Sables JCC's Annual Benefit is May 3

Proceeds will support programs for children, seniors and people with special needs, and the JCC's scholarship fund

Question: What do clovers, computers and community leadership have in common? Answer: Debbie and Gil Mann.

The Manns, who are this year's honorees at the Sables JCC Benefit titled "Ready. Set. Go!", met as teenagers, drew to each other by their shared interests and desire to make a difference in people's lives and the life of the community. Soon after they married in 1981, they co-founded a computer training business in the basement of their home. Seven years later, they sold the company and continued their work together — this time as volunteers in the Jewish community.

Debbie's main passion has been in the area of education. She served on the board of the Amos and Celia Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School and has taught their students as both a tutor and classroom teacher. She held many volunteer positions at Beth El Synagogue, ranging from strategic planning to developing curricula for the B'nai Mitzva program. She also served on the board of Sha'arim and on JPCS' Inclusion Committee, helping to ensure that children with special needs have opportunities and support to thrive in Jewish educational settings.

"There are just some people that you like instantly — Debbie Mann is one of them. Always smiling, always kind and always willing to help," said Mort Namian, director of the Jewish Community Foundation and Senior Philanthropy Officer of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation. "She runs the family, happy to help friends, strangers, family and the community. Together with her husband, Gil, they make an incredible team — a team that is filled with love, dedication and deep caring. Debbie, what is important is family and community."  

Added friend Michelle Basman, "Debbie is my go-to person for practical advice and a calming voice. She is always willing to lend a hand to a friend or a stranger.

Gil's volunteerism and leadership has been instrumental in the growth and success of many organizations, ranging from Jewish senior housing to lobbying for Israel. He served as the president of Beth El Synagogue and also chaired its recent capital campaign. After serving 18 years on committees and the board of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, Gil stepped into the role as the Federation's interim CEO. In true Gil fashion, always putting the needs of the community first, he agreed to take the job only if his salary would not exceed $1 per month.

Gil volunteers his time as a public speaker and has authored two books, Sex, God, Christmas and Jesus: Intimate Emails about Being Jewish and How to Get More Out of Being Jewish Ever or: a) you are not sure you believe in God; b) you think keeping kosher is stupid; c) you think going to synagogue is a waste of time; d) you hated Hebrew school; or e) all of the above.

Gil has also been a hospital clown, working with adult patients since 2008. He has taught doctors and medical professionals about the healing power of humor at many hospitals, including the Mayo Clinic. (Gil says he's honored to clowning at Talnud Torah and apologizes to all his teachers).

"We see Gil give tirelessly to our community, and the extra effort he puts out to do clowning to make sick children smile, or an injured veteran, invaluable," Basman said. "Healo cheers us up with his joke to match any topic. How does he know and remember so many jokes? It's unreal.

Community leader Chuck Barry said Gil is the "first person you call" when something needs to happen in the Jewish community. "Whatever he tries to accomplish, he does beautifully and gives at least 110 percent," Barry said. "He works well with everyone and knows how to get things done. If everyone followed Gil's example, we would have the best community. Debbie and Gil's most important contribution to the future of our community is raising their four children, Josh, Naomi, Danny and Shoshana, to be active, caring and involved young community leaders.

"Ready. Set. Go!" the Sables JCC Benefit honoring Gil and Debbie Mann and introducing the JGames (see bottom of Page 17), will take place on Tuesday, May 3 in the Great Lakes Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, 1300 Nicollet Mall. Cocktails and appetizers will be served at 5:30 p.m., followed by the program and dinner at 6:30 p.m.

All proceeds will support programs for children, seniors and people with special needs, and the JCC's scholarship fund, so that no one is ever turned away due to inability to pay. Tickets for the benefit are available at: www.sablesjcc.org.

During the evening, there will be a variety of activities including: in the lobby, warm up with a Sables JCC trivia game; in the ballroom, meet and greet with your favorite JCC instructor and a chance to win a special gift; at 6:30 p.m., enjoy a special performance by the Minnesota Opera; at 7:30 p.m., presenters will be honored for their volunteer work.

To register, please visit sablesjcc.org.

Manns donated tent to Camp Olami

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leaders in the country.

In addition to their many other leadership roles, Gil and Debbie have been very active at the Sables JCC, both having served on the board of directors, involved in fundraising for the J, and through their philanthropic support. And, thanks to Gil and Debbie, the J's Camp Olami received a new and much-needed giant tent that is now the shelter and home base for more than 500 campers each summer.

"Debbie and Gil are the kind of leaders that don't wait to be asked, they figure out what needs to be done and make it happen," said Sables JCC CEO Joshua Wet. "Their involvement at the JCC benefits the thousands of people who walk through our doors each day. We are pleased to honor such a deserving couple. They are both role models of giving and leadership."

With all they have done for the community, Debbie and Gil's most important contribution to the future of our community is raising their four children, Josh, Naomi, Danny and Shoshana, to be active, caring and involved young community leaders.

Help Brighten Passover for a Jew in Need

By sponsoring a Passover for All gift bag, you will make this Passover holiday brighter for members of the Jewish community who face physical, financial or emotional challenges which prevent them from celebrating Passover. More than 200 bags filled with Passover products will be delivered to Jews in the East metro area. To sponsor a Passover for All gift bag, complete and return the following form:

I Yes! I want to sponsor Passover

for All gift bags at $18 each. I will pay by:

Check Visa MasterCard Discover Am, Express

Credit card number:

Exp. Date / Year

Mail checks payable to: Jewish Family Service of St. Paul, Passover for All 2016, 700 6th Street, St. Paul MN 55102, or call 651-698-0767 or info@jfsap.org with credit card information.

Name:

Billing Address:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Signature:

Passover for All is co-sponsored by Jewish Family Service of St. Paul and the Jewish Community Center of Greater St. Paul.

Sables JCC benefit will also launch JGames

In addition to a kosher dinner and tribute to Debbie and Gil Mann, the Sables JCC's Annual Benefit will also kick off the 2016 JGames, a season of events for the entire community.

What do food, art, golf, trivia, puppets and a ninja warrior have in common? Join the Sables JCC on May 3 and learn more about its exciting year of events.

For information, visit www.sablesjcc.org.