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# CREATING JEWISH COMMUNITY: A PROPOSAL FOR A JEWISH COMMUNITY COFFEE BAR IN A JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

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## SUMMARY

This proposal envisions the creation in the Bergen County YJCC of a coffee bar which will encourage community members to spend extended periods of time, and will especially encourage informal interaction among members. The overarching goal is to create a sense of Jewish community.

## BACKGROUND

Sociologist Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone* documents a constant, gradual trend in American society over roughly the last half century towards less and less engagement among people. This decreased engagement, decreased *social capital* in Putnam's terms, is evident whether one looks at highly structured clubs or fraternal organizations, church/synagogue involvement, political involvement, or virtually any other form of human interaction. In anecdotal terms, this phenomenon is observed as a lack of a sense of community, a lack of a sense of neighborhood, decreased participation by members of voluntary associations, and a general sense of diffuseness, fragmentation, and loneliness in American life today.

In Jewish terms, this decrease in social capital represents a serious problem. Unlike some cultures that have traditionally placed strong emphasis on the value of the individual, the rugged individual, or the holy person living in spiritual solitude, Judaism has always preferred life in community. The first thing labeled by the Bible as being "not good" (after a long series of things in Genesis Chapter I that are proclaimed to be "good" or even "very good") is human solitude: "It is not good for the human to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Perhaps nowhere is the value of life in community as evident as in the tradition requirement of a *minyan*, a group or quorum of ten, in order for a full prayer service to be conducted. Jewish life can not be lived alone.

Some have suggested that the decrease in social capital among Americans in the last several decades does not reflect a decreased willingness to engage, but only a decreased

willingness to engage in traditional, highly structured and long-term associations. They point out that Americans associate with one another as much as ever, but our contact is more episodic, less organized, and shorter term. This view accords well with the more general observation that American life in the second half of the twentieth century is characterized by rapidly increasing mobility. People move from house to house, from city to city, from job to job, from marriage to marriage, and so on, at a tremendous rate. This being so, any attempt to build community must take into account the mobility that is now a fundamental feature of our lives.

In 1989, sociologist Ray Oldenburg investigated one specific piece of community-building in a book entitled *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You Through the Day*. The thesis of the book is that most societies have had institutions like those listed in the book's sub-title, in which people gather on a regular basis for un-programmed, relaxed, informal interaction with one another. Such places Oldenburg dubbed "third places," to distinguish them from the "first place," i.e., the home, and from "second places," i.e., the workplace. He then observes that there are relatively few third places in suburban America. Their absence is a problem.

In the years since Oldenburg's book came out, a fascinating model of an attempt at building third places has emerged in the form of the coffee bar. These institutions (of which the *Starbucks* chain is probably the most familiar—though not the only—example) differ substantially from the coffee shops or diners that preceded them. Coffee-shops or diners are places that one goes to for a meal, or perhaps dessert, or occasionally even just coffee. But they are essentially restaurants. One sits at a table or at a counter, is served, eats and/or drinks, pays the bill and leaves. The coffee bar is not meant to appear like a restaurant. Rather, it is set up like a living room, or a lounge area, with the service counter included at which one can buy good quality coffee, tea and other drinks, and a few basic snacks, baked goods, and so on. The structure of the place, however, invites long stays and informal associations. Seating accommodations include chairs at small café tables, couches, and arm-chairs. Lighting is somewhat subdued and indirect. The effect created is one of relaxation and leisure. People come to read a book or a newspaper, to hold informal business meetings, and to spend relaxed time with friends. According to a fascinating account in *The Washington Post*, it is even becoming common for people to work in such establishments — teachers sit and grade papers, writers play their craft on lap-tops, and those in the job market work on resumes and make calls to prospective employers on their cell phones, all while sipping coffee (see "Sipping Through the Workday: An Office Alternative Is Brewing" *The Washington Post* March 12, 2002; Page C10).

