**Congregation Beth Emek President’s statement at opening of Board Meeting on February 8, 2012**

**BOARD UPDATE by Skylar Cohen, President**

Over the last few days, our community has mourned the passing of Don Miller. The depth of our loss will continue to be felt for quite some time in the future. Much has been said about Don’s contributions to science, the arts, ballistics, local politics and environmental policy. I wanted to just add a few words about Don’s contributions to Congregation Beth Emek.

I want to acknowledge my own personal indebtedness to Don. He was wise, passionate and principled. I won’t say I always agreed with his assessment of a situation but I always wanted to hear his opinion and the intricate thought process behind it. He personally offered me counsel and courage at a time when I was unclear on a path forward for our community. He also set an example of the value of local involvement and engagement that we all would do well to model. I am personally better off for having known Don.

It has been noted that Don and Miriam were founding members of CBE. More importantly, they continued to be sustaining members of the community giving generously of their time and resource year in and year out for more than 50 years, long after their own children were grown and long after many others may have lost interest or energy. They are truly the giants on whose shoulders we all stand. A self proclaimed secular Jew, Don was nonetheless an ardent believer in synagogue Judaism as the best way to sustain Jewish life in America. Don believed strongly in Jewish ethical teachings and in the power of tradition. In his own words: “There is a very satisfying feeling in knowing that I have ancestors that have followed our ethical tradition for 150 generations, or about 3000 years. I don’t want this tradition to stop with me, my family, my community, and all my fellow Jews.”

As both leaders and community members, we owe much to Don Miller for his contributions to our community and the best way that I can offer to honor his legacy is to each do our own part to ensure the health and continuity of our local Jewish community.