



Gerald Kraft

Gerry became involved with community service at an early age. He grew up working at his father's bakery and later left the family business to become a realtor, insurance agent and property manager. In 1966 he joined Melvin Simon & Associates as Executive Vice President and retired in 1990.

He served a two-year tour of duty in the US Air Force and was president of the Jewish Guild of Lackland AFB. He was appointed to the Indiana Governors Youth Council and named a delegate to the White House Conference on Children and Youth, United Way of Central Indiana, the board of the Indiana Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the JCC, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Shaarey Tefillah Cemetery, Endowment Fund at the JFGI and on the boards of both the BJE and JCRC. The list continues with HIAS, CJF, AIPAC and the World Conference on Soviet Jewry. His crowning moment was serving on the local, district and international boards of B'nai B'rith. He was elected International President in 1982 and visited over 50 communities during his 28 trips to countries on six continents, meeting with 24 heads of state. One of the major events of his term was in 1984, when, at the request of the Israeli government, Kraft went to Ethiopia for the initial airlift of Ethiopian Jews from the Sudan to Israel. He was awarded the Sagamore of the Wabash and helped organize and fund the creation of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society.

Many remember Gerry as an advisor for the local BBYO chapters. His leadership and love for youth is shown today in Indianapolis. The local BBYO chapter numbers over 90 teens and the many adult leaders who had their leadership training through BBYO.

Kraft and his wife Adele "Cookie" have three children—Karen, Leslie and Paul (Sherri)—and seven grandchildren.