RATIONALE

The Bergen County YJCC has historically served as a membership organization to which members come to receive specific services. They drop kids off for nursery school, karate and swimming lessons, or they come to work out, or to take a yoga class. When the activity is over, they leave. Many families discontinue their memberships when their youngest child graduates from nursery school. Note that the one general exception to this description is in the senior population who come to the YJCC for a full day, and often spend time just hanging out and "schmoozing." The younger members generally live a frenetic life in which they perceive that they have no discretionary time to simply "hang out" in a non-structured but inviting environment.

Another important characteristic of the YJCC membership is that Jewishly it is a relatively uninvolved population. Jewish consciousness is not at the forefront, and most typical indicators of active Jewish involvement (e.g., percentage of children attending day schools, synagogue attendance, ritual observance levels, visits to Israel, etc.) are low.

The goals of the Jewish Life Connection are twofold, in accordance with the preceding two observations: 1) to create a sense of community to which people come regularly simply to connect with one another; 2) to deepen and enrich the Jewish tone of this community.

## THE PLAN

To create an upscale "Starbucks-type" coffee bar at the YJCC as a "third place" that will also be deeply Jewish.

### Possible names:

- A Yiddishe Cup
- Shmooze Caf

### Description:

The plan will be to create a coffee bar including a service counter that will serve gourmet coffees, teas, juices and light snacks, small caf tables with chairs, and several groupings of comfortable arm-chairs, small couches and coffee tables. Lighting will be pleasing and soft, not glaring or overly bright. Available to read there (i.e., not for purchase) will be subscriptions to several Jewish periodicals (e.g., local Jewish papers, *Jerusalem Post*, *Moment*, *Tikkun*, *Shema*, *JQR*, etc.). Soft background music will be provided, including various Jewish genres (e.g., Israeli, klezmer, American Jewish and more "exotic" fare), with information available at all times regarding the "play list". Artwork will also be Jewish, again with information available to interested patrons. In keeping with the Jewish character of the place, all efforts will be made to sell products that do not conflict with Jewish values. Thus, for example, only "Fair Trade" coffee (i.e., coffee produced by roasters/importers committed to fair treatment of growers, fair wages for pickers, "environmentally friendly" growing methods, etc.). These choices will have

to be explained somehow (perhaps on the menu, or on an information placard at the service counter), since the goal is, at least in part, educational. The Jewish character will further be enhanced by trying to use Israeli products, when available (e.g., Osem and Elite cookies, Wisotzky teas, and so on.), and by having *tzedakah* boxes at the service counter for a variety of different organizations. A "Talmud/graffiti" wall (see description, below), may also help to generate conversation on Jewish topics, as may the regular presence ("office hours") in the café of the YJCC's rabbi. Local congregational rabbis will also be invited to "hang out" in the café as often as they can. Periodic special events may include live music, poetry readings, etc.

The "Talmud/graffiti" wall:

On one wall of the café, large sheets of paper are hung, with a provocative quotation or question in the center. Pens are provided for people to respond, in writing, to the text, and to each other's responses.

Financial support:

Although ideally such an institution would be self-supporting, it is important to realize that its primary goal is not generating profit but creating and enhancing community. Prices at the café will be competitive with typical local prices for coffee, tea, etc., but it is quite possible that the first year or two of operation will not be profitable. The goal of building community is so important that it must not be contingent on profitability. Three possible sources of subsidy/underwriting are: 1) corporate grants, especially from corporations being featured at the café (i.e., suppliers of teas, coffees, and snacks, periodical publishers, etc.); 2) Foundation grants; 3) private fund-raising.

## MARKETING

One of the central questions yet to be addressed is how the café will be marketed and advertised. To some extent this is a question of whether it will be seen primarily as a part of the YJCC, therefore aimed primarily at YJCC members, or whether it will be aimed at a broader spectrum of Bergen County's Jews. Part of the plan could be the sale, at the café, of "branded" items, e.g., t-shirts, coffee mugs, baseball caps, etc. If the name of the café is sufficiently attractive, and the logo sufficiently eye-catching, such paraphernalia could be a large part of the "branding" process, as they have been for establishments such as Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream.

