

## Inside Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold's Sisterhood Judaica Shop

Jillian Diamond | Staff Writer

While their children are off learning at Hebrew school on Sundays, congregants at Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold may find themselves at a loss for what to do with their time. School sessions only last for two hours, leaving little time to drive home and back to pick up their child. So many choose to linger at the synagogue while waiting for classes to end — and happen upon the synagogue's Sisterhood Judaica Shop.

Opening on Sundays while Hebrew school classes are in session, the shop sources its goods from a variety of local Jewish artists and American and Israeli retail vendors. Books, toys and jewelry are always in stock, as are specifically Jewish-themed items like mezuzot and tallit. Though small, the shop has been running out of Temple Beth Shalom since the 1970s.

Its enduring presence in the synagogue is largely thanks to the work of board members Shelley Pollero and Faye Weiss, the latter of whom is the committee chair of the Judaica shop.

Weiss has been involved with managing the shop since the 1980s, when she first joined the board. She noted that when it first started out, it was located in the basement of the temple's old building. The space was so small that she had to use a janitor's closet for storage.

"I've had many helpers over the years, but Shelley has been my right-hand man," Weiss said of the two's business partnership. "We work very well together. There are certain things one of us likes doing and the other doesn't. I'm not a computer person, but Shelley loves working with computers. And I like making phone calls to our clients and vendors."

The shop's operating hours are short, but Pollero says they are specifically

meant to be. The temple sees a large volume of people when parents come and drop off their children at Hebrew school. And unlike other times when there are many people at Beth Shalom, such as Shabbat or the High Holy Days, they actually have time to do window shopping or even make a few purchases there.

"During religious school is when most people come in, though people can schedule appointments if they



Some of the products on display at Temple Beth Shalom's Judaica shop



want to come visit some other time," Pollero said.

The Judaica shop will be temporarily closed for the summer, with appointments being necessary for anyone who wants to peruse its wares.

The shop servicing people by appointment became a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many businesses shut down temporarily due to health concerns, there was still a need for the Judaica shop — particularly for the tallit they sell for b'nai mitzvahs. The pandemic also posed a problem because they were unable to hold their Chanukah bazaar, which serves as the shop's primary fundraising event.

"We used to invite the whole community in for the holidays, but we couldn't

really do that with COVID," Pollero said. "But we still had a lot of people show up then, and people still come to us to do their Chanukah shopping."

With the temple's permission, Pollero and Weiss were able to service customers through small, in-person appointments in which they made sure to follow COVID safety protocols.

Though the most serious phases of social distancing and wearing masks are long over, the shop continues to take customers by appointment. For some, that has proven more convenient.

But the Judaica shop is not only a source of gifts and tchotchkes for the community — it also plays an important role in the temple's fundraising. Beth Shalom's sisterhood administration

has made matching donations to the temple each year, in addition to sponsoring much of its programming.

"This system is built on friendship," Weiss noted. "When I first joined the temple, some of the first people I met were sisterhood members. You build friendships and relationships there, and that's what [the] sisterhood really means to me. The Judaica shop has always given to the sisterhood, and the sisterhood has always given to the temple." ■

[jdiamond@midatlanticmedia.com](mailto:jdiamond@midatlanticmedia.com)