

Dena Herrin
President: 2011-2014

Dena Herrin was President of Congregation Rodeph Shalom from 2011-2014. She was one of few female presidents in RS history and left a profound impact. She co-chaired the most significant capital campaign in the congregation's 224 year history which resulted in the major renovation and expansion of our historic building. As President of Rodeph Shalom, Dena worked on critical initiatives surrounding financial management, board governance, and community engagement. She chaired the launch of a new school model, building partnerships with neighborhood schools and other non-profit organizations to pursue educational and community improvement opportunities.



When asked about what drew her to our congregation, Dena reflected and replied, "Our next door neighbors were also an interfaith couple and they were the ones who said 'This is where you need to go.' Otherwise, I wouldn't even have thought about it or known about it. What got me to stay was my kids' engagement. The clergy also did such a good job engaging my husband who is Venezuelan. They worked so hard to engage us."

When reflecting upon the renovation and addition to RS, Dena noted, "It gave us a presence that maybe we didn't have before. Until we did this expansion, we were a very insular congregation. There were no outward facing windows in that entire building except for the stained glass. You would ride past our building on Broad Street and have no idea what was there. So the addition was very intentionally designed to reflect our new vision as an outward-facing congregation, a welcoming congregation in partnership with our North Philadelphia neighborhood. We got rid of the chain-link fences. We fixed the physical structure, but the manifestation of the vision that you see in that building is really profound. We are now open. And that's what we want to be."

Since leaving her role as President at RS, Dena has been the Executive Director of Girls Inc. of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. This is an incredible organization that implements life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. She is a long-term resident of Philadelphia where she happily lives with her family.

Thank you, Dena, for sharing your story with us. Thank you for all of your leadership, guidance, and tenacity during your tenure at RS. You have helped to make our congregation more welcoming and open and thus have helped us to truly align with our vision statement.

Written by Monica Kramer Gyuriska