## NEXT STEPS

- Local research to see what kinds of third places exist in the area, how they are used, what happens in them.
- Visit to/Consultation with Makor (NYC)

- Research into the process of □schmoozing□ — what it involves, where, when, how it happens, how to catalyze it

# Mandel Fellows Jewish Educators Initiative

## Project Proposal

Jody Hirsh

Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center

Milwaukee

### The Project

The JCC is planning an expansion/renovation to begin in 2003 or 2004. My proposed project is to exploit the opportunity of new lobby space, Jewish community library, and general reconfiguration of the JCC space to create a Jewish space which will be comfortable, unified, and recognizably Jewish.

### History

The Milwaukee Jewish Community Center moved into its current location in 1987. The complex was previously the University School of Milwaukee. The move was conceived as two separate facilities: the Milwaukee Jewish Day School and the Coalition for Jewish Learning (CJL) in the building on the North end of the campus and the JCC, Jewish Family Service and BBYO in the South building. In many ways it was an ideal move: location central to the Jewish community as it moved northward to the suburbs; proximity of the JCC and the Milwaukee Jewish Day School on the same campus; extensive outdoor fields for athletics; meeting rooms for other Jewish institutions which would be more conveniently located away from the downtown area. The building and facility, however, was problematic in many ways: it needed to be redesigned and refit for adult athletic and fitness facilities; there were various restrictions imposed by the local village administration; because it was a school and not a community center, there was no lobby or other space for informal greeting and meeting; the layout of the building was a complicated maze of hallways and stairwells with no direct way of getting from one service area to another.

In addition, the proposed expansion would involve the housing of the CJL in the same building as the JCC. This has many advantages, political and practical. Among the advantages would be the merging of the CJL and JCC libraries. When the various agencies moved to the present campus, it was decided that both the CJL and JCC would have restricted libraries. The CJL was to house SÖforim (i.e. religious texts such as chumash and talmud), some reference, a video collection, and holocaust materials. The JCC was to house fiction, poetry, some history, part of the video collection and a separate holocaust collection. Needless to say, the arrangement created two inadequate libraries. The merging of the libraries gives us an opportunity to create

*→ Fascinating*

an exciting Jewish Community Library which would pool resources, and become a library and programming center with its entrance off the new lobby of the JCC.

## Need

The plans for JCC expansion are indeed exciting and full of potential. It would mean a substantial reconfiguring of the building(s). It must be said, however, that for the last year, the JCC has been engaged in major political involvement with the village board of the Village of Whitefish Bay where the JCC is currently located. Although we are fairly confident that we'll ultimately receive permission from the village board to expand, the permission isn't assured. Consequently, although architects have been contracted to draw up plans for a proposed JCC, little time has been spent in considering the Jewishness of the edifice.

Although the current JCC has various works of art and wall hangings of Jewish content, the overall Tutor architecture with no entrance lobby or gathering space does not feel Jewish. Redesigning the look and feel of the space would achieve many things:

- Creating warmth
- Adding Jewish content.
- Strengthening the sense of community
- Contributing to Jewish knowledge
- Spotlighting Jewish culture
- Adding continuity to the various areas & stations of the building
- Identifying the JCC as a Jewish space

In addition to an overall unified plan that would integrate all elements/areas within the JCC, a Jewish design plan would also create a unique design for each of the major service areas:

- Adult Education
- Customer service, membership services
- Parenting
- Jewish Culture & the Arts
- Theater
- Early Childhood
- Children & Youth
- Social Hall & Kitchen
- Health, Fitness and Recreation

## The Rational and the Concept

Now is an ideal time, at the beginning of the expansion process to plan for the Jewishness

of the space. The challenge is a unique one: what makes a JCC different from other Jewish communal institutions (such as the synagogue)? How would art, design and look of a JCC emphasize the pluralistic and inclusive nature of the JCC? How would the design of a JCC reflect Jewish culture and history and not just religion? How could the design and layout of the new JCC plan contribute to the building of social capital? How does the concept of collective memory contribute to the overall plan? How can the plans of the new JCC help make everyone comfortable regardless of religious or secular identification? How would the look and feel of the JCC help create a sense of overall community?

