

# DR. KING'S LEGACY - March To Vigil

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Clockwise from top left:

Gary Weisserman of Walled Lake and Dana and Erin Rhodes of Farmington Hills

Robert Cohen of Royal Oak, Jewish Community Relations Council executive director

West Bloomfield High School student Shelby Brusseloff

Beth Borson of West Bloomfield and Rep. Gary Peters

Rabbi Paul Yedwab of Temple Israel



# March To Vigil

## West Bloomfield unites in marking King message.

**Don Cohen**  
Special to the Jewish News

It was the Sweet Sixteen year for West Bloomfield's United We Walk celebrating the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and the slain civil rights leader's legacy. The annual event, held on the Sunday before the holiday for the past two years, brought a diverse group together at West Bloomfield High School to celebrate and affirm King's message of racial and social justice.

The day's events included a one-mile walk along Orchard Lake Road, music and speeches, food and drink, opportunities for structured dialogue and a candlelight vigil. More than 200 people walked with signs and banners and even more took part in the auditorium program.

Dave Henig, an active member of Temple Kol Ami in West Bloomfield and on the staff of the Oakland County-based

Michigan Board of Rabbis, has served as an event co-chair the past three years.

He sees the event as an important expression of community unity.

"Each year, we show that our community can work together. It is our attempt to build Dr. King's beloved community. We still working on it, but we will continue to work on it until everyone is on board," Henig said.

Camp Kennedy of Oakland County-based Tamarack Camps was the inspiration for West Bloomfield High School 10th-grader Shelby Brusseloff, a winner of the oratory contest. Together with the two other winners, she recited her winning entry on the theme "United We Can," highlighting the importance of community support for individual achievement.

"I love to write and I'm very passionate about camp," Brusseloff said, explaining why she entered the contest. "We should always remember Dr. King and work to

keep the dream alive. As the years pass, it is harder to keep things going, but it's nice to see that it is still important in our community and hopefully it will continue for many more years."

Rabbi Paul Yedwab of Temple Israel in West Bloomfield shared his personal experience as a student wrestler trying not to get pinned as well as his parents' commitment to the civil rights movement and their friendship with Dr. King — stressing the importance of perseverance.

When Dr. King was assassinated in 1968, Yedwab feared for his parents because they were at a civil rights conference at the time, but as it turned out, not with Dr. King. Only when he was older did he feel Dr. King's loss as personal.

One of the strengths that the rabbi valued most about Dr. King was a "passive determination and sacred patience" that allowed him to gracefully, but effectively push for justice and civil rights. The rabbi

observed "these are very difficult to find today."

"We must all stand together," he told the audience.

He challenged the students in particular, asking them, "What is your role?" He urged them to "remember in your heart and soul and being Dr. King's most important message and dedicate yourself to it: 'You must never, ever give up.'"

United We Walk co-sponsors included the Jewish Community Relations Council of Metropolitan Detroit, H'nai Brith Great Lakes Region, Temple Kol Ami, Congregation Beth Ahm in West Bloomfield, Temple Shir Shalom in West Bloomfield, Congregation Shazrey Zedek of Oakland County and the Greater Detroit Chapter of Hadassah.

U.S. Rep Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, and State Rep. Lisa Brown, D-West Bloomfield, were among the elected officials attending. □