

# **The Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**

3880 Sedgwick Avenue - Bronx, NY 10463



**Honors**

**Gary Axelbank**

11 Tammuz 5778

June 24, 2018

# *Congratulations, Gary!*



Photo: Dean Spiwack

*Eli Axelbank, Jeffrey Axelbank, Gary Axelbank, Arthur Axelbank  
Gary's Bar Mitzvah, May 1967*

## ***Celebrating Three Generations of Axelbanks at the VCJC!***

Molly and Philip Axelbank  
Mickey and Eli Axelbank  
Gary and Suzanne Axelbank

From:  
Mickey Axelbank  
Arthur Axelbank and Susi Lieff and Family  
Jeffrey Axelbank and Lori Freedman and Family

# ☆ PROGRAM ☆

Welcome

Robert Gillman  
*President*

Mistress of Ceremonies

Marcy Gillman Harris  
*Chair, Journal Gala Committee*

## Star Spangled Banner

### Hatikvah

Invocation

Rabbi David Borenstein

Family Remarks

Shawn Axelbank

## ❖ DINNER ❖

Committee Welcome

Phillip Friedman  
*Vice-Chair, Journal Gala Committee*

Plaque and Gift Presentation

Ceil Hartstein

Guest of Honor

Gary Axelbank

## ❖ DESSERT ❖

## GARY AXELBANK



Gary Axelbank is a life-long resident of Van Cortlandt Village. He attended PS 95, followed by JHS 143 and graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School. He continued on to earn his undergraduate degree from Lehman College. He continues to live in Park Reservoir where he is the Vice President of the Board of Directors. He and his wife have two children.

Gary loved the rock and roll music he grew up listening to and went into radio as a disc jockey at the beginning of his broadcast career. He began his media career at stations in Maryland and Delaware, at WRNW in Briarcliff Manor, NY, and at WDHA in Dover, NJ. He has also done stints at WWRL in New York. He has been a producer of news features for WNBC-TV and a producer in the station's sports department, where his duties

included coverage of major sports teams on NBC's flagship station. He was also a producer on FOX Sports News.

Currently, Gary is well-known as the host and senior producer of Bronx Talk, the borough's flagship talk show on BronxNet cable television. Since the program's debut in October 1994, he has hosted more than 1,100 weekly editions of Bronx Talk, including 55 political debates, more than 100 programs on education, and dozens of programs on crime and policing, youth, parks, health care and a range of community issues. He is also the creator and publisher of [thisistheBronX.info](http://thisistheBronX.info), the borough's "everything Bronx" web portal. In addition, he is the host of the Bronx Buzz, a weekly reporter's roundtable that debuted in March 2016. In December 2016, Gary was recognized in City & State NY's Bronx Borough Influential 50 report as the borough's 21<sup>st</sup> most influential figure.

Gary represents the third generation of his family involved with VCJC. His grandfather was an original Amalgamated pioneer and was a regular member of the congregation at the old Gouverneur site. Both of his parents served on the VCJC Board of Directors. Back in the 1970s, they were also among the founders of the Adult Social Club.

Along with his two brothers, Gary attended the VCJC Hebrew School and all three celebrated their Bar Mitzvahs at the synagogue. Gary's wedding (at which he reports he wore low black Converse sneakers!) was held at VCJC, officiated by Rabbi Jacob Sodden (obm). During the past year, Gary has been an active participant in a special committee looking at the future direction of VCJC. Recently, he exhibited his special talent as the moderator of an open forum held at a breakfast honoring our new congressman, Adriano Espaillat.

In his "spare time", Gary has other interests. He is an avid Mets fan, which can be a full-time occupation in itself. He also has a great passion for our neighborhood, and has been one of the foremost advocates for the Jerome Park reservoir and delivered an informative lecture about this one Sunday morning at VCJC a few years ago.

We are fortunate to have someone of Gary's stature and accomplishments affiliated with VCJC and are proud to have him as this year's honoree.

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

It is a distinct honor and privilege to pay tribute to this year's VCJC's Annual Gala guest of honor, Gary Axelbank. Gary, a life-long resident of Van Cortlandt Village, is the third generation connected with the VCJC. He attended the VCJC Hebrew School. His Bar Mitzvah and wedding were celebrated at our shul, and were officiated by the late Rabbi Jacob Sodden ob''m.

