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Mom, the full-time mensch

BY ORIT ARFA

"Is everybody happy today?" Shana Passman cheerfully asked a table of Holocaust survivors eating lunch at Hollywood Temple Beth El at the annual Chanukah party of Café Europa, a social club for Holocaust Survivors run by the Jewish Family Service (JFS).

The survivors' faces lit up, but one said she needed a napkin — and Passman quickly ran to get one. As Passman and the survivors shmoozed and later danced to the accordion band, it became hard to tell who was helping whom.



"These people inspire me," said Passman, 60. "They're not survivors for nothing."

Passman said she feels fortunate to be able to make giving to others a vocation. For the past 14 years, she has volunteered her time assisting seniors in various capacities, including delivering weekly meals through Meals on Wheels and offering counseling as a case aide at the JFS/ Freda Mohr Multipurpose Center.

She sits on executive and advisory boards of a variety of organizations and educational institutions, including JFS, the food bank SOVA, United in Harmony, Pitzer College, and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Jewish Nonprofit Management.

But her involvement extends beyond attending meetings. She thrives on hands-on work, whether it's collecting food and toys for the needy or mentoring students.

"I love doing this," Passman said, holding back tears, during an interview in her Beverly Hills home. "I get so much out of it. It feeds my soul. It just does. I love being with seniors; I love being with children."

Animals, too. One of two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels she rescued from the streets chews on a doggie treat next to her.

Passman and her husband, a prominent music attorney, are active members of Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills. She first became involved in community service after the eldest of her four sons volunteered as a counselor for Camp Harmony, a summer camp program for homeless and impoverished children founded by a temple member.

"It made mensches out of my kids," she said.

Being a full-time mother, she said, provided the best mensch training.

"Doing all that mothering and nurturing and being involved in all their schools was the perfect segue."

Her youngest son, Jordan, 24, made a point of ensuring her other good deeds weren't overlooked.

"I bet she failed to mention that she has 60 people over for Pesach, 120 people for break-fast [after Yom Kippur] and does all of the cooking herself," he wrote in an e-mail. "That is her true talent (alongside being the best mother on the planet, of course)."

For more info, visit [Meals on Wheels](#), [Jewish Family Services of Los Angeles](#), [United in Harmony](#), [Pitzer College](#), [Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion](#)

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