Rebecca Gratz Award

Vanessa Ehrlich, RJE, has served as the Director of Lifelong Learning in Highland Park, IL, since 1989. In her role at Lakeside Congregation/Makom Solel, she creatively heads Jewish educational programming, has mentored teachers and colleagues, and leads her community with hard work and dedication. Always looking to grow and learn, she implemented innovations like the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution, D'vash, Chidush, and the elective Chugim Program. Beyond her community, she has consulted for the iCenter, mentoring new Israel Educators and shlichim, and served on Faculty and coordinated the education program at Olin Sang Rubin Union Camp Institute. Vanessa has a certificate in Adult Learning from Spertus College as well as a certificate from the iCenter: Conflicts of Interest - the initiative that prepares educators of all types with the skills to engage with conflict, especially the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, with confidence and competence.

Vanessa's contributions to NATE and ARJE are exceptional. From co-chairing our 2006 Kansas City Conference to serving on the Board of Directors to co-chairing our Operations Team, there is no place in this organization that Vanessa hasn't touched. And above all, Vanessa has worked to recruit and develop members, volunteers, and leaders, believing that service to NATE/ARJE enhances Jewish educators' work and strengthens our organization.

Rebecca Gratz founded the first Sunday school in Philadelphia in the 1830s, which led to the congregational school so closely associated with the growth of the Reform movement. The Rebecca Gratz Award is presented to a member of the ARJE whose commitment, expertise, and contribution to congregational education serve as a model of excellence for all in the ARJE, the Reform movement, and throughout North America.

We are proud to honor Vanessa with this award. Her devotion, compassion, commitment to excellence, sense of humor, and generosity have enriched our organization and strengthened our field. She models the value of lifelong learning, helping those in her community embark on a journey enriched by her deep knowledge of contemporary issues and her commitment to the Jewish community.

ARJE will present Vanessa with the Rebecca Gratz Award on Sunday evening, February 1, at our 70th anniversary celebration. All funds raised in Vanessa's honor will support ARJE leadership development.

Register to Celebrate ARJE at 70

Donate on Vanessa's Behalf