

March 26, 2010

Dear Temple Emanu-El congregants,

At times, we come to you with an appeal for funds but today, our appeal is for your time. As you may have seen, Birmingham's city schools are not exactly performing as the city of Birmingham needs them to. And while there are all sorts of politics involved and answers seem so far from anyone's grasp, there are real and substantive things we can do to make our city a better, more productive place.

Partially because of its proximity and partially because the need is so great, Phillips Academy has become a wonderful new focus of our Tikun Olam efforts. So first and foremost, please make sure that you sign up now for Mitzvah Day on April 24th. We will landscape and paint and shelve books and complete a mural all at and for the Phillips Academy community in downtown Birmingham. Please be sure to meet us all here at Temple at 11 am for our service, followed by lunch provided by our Sisterhood and then our afternoon of the service of our hands. For more information, please email Julie Marcus at jammarcus@bellsouth.net or to RSVP, you can email Dina Hagler at Dh@ourtemple.org.

Additionally, we hope you will consider the following from Sidney Conn, a regular weekly volunteer at Phillips. Truly, if you have the time, you can make such a huge difference!

“Having had exceptional Jewish parents and grandparents, Elenor and I always understood the concept and reality of Tikkun Olam and practiced it whenever possible. When we moved to the inner city of Birmingham, it was easy for us to become involved with our neighborhood school, Phillips Academy. Although the school has 850 students, all black, we found a huge disparity of economic levels, family structures and life experiences. As it has been throughout its entire history, Phillips is unique amongst inner city schools. It is now a magnet school, although it accepts neighborhood and shelter children as well. It has a firm mandate to prepare every student for post secondary education. Many of our inner city schools simply provide caretaking and are treading water, educationally. Volunteering, teaching and tutoring have presented us with a wonderful opportunity to make a real difference in young lives and to share our Jewish values with the students. If you have a few free hours each week and the inclination to participate in a real Mitzvah, please contact us at 251-9396 for more information. After all, ‘If not us, who?’”

Thank you in advance for your involvement!

Rabbi Scott