



Larry Zakarin

Every Saturday morning, regardless of where he is in the world, Larry Zakarin goes to shul. His upbringing in a traditional Conservative home gave him a desire to continue that dedication as an adult, which helped draw him to PAS in 2004 along with his wife, Amy, after they moved to the Upper East Side. Ever since then, his involvement in volunteer efforts and hard work at PAS have put him in the spotlight, leading to his being named a 2024 Simhat Torah honoree.

Larry and Amy, when looking for a nursery school for their now 19-year-old son, Hank, were instantly drawn to PAS' Penn Family Early Childhood Center. "We joined PAS and started attending services and becoming part of the PAS world," Larry said. "Soon after, Rabbi Cosgrove joined PAS, and this was a game-changer for me. Rabbi Cosgrove is my first rabbi that I was able to say is my rabbi."

Shabbat and celebrating the holidays where they felt comfortable was important as they raised their family, which also includes their son Adam, 16. "PAS fits a lot of our wants and has for sure become a major part of our lives, during good, bad, and hard times," Larry said.

Larry's involvement with the Men of a Certain Age group spearheaded his devotion to volunteerism and led to his training as a lay leader. His involvement with Hashkamah Minyan, the "early service," became a cornerstone of his efforts at the synagogue.

When Larry lost his dad in 2011, he found his way to the morning minyan. "I worked through my loss, and my boys had lost their grandpa, but they gained 15 new grandpas through Hashkamah," Larry said. "I was more than 30 years younger than most of the group's members, but they were so inviting."

When the pandemic hit in the spring of 2020, Hashkamah in person had to end. Larry came up with the idea to hire a Torah reader to keep the group together so that they can meet daily and connect. As a result, they did daily minyan on Zoom as an alternative to weekly Hashkamah. Larry said, "we were able to keep our services going. In 2022, when it was safe to resume in person, Rabbi Cosgrove and I discussed how to start things again, in particular the Hashkamah Saturday Minyan. He wanted it to be more inclusive, including inviting women to attend. We expanded to follow the inclusiveness track of PAS. The lay-led service is now a key part of PAS' weekly schedule, with consistent participation from PAS members."

Larry, the division head for accessories, outerwear and swim at Jordache, said his professional strategies from the workplace often inform his projects at PAS: "I use the same approach of a willingness of working towards change—at PAS, our ability to be nimble, to open the door to modern times, and to change allows us to keep getting better."

Larry helped with the new siddur launch and was a member of the Catering Committee and is now on the Advisory Council and the Ritual Advisory Committee.

He feels fortunate to have been tapped by special members of different eras and felt "heard in a big place. PAS is my shul, in good times and bad times. I want to be known as a congregant."

As for the future, Larry said his goal is to increase the number of people in PAS pews.