Note that five key concepts contribute most to the overall development of the Jewish aspects of the expansion plan: 1) Community and the building of social capital, 2) Pluralism and inclusiveness, 3) Collective memory and building memories, 4) Jewish culture and the arts, 5) Jewish knowledge and Jewish education. — ?

### Process

The process would be extremely complex because it would depend on many variables including the overall time frame of the construction, the restrictions by the Village of Whitefish Bay, the JCC board process, and the overall budget of the expansion. Steps of the process would include the following:

- Reading about space, sacred space, space and identity, libraries, libraries as program centers, etc.
- Consulting experts (maybe even bringing someone like David Moss who is designing the new UCLA Hillel House)
- PERHAPS creating lay committees to advance the project including a **Jewish Ambiance Committee** and a **Library Committee**.
- Creating a realistic budget for the Jewish design element of the JCC expansion with the appropriate JCC committees.
- Visiting other JCC and cultural sites (if possible)
- Processing potential plans and developing ideas with various subgroups: members, staff, board, architects, local artists, etc.)
- Creating enthusiasm and excitement about the new Jewish look of the JCC.
- Hiring professional artists and designers to create and execute the plans along with the non-Jewish project architects.

Note: I would not necessarily be directly involved with EVERY aspect of this process. It is an enormous undertaking which would be part of the overall expansion plan. I would by necessity be guiding the Jewish design elements of the project.

### Timeline

The timeline totally depends on the parameters of the overall expansion project and the permission of the village to proceed (there's a slight chance that the permission may not be

- granted). Never-the-less, the initial stages of reading, consulting, conceptualizing can begin immediately.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of the final plan would depend on the vision and priorities of the plan.

**JEDI- JCC Association/ Mandel Fellows: Jewish Educator Initiative  
Project Proposal  
JCC Houston  
Rabbi Eve Ben-Ora**

Proposed Retreat Programs for Proposed Retreat Center at the Gordon Campsite

Proposed Target Populations:

- Families
- Adults
- Women Only
- Jewish Professionals

Rationale:

The retreat center is being built to allow creative and effective use of land the JCC already owns. Though there are camps in Texas that also conduct retreats during the year, all are 3-4 hours away. The JCC retreat center will be less than 1 hour from most locales in the Houston Metropolitan area. It will also attract participants from Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi or Dallas.

The programs to be conducted at the retreat center will have a mind, body, spirit emphasis. The JCC historically has handled the body effectively. The incorporation of an emphasis on Jewish education in a JCC creates the opportunity to bring in the mind and spirit aspects as well.

People in Houston place a high priority on family togetherness time. A retreat setting with family cabins creates a readily available resource for families to spend time together engaged in quality, Jewish activities.

The Jewish professional population will benefit from spending an extended period of time together with facilitated discussions on shared concerns and ideas for the enrichment of the Jewish community.

Topics/Themes for Retreat Programs

- Comparative Judaism- How, what, why the various movements believe and practice Judaism.
- Creating Collective Memory- A Family Heirloom Arts Weekend
- Torah Study Shabbaton- Focus on the content and process of Torah. Include a sofer stam on the faculty of this program
- Kosher Cooking Campout Family Weekend
- Gourmet Kosher Cooking Adult Weekend
- Women's Voices- Women only, cross denominational women's weekend

-Physical Challenge-Prayer- Study Shabbaton  
-Rosh HaShanah Second Day Retreat- Family oriented

## JCC ASSOCIATION / MANDEL FELLOWS INITIATIVE

### PROJECT PROPOSAL

Prepared By: Edward Edelstein

1. The Idea / The Needs — I have titled my project *The Jewish Experience Superstore*. It is derived from a crassly commercial model: the suburban mall and the big box superstore, with a touch of Disneyland thrown in. Our society and our young people, in particular, have become conditioned to having their senses assaulted. Picture the scene as you enter any mall, particularly around a holiday time. First, there is the hustle and bustle of many people that creates a sense of excitement. There are many options (read different styles) of where to shop: department stores, specialty stores, small boutiques and even kiosks and carts in the middle of the mall. If you don't want to shop, you can eat. There also are inevitably arcades, movies, perhaps rides and other forms of entertainment. There is music and perhaps even conflicting sounds coming from different sources. There are dazzling displays, advertising boards, scrolling signs and probably video monitors competing for your visual attention. There may be "sidewalk santas" or others taking up collections for different causes. The smells of different foods mix with the smells of perfumes. Everything is new, bright, fresh and enticing. And though most of it screams "buy me", some of it also says "learn about me", such as the increasing number of interactive computer displays. It's all called marketing.