In many Jewish homes education is of paramount importance. This is especially so when our most formative role models are dedicated to formal education. Gary's late father, Eli, was a gifted educator for most of his adult life. Gary's mother, Mickey, dedicated her professional life to early childhood education. Gary's career took a right turn, focusing on the grand borough in which so many of our congregants were born, raised in, and share a keen interest and fascination reminiscing about.

Whereas classes inform and teach tens of pupils, what can be said about our guest of honor who has been reaching, teaching, and informing tens and even hundreds of thousands of Bronx residents over decades via the media? Gary is the senior producer of Bronx Talk, BronxNet cable television's flagship talk show. Since its inception in 1994, Gary has hosted an amazing 1100 weekly editions of Bronx Talk. We all talk about bringing awareness to important issues of the day. However to truly do something of such magnitude that can publicly address and even bring about real change is something entirely different. Many of us were taught the importance of citizenship and staying abreast of current events growing up. However, Gary propelled things to a whole new level, and performed a tremendous accomplishment by comprehensively researching issues of the day and presenting them in a manner conducive to improvement. By way of example, Gary's show featured 100 programs on education, and dozens of programs on a whole range of community issues.

Gary has also hosted 55 political debates. Recently he served as moderator at a VCJC breakfast forum honoring our new congressman, Adriano Espaillat. I believe the influence of his family and involvement with the VCJC throughout his life played an integral part in his decision to so tenaciously and single mindedly commit himself to these very idealistic yet worthwhile goals. Even then, I believe it is only with his G-d given talents that he has developed, and with Divine assistance, that he has achieved so much. Though Gary could well be forgiven for any airs, his realization that dedication to community is not only a responsibility but a privilege keeps him humble and always affable, friendly and approachable, a true mensch in the fullest sense of the word.

I believe it was in this spirit that Gary made time for the VCJC. He joined a committee for the future of VCJC. Gary graciously consented to be our guest of honor at this year's Annual Gala, to bring attention to and help raise badly needed funds for our institution to continue and grow as we move forward.

In December of 2016 Gary's excellence in service was universally recognized in City and State NY's Bronx Borough Influential 50 report as the borough's 21st most influential figure. I think Gary could very well be the poster boy for the sky's the limit to what a decent and dedicated person can achieve when wholeheartedly applying himself for the good of the people. He is unquestionably a tremendous credit to his family, our VCJC'S extended family and the entire Bronx community.

I would like to conclude with a beautiful blessing from our liturgy. May He who blessed our forefathers bless...all who are involved faithfully in the needs of the community. May the Holy One, Blessed is He, grant them their reward and send blessings and success to all their work, and the work of all Israel their brethren. And let us say Amen. Congratulations.

**Rabbi David Borenstein**



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

I don't think that there is anyone who lives in Van Cortlandt Village, or anywhere else in the Bronx who has not at least heard of **Gary Axelbank**. He is this year's Van Cortlandt Jewish Center's well deserving honoree. It is in recognition of his excellent work on television's Bronx Talk and his many other endeavors involving The Bronx, our neighborhood and our synagogue.

I know him best as a neighborhood fixture. His involvement with the Park Reservoir Co-op, the neighborhood, especially with the Jerome Park Reservoir, and his efforts in keeping the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center alive and well, are a few of the reasons why Gary is this year's honoree.

Gary grew up in this neighborhood. He attended our Hebrew School, celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, and was married in our synagogue. He is following in the footsteps of his parents, each of who served as a member of our Board of Trustees, and of his grandfather. Gary follows them with his involvement in the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, as well as with the Amalgamated's sister Co-op, Park Reservoir, where he is Vice-President.

He is the third generation of Axelbanks who have toiled for the Jews of this neighborhood so that they may have a place to pray and practice their religion.

**Congratulations Gary on this honor. It is well deserved.**

**Robert Gillman, President**

## **JOURNAL/GALA CHAIR'S MESSAGE**

This year's Journal Gala is especially important to me because the chosen honoree is not only a well-known community member and television/radio celebrity, but also a part of my own family. When I married my husband Stu, I married into the Harris family, which is also a part of the Axelbank family. I am proud to call Gary my cousin, and to be able to say that his family connection is two-fold: he is part of my related family and part of my VCJC family.

