

# In a 'first,' Bnai Zion will honor seven young community members

By Rachel Gross Weinstein

Each year, the Bnai Zion Foundation hosts a brunch to honor community members who show leadership and have a love for Israel. This year, seven young leaders will be given this distinction on Sunday, May 6.

Brett Diamond, Ben Fine, Brett Lazarus, Jodi Barris Sanchez, Shane Stein, Robin Finkelstein Stone and Dawn Spechler Strauss will receive the Bnai Zion Community New Leadership Award. All seven of them are under the age of 40.

This is the first time Bnai Zion is honoring seven individuals at this event — one to two people are generally honored. According to Avrille Harris-Cohen, regional director of the Texas Region, they chose to honor these seven because all have shown great leadership skills, and many of them have young children and balance service to the community with family commitments.

“A lot of our members are older, so it’s nice to honor young leaders,” she explained. “It is vital to get them involved with Bnai Zion so they can continue supporting the organization and it can thrive for years to come.”

Diamond, Fine, Lazarus, Stein, Stone and Strauss have all volunteered with the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. Diamond has co-chaired the annual Matzoh Ball event; Fine is involved with the Center for Jewish Education and the Young Adults Division; Lazarus is co-chair of the Young Adults Division; Stone is co-chair of the Younger Set Council; and Strauss recently co-chaired the Women Helping Women mitzvah project that collected feminine hygiene products. Sanchez, meanwhile, opened a successful event/video production company, Entertainment Runway, is involved with Chabad of Dallas and even met her husband at Intown Chabad.

David Eisenberg, president of the Texas Region of Bnai Zion, said honoring these individuals will hopefully allow them to learn more about the organization and deepen their connection to Israel and the Dallas Jewish Community.

“This is about developing the next generation of leaders,” he said. “We are recognizing them for what they have done and any volunteer

work they do in the future, whether it is with Bnai Zion or any other organization.”

Bnai Zion is dedicated to assisting those in need with humanitarian programs in the United States and Israel. Two of the main projects it supports are the Bnai Zion Medical Center in Haifa, and the Ahava Village for Children and Youth in Kiryat Bialik, which is about 20 minutes from Haifa. One hundred percent of the money raised from the brunch will benefit Ahava, a residential center for children ages 6 to 18 who come from high-risk home situations.

All of the money raised from the live auction at the brunch will also benefit Ahava and attendees will have the chance to donate money for computers, animals and cages for pet therapy, therapeutic games for children, emergency diagnostic equipment and more.

“The children at Ahava have been removed from their home, so it is very important to support it,” Harris-Cohen said. “Without this center, many of these children would fall through the cracks, but at Ahava, they are given love and care. I have visited Ahava and have never seen anything like it. It is of the utmost importance to continue supporting it.”

Ahava cares for over 200 children and the goals in the next few years are to construct new buildings for workshops, classes and activities, along with an emergency shelter to provide immediate care for children removed from traumatic situations, with lodging for social workers and therapists.

“We are very proud to support this,” Eisenberg added. “It is important to give back to the local community, but especially to Israel. It is amazing to see how Ahava has developed over the years. It was emotional for me when I visited it and got to see all of the kids there. It’s an amazing place.”

The brunch will begin at 10 a.m. and tickets cost \$54 per person or \$44 for those under the 30; sponsorships are also available. It will take place at the Westin Galleria, 13340 Dallas Pkwy. in Dallas.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Avrille Harris-Cohen at 972-918-9200 or [avrille.harris-cohen@bnaizion.org](mailto:avrille.harris-cohen@bnaizion.org), or visit [www.bnaizion.org](http://www.bnaizion.org).



Photo: Submitted by Bnai Zion  
Pictured are back row from left: Ben Fine, Brett Lazarus, Shane Stein, Brett Diamond and Robin Finkelstein Stone. Front row from left are Dawn Spechler Strauss and Jodi Barris Sanchez. The seven of them will be honored with the Bnai Zion Community New Leadership Award.

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2432 Preston Rd.  
Plano, TX  
972-612-6208

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2828 E. Trinity Mills Rd., Ste. 121 • Carrollton, Texas 75006-2312  
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