

Congregation Etz Chaim in Marietta, Georgia wanted to host Gary for a weekend of Hiddur Mitzvah programming, but started with a small program, first, to see if there was community-wide support for this kind of program. On a quiet, winter Sunday afternoon, the community was invited to 5-hour open house in which members and non-members had the opportunity to make pre-ordered pieces from the HMP collection. Items were available nearly at cost, with the emphasis on community-building, rather than fund-raising. Israeli music and pictures of congregants' trips to Israel played in the background. Nominal fees were charged to cover anticipated shipping/handling, and leftover funds were used to pay for publicity for the following year's event. 70 families participated, with sales of approximately \$7,000.

Gary was invited to join Etz Chaim congregants the following year as their scholar-in-residence. The weekend consisted of several different components:

The programming kicked off Saturday night after Havdalah, with Gary as the featured speaker at an educational program at a local Jewish day school's "Taste of Torah." Gary joined Jewish educators and rabbis who held break-out sessions on a variety of topics; Gary spoke about using art as a catalyst for social change. The evening concluded with a wine/cheese reception and trunk show.

Sunday morning, Gary joined several local sisterhood chapters at Etz Chaim for a brunch and fund-raiser for the Torah Fund. Gary spoke to the sisterhood members, and joined them in a small Hiddur Mitzvah project after the brunch that included a special Miriam's cup that was sold as a fund-raiser for the Torah fund and designed exclusively for this event.

As the brunch ended, Gary spoke to a Sunday School assembly about his Hiddur Mitzvah Project, and the commissioned piece that students would be helping him to create. Prior to Gary's visit, students were asked to submit drawings of their favorite pieces of Judaica. Gary designed a special tree-of-life sculpture for Etz Chaim, paid for with donations from families, religious school students, and various congregational funds. Every child in attendance that day participated in making the mosaic glass that was integrated into the sculpture. The sculpture was also adorned with students' drawings that were silkscreened on the glass in 14-carat gold.

The highlight of the day was another large open house, open to the greater Atlanta community. Gary mingled with participants who were again invited to create the glass from any of the pieces in the Hiddur Mitzvah collection. Additional items were available for purchase on consignment. Again the emphasis was on art and community building, rather than fund-raising. Trunk show pieces from Gary's collection were also available for purchase.

The weekend concluded with an evening of dessert and design. Gary designed a one-of-a-kind Etz Chaim menorah and spent the evening with participants who enjoyed a catered dessert buffet and Gary's assistance in creating the large mosaics that would adorn their heirloom pieces.

All costs for the events - Gary's travel expenses, printing and advertising, shipping/handling costs were covered by the nominal add-on fees charged to participants above wholesale costs, as well as proceeds from the trunk shows. Sales for the entire weekend exceeded \$20,000, with hundreds of children and adults participating in one or more of the various programs.