

Member Spotlight

Paula Rubin

By Carolyn Taylor

It's 1968 and a teacher's all-white 2nd graders want to understand the meaning behind the assassination of Martin Luther King, which has just occurred. Their teacher embarks on an exercise to illuminate what the exclusion of people means in terms that her young students can grasp, so that they might understand the importance of the man just lost. At certain intervals, they were not to speak to anyone in their class with blonde hair. Then, anyone with brown hair, then blue eyes, etc. In so doing, they had just learned how it feels to have brown skin and feel ostracized. This is the memory that one of Paula Rubin's students has of her to this day and they remain in touch after 45 years.



Paula has spent her lifetime in service of others through teaching, mentoring, volunteering, supporting, directing and orchestrating programs for those she could help. As a teacher, she spent 25 years with the young children that she adores but her benefactors are comprised of people of all ages, a bona fide laundry list of charitable organizations that is dizzying and humbling to me. Where does one start? Perhaps at the beginning.

From a strong middle-class Jewish family in Long Island amongst a predominantly white-collar neighborhood, Paula Emanuel ("God be with you" in Hebrew), grew up as the oldest of 4 children where she naturally assumed the role of little mother. In her youth, she excelled in dance and has spent all of her life in athletics and remains an avid swimmer today. From her I learned that 66 laps are a mile of swimming (which she does) at the YMCA, although a mere 40-50 laps is her norm. So, if she's ever invited to your pool party, she'll be the one in the pool blowing your mind with her swimming mastery! Out of the pool, she admits she's somewhat of a talker and loves to travel. Between them, she and Joel have made 6 trips to Russia where his ancestry lives and he speaks Russian fluently. Most recently, they spent 5 weeks in Indo-China and China.

As a teen herself, she and others in her high school developed a service group to help disadvantaged children in inner city Manhattan. She graduated from Penn State with a BS in education and later got her master's from Adelphi U on Long Island. During her child-rearing years, she was a Girl Scout leader and worked summer camps for 30 years as counselor, swimming instructor, group leader and director of her school's summer program. She was one of the first homeowners in Heathrow (1984), but she and husband Joel of 47 years moved here full-time 15 years ago. Daughter Ilene and her husband Zane and son Gregory and wife Nicole, along with their 4 grandchildren remain in Long Island and live near each other.

With volunteerism in her DNA, she joined the HWC upon arriving here permanently and has since served on the telephone, hospitality and charitable endeavors committees where she lends her hands to one event every year. She's helped distribute for Bags of Hope handing out books as well, and mentoring those children to write book reports, wrapped presents for Kid's House and helped with their holiday party, participates in Secret Santa, cooks for the homeless at her Temple once a month and has been on the Board of Hadassah, 10 of them here.

A day in the life of Paula Rubin might include the gym, swimming, or playing Mah Jongg with some of the HWC girls. More often than not, I'm sure Paula would be doing something for someone that would make their day a little easier or a little brighter and we are delighted and grateful to call her one of our own.~