,” Rosen said. “I hope everything has a Judaic component.”

Similarly, the music will highlight Judaism, Shabbat, holidays and *mitzvot* (commandments), while the puzzles will help children learn the *Alef-Bet*, or Hebrew alphabet. Even generic toys can be integrated with Judaic content and thought, Rosen said, such as by discussing Noah’s Ark while playing with stuffed animals and boats.

Finally, the walls are also adorned with beautiful, specially-commissioned murals of the Western Wall, Jerusalem and Shabbat candles, each hand-painted by local Western New York artist Cathy Shuman Miller.

“The Rosen Family Lounge enriches us all by providing a vibrant Jewish gathering space for children and young families, a vitally important part of our Temple Beth Tzedek community, furthering our mission of lifelong learning, nurturing an inclusive, caring community and transmitting our heritage to the next generation,” said TBT President Janet Gunner.

Despite the focus on children, though, the room is not just intended for the younger set, Rosen said, adding that she also envisions it as a refuge for parents, who could even schedule regular gatherings every week.

“I feel that it’s important for parents to have an opportunity to share their parenting experiences and their experiences raising Jewish children together to decrease a feeling of isolation, and also to share their joys and setbacks in life, to have lifelong friends, and to build a support network, somewhere they can go,” she said.

“If they want to call some friends and get together after *shul* or after nursery school, they can have a place together. You can always have a meeting place.”

The concept for the room resulted from brainstorming by the Rosens and Temple leadership about how to use a special endowment fund left by Jonathan Rosen’s mother. The fund was to be used for improvements to TBT, and the Rosens felt a children’s indoor play area would be appropriate.

At the same time, she hopes the new Family Lounge benefits TBT by demonstrating the degree to which the synagogue’s friendly atmosphere can appeal to the region’s young families.

“It would encourage someone to become a member because they’d feel part of the community. They’d get to know the members and the rabbi,” she said. “People kind of flock together when they have something in common. A common gathering place might lead to common friendships and shared Temple memberships.”

The dedication ceremony, to be led by Rabbi Perry Netter, will be held Sunday, Sept. 11 at 10:30 a.m. Besides the Rosens, the planning committee also included Safi Netter, Lauren Bloomberg and Dana Stoffman.

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ABOUT TEMPLE BETH TZEDEK

Temple Beth Tzedek is the largest Conservative synagogue in Western New York, serving more than 575 families and about 1,500 individuals in the greater Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. Formed on June 8, 2008 from the merger of Temple Shaarey Zedek and Temple Beth El, the oldest synagogue between New York City and Chicago, the synagogue caters to congregants of all ages with a range of religious, educational, social and cultural programs. Temple Beth Tzedek is located at 621 Getzville Road in Amherst.