

## A N.Y. MINUTE

*Rabbi Sharon Brous, who in seven years has gone from rabbinic fellow at B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan to leader of her own spiritual community, IKAR, in Los Angeles, is the first-ever recipient of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles' Inspired Leadership Award, a \$100,000 grant for programs that support her vision of the Jewish future.*

**Q: Have you noticed any difference in the Jewish communities in L.A. and N.Y.?**

**A:** It's completely different here. It was difficult to adjust to life in L.A., where I identify as a New Yorker. Here, traffic precludes community because it's so hard to get anywhere. The gravity of L.A. pulls people in different directions. My husband and I were so used to the Upper West Side that we felt a real loss of community here.

IKAR, it's been said, is counter-gravitational. That's

why it started. ... In this city, people with innovative ideas can really thrive if you have the chutzpah. There is the sense that Jewish life should be as creative and stimulating as intellectual life.

**What do you plan on doing with the grant money?**

**A:** I'm going to start a tzedakah collective to inspire others who might not give and give meaningfully. I will challenge the community to match my gift and then together we'll make determinations about worthy projects both within and beyond the IKAR community and the Jewish community. I'll also fund programs at IKAR, like the Isaiah Initiative, the greatest expression of our core commitment. People make contributions and we don't allow ourselves to

access that money until members of IKAR take the principles of Torah to the streets. For each hour of volunteer work, we access a certain amount of money from the fund.

The deep spiritual engagement at IKAR is inspiring people to go feed the hungry and to work to address the root causes of poverty. It's an exciting new model of philanthropy, holding us to our deepest truths.

**How do you motivate your congregants to volunteer?**

**A:** We talk a lot about what it means to be a community not only of words but of actions. At the end of each year, we put together a booklet that celebrates the work people have been doing, the organizations they're working with and incentivizes others.

**Randi Sherman**



*Rabbi Sharon Brous: Now has \$100,000 to dole out to further her social-justice vision.*