

Music! Music! Music!

Don't miss Music! Music! Music!, sponsored by Park Synagogue Senior Adults and B'nai Jeshurun's Hazak Group, on Sunday, Nov. 15, 3:30 pm, at Park Synagogue East, 27500 Shaker Blvd., Pepper Pike, featuring the Laura Varcho Trio in an upbeat musical program. The event concludes with a table-served dinner.



The Laura Varcho Trio, made up of vocalist Laura Varcho, premier jazz pianist Joe Hunter, and bass-player Bryan Thomas, will play a wide variety of music from past and present eras, including songs from Gershwin, Porter, Lloyd Weber, and many other talented composers. There will be something for all music lovers to enjoy!

The event is open to people of all ages in the community. Cost is \$30 per person for community members. Prepaid reservations are required by November 6. For registration information, please contact Ellen Petler, Park Synagogue program and volunteer director, at epetler@parksyn.org or 216.371.2244, ext. 122.

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About the Hebrew Free Loan Association

by Michal Marcus, HFLA Executive Director

As I sat at the Western Reserve Historical Society reading through log books dating back to the first decade of the last century, it amazed me how one organization could remain so relevant, even 111 years after its inception.

The Hebrew Free Loan Association (HFLA) of Northeast Ohio's core belief that people would rather have a hand up than a handout continues to inspire the more than 26,000 recipients of the organization's interest-free loans.

"Our model of lending small amounts of money to those who cannot qualify for conventional bank loans still raises eyebrows in some sectors, with people not understanding how we manage to operate," said HFLA Executive Director Michal Marcus. "Even after economist Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for establishing micro lending in Bangladesh, beginning in 1976, our non-sectarian lending and our interest-free model continues to fly under the radar, although we started more than 70 years before Grameen Bank."

Perhaps the reason is that most people do not perceive the need for our services. HFLA is not incorporated as a bank, and our community would prefer to believe that it does not have the same needs as a developing country like Bangladesh. The truth is, however, that for many Northeast Ohioans, one paycheck can stand between their families and financial ruin.

This is where HFLA comes in. Following Biblical precepts (Exodus 22:24), HFLA provides interest-free loans to people in need who, typically, may be considered high risk and unqualified for conventional bank loans. That being said, the HFLA default rate is only 3%.

"How do we do this? We listen to people and try to understand their story," Marcus told us. "We build relationships, examine applicants' income and expenses, and make a loan determination based on our belief that they will repay it so that the next person in need will have access to these funds."

Lynda Hirsh was living at Sherri Park when the fire broke out, and overnight she had to figure out how to move. Her insurance had lapsed and she didn't have the extra income for this unforeseen event. HFLA was there to help her with an interest-free loan so she could relocate and start afresh.

And here's a story from Jane, who shared the transformative impact of interest-free loans on the lives of her children:

"HFLA has been an enormous blessing to my family. As a single parent with three children, the collapse of a 20-year marriage and a family business failure left me facing huge financial stresses as I attempted to rebuild our lives.

"As a teacher, I know the value of education. When my son wanted to attend college, I could not

secure a traditional bank loan. HFLA lent our family the money to fill in the gaps that the three jobs I was holding could not fill. My son got a job and together we were able to pay his tuition. He continued to thrive at university and today is a successful businessman.

"My second son also wanted to pursue a psychology degree. Again, HFLA was there to help him achieve that goal. He is currently a senior and is a published researcher in the field of psychology. He plans to pursue a doctorate in psychology next fall.

"My daughter recently began pursuit of a nursing degree at the University. HFLA was there for our family again.

"Without these loans, my children would not have been able to achieve their dreams. They took the blessing that we were given and used it to set goals and work hard to achieve them. We are grateful for the financial support we were given and hope to someday help others as HFLA has helped us in our time of great need."

For more information about HFLA, visit hflaclev.org.

Come to Party 111 and support the next 111 years of interest-free lending!

Saturday, November 14

Temple Emanu El

6:30 to 10 pm

On Saturday, Nov. 14, join HFLA to support 111 years of interest-free lending in Northeast Ohio with a sit-down dinner, open bar, live music and silent auction. Meet some of the 25,000 people that HFLA has helped since 1904. This gala takes place from 6:30 to 10 pm at Temple Emanu El, 4545 Brainard Road in Orange Village. Please register by calling 216.378.9042, emailing team@hflaclev.org or visiting hflaclev.org. Sponsorship information is also available.