

The magic of MITZVAH DAY

This weekend, we all have the opportunity to make the world a better place one mitzvah at a time.

LIKE many other women who have decided to leave the workforce after having kids, I have become an expert at multitasking.

My days start with kinder or school drop off, then to the gym (maybe), followed by a quick super-market shop (including buying an after school snack for the kids). Then home for a quick lunch, reply to a few emails, start planning for dinner then off to kinder/school for pick up. Then the day just starts to get really busy, with after school activities, supervising homework, preparing dinner, eating dinner, cleaning up after dinner, bathing the kids followed by the bedtime routine. Now it's 9pm, I'm exhausted and ready for bed! I really do wonder how I used to be able to work part-time as a lawyer and still have the energy after putting the kids down to watch Q&A and have a serious political discussion with my husband. Heck, I could still be very alert doing all this at 1am!

Viewpoint

KERRYNN LOWE

Don't get me wrong, I really love being at home with my children, but I felt that I wanted to get involved with a community organisation and perform some charity work. My urge for some additional intellectual stimulation was growing and the desire to make a difference was getting stronger. I knew I had skills, but how could these be best utilised? Well, while I was procrastinating about possible roles, I was fortunate to be approached by a friend who knew that Mitzvah Day was on the lookout for new members to their organising committee. To be honest, I didn't really know much about this group, but my friend was encouraging and I wasn't doing anything else ... so why not?

In mid-May, I had my first contact with Mitzvah Day Australia founder, Judy Feiglin. I could tell she was very passionate about the Mitzvah Day



Cleaning up the garden at Yorrala in Murrumbidgee on Mitzvah Day 2013.

Photo: Peter Haskin

event. She told me about how the idea was first founded in the UK in 2008 and is now so well developed there that they have several full time staff. As well as that Mitzvah Day, they also run interfaith functions throughout the year. It seemed that Judy already had a good team to work with and had been working hard to develop interest and support among many Jewish organisations to take part again in 2014. Since being established in Australia three years ago, Mitzvah Day has enjoyed growing success with an increasing number of participants and organisations taking part each year. This year, the aim was to be even bigger and expand from its Melbourne roots, to be truly national.

A month later, I met the rest of the committee. An inspiring mix of community leaders, community-minded individuals, a stay-at-home mum (that's me) and of course, our indispensable IT guy, a real necessity these days. Everyone in the group had

become involved because they "knew someone" who had invited them to join. Most are founding members, but others, like me, were newbies.

We are different ages and have diverse experiences, but all of us have the same passion.

Even if it only lasts a single day each year, Mitzvah Day is a wonderful and valuable message to send to our children, parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

We all believe that it is great and rewarding for groups of Jewish people of all ages, to carry out a project that benefits a charity, organisation or individuals. Even if it only lasts a single day each year, Mitzvah Day is a

wonderful and valuable message to send to our children, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. We believe that it is important to help bring people together across the Jewish community to create awareness of different ways we can help each other—all while making it a fun way to highlight the importance of mitzvot.

We all had our delegated tasks to do and we were able to choose those that best suited our interests. From a website redesign, advertising, billboards and mail outs, everyone has contributed to a point where just one week away from the big day, Sunday, November 16, everything is ready to go. Now in 20 countries, Mitzvah Day (international) will bring 35,000 people together at the same time, to make a difference. I really can't wait to see how my first Mitzvah Day turns out.

To find out more about Mitzvah Day and to get involved, visit www.mitzvahday.org.au or email info@mitzvahday.org.au.



Emmy Monash residents and Central Synagogue Children's Group on Mitzvah Day 2013 wrapping Christmas gifts for women and children who seek refuge from domestic violence.

What Mitzvah Day means to me

Judy Steinmagen

It's fun and easy to make a difference. I enjoy working with others and it makes me happy to be involved in contributing to the broader community.



2011, we organised 15 projects. In 2013, 65 projects, and this year with the support of a wide cross section of the Jewish community we hope for more than 70 projects across Australia.

Personally, it has been a most rewarding experience. Seeing people of so many backgrounds, ages and abilities coming together united in caring has been heartwarming for me and worth all the time and effort.

Fay Dubrowin

While we aim to do a mitzvah each day, an annual Mitzvah Day project gives us at B'nai B'rith Victoria, an extra opportunity to share in giving not only within our own community but also within the broader community. I'm proud that B'nai B'rith is organising two community functions for elderly and homebound citizens, one in conjunction



with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and one with Jewish Care and the Zionist Council of Victoria.

Bev Gelbart

Mitzvah Day is an opportunity to bring people together across our community and to create awareness of different ways we can all help others. It is a fun way to highlight the importance of mitzvot.



Debra Korman

I love that Jewish people all over the world are working to make a difference and to add value to other people's lives. I really feel a sense of connection on Mitzvah Day to not only



other Jews who are performing the mitzvahs, but also to all those people (Jewish or otherwise) who we are helping. It's a wonderful feeling!

Steve Silver

I joined Mitzvah Day helping out behind the scenes since 2011 as I wanted to participate in helping others. The doing of good deeds is infectious - everyone benefits.



Frances Stiglec

The reason why I believe Mitzvah Day is important and why I decided to join the Committee - is that it is a day that is all-encompassing - in that Jews of all affiliations can partici-



pate; it does not discriminate between age or ability; that one can participate as a family, group or individual - enabling children to learn first-hand the benefits of mitzvah through action and deeds, plus at the same time broadening the outreach between the Jewish and wider communities.

Tamara Vandenberg

I have been involved in Mitzvah Day for the past two years because I think it's a great initiative. It's an opportunity to get out there and do something good for others and really boost the wider public's opinions on the Jewish community. I get involved with projects where my kids can join in, so they can appreciate the satisfaction of helping others in need.

