

Presidential Matters

by Steve Aronowitz



Some may not know them all by name but there is no question you've seen them in the synagogue whenever you are in the building. We are very fortunate to have wonderful support staff who take care of many of the "behind the scene" tasks which, often, are taken for granted.

Certainly, at the top of the list is Audi Acevedo, our Managing Director. As co-presidents of the synagogue, Mitchell and I work with Audi on a daily basis. Audi was hired in 2010 and her role has expanded from bookkeeper to office manager to her current title. In short, practically all operations go through Audi – from working closely with the treasurers on financial matters, to putting together Temple Talk, to serving as the Rabbi's secretary, to managing the maintenance staff. She is at every service, greeting congregants and guests with a smile. When I asked her about the past 10 years, she remarked, "This is a very special place to me. I've never been treated with such warmth and love."

Fernando, an avid NY Giants fan, joined our custodial staff in 2013. When one speaks with Fernando, they immediately appreciate his passion for where he works. Audi told me, "the two of us have cried over the loss of some of our members – it's crazy how you go to a place to work and the place and its people become your home and your family."

Juan Carlos Agudelo, one of the most dedicated and loyal individuals one could ever meet, takes real pride in his work. "He is a perfectionist," says former president, Robert Stern, who was, of course, at Oakland with him for 20 years prior to the consolidation. "Often," Bob explains, "I'd observe him cleaning an area at OJC, after it had been cleaned by one of the crew members. I would take him aside and ask why he cleaned an area that had already been cleaned. His response, with a smile, was that it wasn't done properly. I'd see him later talking to the guy who did the initial work, calmly explaining how it should be done."

Despite residing a fair distance from the synagogue, requiring multiple bus runs to get here, Juan Carlos always finds a way to get to the building to perform his duties. That is a guarantee!!!! Bob highlighted the best example remarking, "On more than one occasion when I couldn't venture out because of a heavy snowfall, he'd call to assure me that he was at the shul clearing the sidewalks for entry." Regardless of the weather, Juan Carlos is a model of commitment, never once asking to leave an event early due to inclement weather.

Bob added, "It was a running joke, except it was true, that you could eat off the floor after Juan Carlos cleaned it."

A few years ago, just for fun, Cantor Shron "gave" Hebrew names to Audi, Fernando, and Juan Carlos. Here's the way The Cantor explains it:

Audi is "Dina Goldberg", Fernando is "Chaim Rosenberg", and Juan Carlos is "Yonatan Yaakov Abrams". It's a been a running joke between us for years, but in reality, it's a wonder how these three are not yet official members of the tribe. The concern, care, and genuine love that each of them shows our congregation and its members is truly remarkable. They are members of the family in every sense of the word, and I'm fairly sure we wouldn't make it a week without their help and their care."

And, Rabbi Yaffe summed up their value by expressing his appreciation and respect for their individual and collective efforts. "They almost always know what I need before I even know I need it! It's not every day that an organization finds the kind of professional, knowledgeable, and caring individuals that we've sometimes come to take for granted!"

That is so true. In our lives, it is easy to not see what is often right in front of us. There is no controversy when it comes to Audi, Fernando, and Juan Carlos, three employees whose dedication and work ethic is on display every day.