Gary has had ties with the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, first through his parents, then through his childhood attending Hebrew School and as a Bar Mitzvah, then in marriage to his wife Suzanne, held in the main sanctuary as Gary so often proudly tells people when at an event in the building. More recently, Gary stepped forward when asked to assist me with ideas and publicity relating to my efforts as chair of the VCJC Fundraising Committee, and gladly accepted positions on recently created Committee for the Future of the VCJC, and Committee for the Preservation of the VCJC.

There are many ways for people to support the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, and while not someone who regularly attends religious services, Gary has supported the VCJC by being a long-time member and making himself available for support whenever asked. He led a well-attended presentation on the Jerome Park Reservoir, and was the Master of Ceremonies for a recent breakfast.

It is for these reasons, and probably others which have not come to mind when writing this message, that it is with immense pleasure and sincerest thanks that I say Mazel Tov – congratulations, Gary, for an honor that is well-deserved.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my committee, without whom, along with our honoree, this event would not be possible: Marc Friedman, Phil Friedman, Bob Gillman, Ceil Hartstein, Jack Kleinfeld and Jack Spiegel – thank you all for your hard work and support. A hearty thank you as well to our office staff, Roberta Seidner and Claire Haime, who keep everything together like glue to paper. And a special shout out to Phil Friedman, who although he resigned the position of Journal chair a few years ago, has always been my constant advisor and friend.

**Marcy Gillman-Harris, Journal/Gala Chair**



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851 Grand Concourse, 161<sup>st</sup> St.  
Bronx, New York 10451

Ruben Diaz Jr.  
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

TEL: 718-590-3500  
FAX: 718-590-3537

June 24, 2018

Van Cortlandt Jewish Center  
3880 Sedgwick Ave  
Bronx, NY 10463

Dear Friends:

Congratulations on the occasion of your 2018 Annual Gala, a time to reflect and be proud of all that the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center has accomplished and continues to do for the people of The Bronx, New York City and the entire State of New York.

This wonderful event highlights and celebrates the rich heritage and the contributions of the Jewish community and its leadership, which has long been an important part of this borough, making important cultural, economic and political contributions that have helped The Bronx's resurgence.

The Bronx has seen great transformative change, seeing tremendous economic growth as well as historic decreases in crime and unemployment rates since I took office in 2009. Organizations such as yours have played a key role in our success.

I offer my most heartfelt congratulations to your honoree, Gary Axelbank, for devoting countless hours and working hard to help The Bronx and your synagogue flourish as our borough and our city continue to grow stronger.

On behalf of the more than 1.4 million residents of The Bronx, I salute the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center and your honoree, wishing you continued success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Ruben Diaz Jr.



*We congratulate and thank our  
fellow cooperator and Board Member*

**GARY AXELBANK**



For his support and services to the  
*Van Cortlandt Jewish Center*

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*Congratulations and Best Wishes*  
to

**GARY AXELBANK**



On this special occasion for all you do for  
*Van Cortlandt Jewish Center*

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*We congratulate and thank our friend*

**GARY AXELBANK**



For his work and dedication to the  
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Board of Directors of  
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Congratulations to our honoree

**GARY AXELBANK**

for his dedication  
and valuable contributions  
to the

**Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**

and to the

**People of the Bronx**

**Marc  
Friedman**

**Phil  
Friedman**

**Laura and Bob Gillman**

Extend Congratulations  
and Best Wishes to  
our honoree

**GARY AXELBANK**

We appreciate the work he has diligently performed for our shul and neighborhood for the past number of years. We pray for a bright future for him and his family for many more years

**May We All Live and Be Well to  
120 Years, and May We Work  
Together for All of That Time.**

**Mazel Tov**

to

**GARY AXELBANK**

with gratitude

for your

dedicated service

to the

**Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**

and to

**The Cooperative Community**



**Jackie & Howie Leventhal**

In loving memory  
of my wonderful parents,

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and

**ZELDA (KAMINETZKY) PANUSH ז"ל**

May they rest peacefully in Gan Eden

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Congratulates the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center  
on its Annual Gala

**June 24, 2018**

and its Honoree

**GARY AXELBANK**

In recognition of his service to VCJC and the community.

Howard Bruce Neufeld, *President*  
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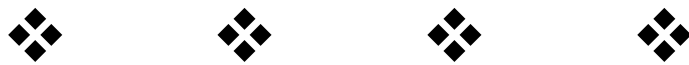


# **ORLOFF TOWERS**

Congratulates your Honoree

**GARY AXELBANK**

for his many contributions  
and strong support of the  
**Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**  
and the Bronx Community



Gary,

You put your heart into everything you do.

