

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

EIGHT OVER EIGHTY



The Tikkun Olam Award
REPAIRING THE WORLD

25th Annual Celebration

Jewish Senior Life's **Eight Over Eighty** recognizes eight distinguished leaders in our community, all over the age of 80, who have demonstrated a lifetime of dedication to the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam - Repairing the World.



JEWISH SENIOR LIFE

FOR NOMINATION FORMS

www.jslmi.org/events/eight-over-eighty
or contact

Beth Tryon at 248-592-5026 TTY #711
Btryon@jslmi.org

Nominations will be accepted
through January 7, 2018

SAVE THE DATE

25th Annual Eight Over Eighty Event
Sunday, April 29, 2018
11:30am at Adat Shalom Synagogue

FOR SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT

www.jslmi.org/events/eight-over-eighty



views

guest column

My First Sukkot

If Judaism were a talk radio program, these past High Holidays and Sukkot were me phoning in to finally comment on the show. “Hey guys, I’m Caitlyn, first-time caller, long-time listener ...”

“Hey, Caitlyn! Welcome to the show!” Judaism replied.

I was raised in a household that was at once quite Catholic and quite secular, jumping through the Catholic sacrament hoops of communion, confession, confirmation, etc., but never believing. For whatever reason, since I was very young, it was always Judaism and Jewishness to which I felt connected. This year (Gregorian, not lunar), after much serious contemplation and consulting with more than a few Jews of authority (i.e. a couple rabbis, my most enthusiastic Jewish friends and some Israelis for good measure), I decided to begin my conversion process.

I began the process in August, working with Rabbi Arianna Gordon of Temple Israel, but I had begun delving deeper into the local Jewish community in Detroit months earlier. It was at an event for Pesach at the Detroit Institute of Arts that I first met Rabbi Dan Horwitz, whose organization, The Well, was hosting the event. I immediately liked what Rabbi Dan and The Well were doing, helping to foster inclusive Jewish community across demographics.

Before I knew it, I was discussing converting over coffee with Rabbi Dan and within weeks I decided to take the plunge. As I eventually began the formal process, the High Holidays were quickly approaching. My first Rosh Hashanah was lovely, celebrated with the Jewish family that I nanny for. The following Friday morning, before Yom Kippur began, I saw a Facebook post from Rabbi Dan asking if anyone was around that could come help with a project. I commented immediately, happening to be in the area at the time. “It’s messy. And involves opening a lot of cans of soda,” he messaged me.

And so I spent the better part of the morning and afternoon popping open hundreds — literally hundreds and hundreds — of cans of donated, expired Pepsi Fire (I didn’t know it was a thing either), which would then be emptied, rinsed and constructed into the walls of The Well’s sukkah in Downtown Detroit. We listened to music, chatted and methodically opened nearly 1,000 soda cans.

Rabbi Dan posted a video of us using Facebook Live. After we finished, my hands ached and my hamstrings burned from all the can-open-

ing and squatting. It felt good. I was a part of something. I was *doing* what I believed in.

That night, after Kol Nidre services, I got it. I got why Judaism clicked

for me, why it had always appealed to me so much. “Judaism is about practice more than just belief!” I texted my enthusiastically Jewish friend Haley.

I had struggled until then with my secular leanings and a perceived conflict between them and my lifelong attraction to Judaism. How would I reconcile the two? Why did no one else, even my rabbi, seem concerned about this?

“I can’t just believe in something I don’t actually believe in,” I’d say. “I consider myself secular but I love so much about Judaism beyond just the God part. The social justice, the community, the progressivism, the tradition ...” And everyone would nod their heads as if to say, “Right, yep. That’s OK. That’s it. That’s good!”

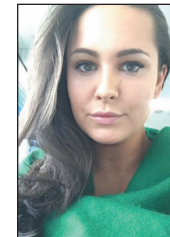
Last month, I got to see what my handiwork helped create: A sukkah of (Molson) Ice and (Pepsi) Fire — an attempt at an eco-friendly nod to *Game of Thrones* — standing tall and proud in the heart of Downtown Detroit in front of the Skillman Branch of the Detroit Public Library.

I dwelled in the sukkah with Rabbi Dan and his teammates Matt and Avery, sharing coffee with whoever happened to stop by, sometimes answering questions about what exactly the sukkah was and what it represented, other times simply enjoying a morning cuppa with new acquaintances, snapping selfies with a plush toy lulav and etrog. I shared a lovely Shabbat dinner as well as a “Lunch and Learn” in the sukkah I helped to build.

On Yom Kippur, mid-fast, my mother called me, near tears. She had seen the video Rabbi Dan posted the day before. “All your life you’ve wanted this, to be part of something bigger, a community, to do good. I think you finally found it with Judaism and I’m just so happy,” she told me, crying.

And she’s right. While I didn’t need Judaism to *theoretically* understand the importance of community and intention, it has undeniably helped me find and understand the *practical* importance of those things and so much more.

As my first Sukkot came to an end, I could happily say, “I get it.” Judaism is about practice. I’m so happy I finally decided to phone in. 🍷



Caitlyn Brennan

Caitlyn Brennan is a young professional residing in Birmingham.