Husband, Father, Community Advocate

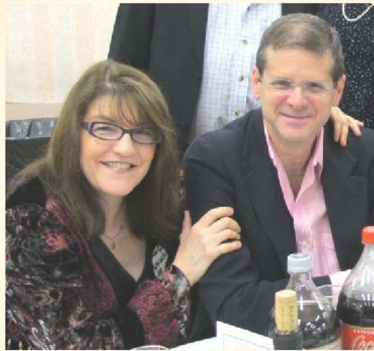
Congratulations to a special person  
for this well deserved honor.

We love you Gary  
Suzanne, Evan, Shawn ♥

Also, a warm thank you to the  
Van Cortlandt Jewish Center  
for bestowing this honor.  
A welcoming home to all.



**Congratulations to our cousin**  
**Gary Axelbank**



**From Hebrew School to Bar Mitzvah to  
Marriage to your current support -  
thank you for continuing your ties to  
the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center!**

**Stuart & Marcy Harris**  
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**Emily Harris**

Congratulations to our dear Cousin Gary

With admiration, pride and love.

Ellie and Barry

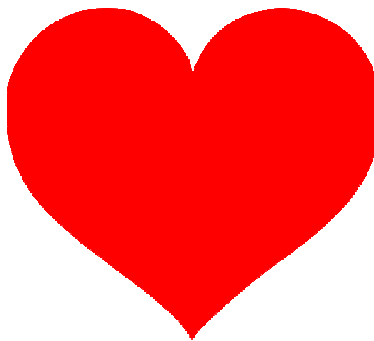
Susan and Tomas

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Andi and Lance

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**MAZEL TOV**  
**to**  
**OUR DEAR FRIEND**  
**GARY!**



**Love,**  
**Renee, Michael & Jyl**

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Gary Axelbank  
and all of our neighbors at  
the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center.*



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Mazel Tov

and

Best Wishes to

**Gary Axelbank**

on behalf of our beloved

Bronx and the

Van Cortlandt Jewish Center



**Esther & David Malach**

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GARY AXELBANK**

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Dear **Gary,**

All

of

my

very

best.

**Neil Harrow**

Congratulations

to

**Gary Axelbank**

for all his efforts on  
behalf of the VCJC

Your continued support  
is highly appreciated

Mazel-Tov on this much  
deserved honor!!

Best wishes,  
**Ceil, Larry & Matthew  
Hartstein**

We Are Proud To Celebrate

**The Van Cortlandt  
Jewish Center**

For Over 85 Years  
of Service to The Community

\* \* \* \* \*

**Marcia and Paul Miller**

and the extended

**Panken and Miller Families**

\* \* \* \* \*

With thoughts of former long-time members:

**Abby & Saul Panken, o.b.m**

**Mildred Epstein, o.b.m.**

**Annie Becker, o.b.m.**

and also

**Ruth & Manny Miller, o.b.m.**

Mazel Tov

**GARY AXELBANK**

upon your being honored by the  
Van Cortlandt Jewish Center

In the words of  
Rabbi David Borenstein, “the apple  
doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

May G-d Bless You and Your Family  
with Good Health & Prosperity!

***Ben-Z Panush***

In loving memory of  
**JOSEPH SASSOON**

who loved to daven at the  
**Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**

We miss you.



*Harriet Sassoon*

*David & Erica*

*Yitzchak & Sara*

*Robbie & Jenny*

*and grandchildren*

*Congratulations to our fellow  
Board Member*

**GARY AXELBANK**



For his services to the  
*Van Cortlandt Jewish Center*  
*and our Co-op Community*

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extend Congratulations and Best Wishes  
to

**GARY AXELBANK**

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Howard Leventhal		Vice President
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of the  
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extends Congratulations and Best Wishes  
to**

**GARY AXELBANK**



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Marcy Gillman-Harris ✧ Marilyn Newman



Congratulations to  
**Gary Axelbank**  
on a well deserved honor!

Love,

**Debbie Schwartz, The Galarzas, & The Greenbergs**

Sisterhood Congratulates

**GARY AXELBANK**

for his dedication and commitment  
to the continued growth and success of the  
**Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**  
and  
**The Bronx**

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**Sisterhood of Van Cortlandt Jewish Center**



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