*Why can't the same thing be done for Jewish education?*

There is no question that formal schooling and formal education cannot be all fun and games and cacophony. But we are not in the business of formal education; we are in the business of informal education, of reaching out to senses and emotions. We try to reach deep inside, to strike a nerve, to form an impression and, dare I say, to create a collective memory.

*The need?* The need is simple. We need to find a way to touch the great number of people (young and old) for whom the JCC is their only (or initial) point of contact with the Jewish community. We need to create a forum in which to present Jewish history, holidays, culture, identity in a manner that is stimulating, evocative, contemporary and exciting. We need to compete. We need sound-bite Judaism or at least Judaism in 60 second commercials.

*Sounds superficial?* It is. But I view it as a point of capture, a means to an end, not the end in itself. Our society is used to getting their information in short bursts: news updates, 30 second public service messages, web pages, IM's and flashing neon. We can't expect people to sing up for evening lectures, speaker series or semester classes

unless we have lured them in. Even if it is reluctantly, we need to "get with the agenda" or be left behind.

2. The Rationale and the Concept: The rationale might be stated as "there's a need and no one else is doing it". While Day School education is booming, supplementary Jewish education for the most part is still searching for its niche and facing ever-growing competition from sports, dance classes, tutors, school plays, enrichment programs and the diverse schedules of single-parent families. The unaffiliated population has not even been approached. So, the rationale is that there is a vast unmet need out there, even if it is not quite a felt need among some parts of the target population. I should clarify that this *Jewish Experience Superstore* is not in any way, shape or form meant to be a replacement or substitute for any form of formal Jewish education (Hebrew School, Religious School, Confirmation Class, etc.). For those enrolled in a formal program (and for those existing schools), this *Superstore* is meant to be a resource and a source of enrichment. I would envision working with the schools to enhance their education program, but most definitely, NOT to replace it! For those not enrolled in any program, it is designed to be a point of entry and attraction that it is hoped might lead to some other or additional form of Jewish education, either at the JCC or at a synagogue. While these programs will clearly evolve overtime, it is not our agenda (hidden or otherwise) to form our own Hebrew School or to compete with the synagogues.

I believe that such an undertaking makes sense at our JCC.

We are a well-developed and well-equipped agency that prides itself on being cutting-edge. We have a history of piloting new programs with a strong commitment to Jewish culture and education. The transmitting of Jewish tradition is included in our mission statement. We are positioned in a large, mostly affluent Jewish community with numerous synagogues to join in and take advantage of such a resource. While funding is always an issue, if a grant is given or a donor found for the primary development, our agency could probably support some of the ancillary expenses associated with such a project.

3. I believe that this project is very much in keeping with the vision and ideas that are central to the Mandel Fellows / Jewish Educators Initiative. The packaging and presentation, the marketing and display of this project may be unorthodox (would "unconventional" be a better choice of words?), but the substance is very much mainstream Jewish education. The window-dressing may give off an aura of commercial and shallow, but the goal is to attract people and ultimately provide depth and substance. The target is two-fold: to reach out to the unaffiliated and find a medium for Jewish education that speaks to them; and to provide a resource for enrichment and enhancement of existing programs of Jewish education that simply does not exist anywhere else. It is hoped that both of these target populations could be guided both to

additional study and to social action and community service. It is through the latter that we may be able to succeed in building social capital. Clearly, throughout the entire experience we serve to build Jewish collective memory. The *Superstore*, in fact, would serve the dual purpose of evoking past Jewish collective memory while at the same time creating new Jewish collective memory for future generations. Surely, this is the essence of our Jewish Educators Initiative.

# Building Jewish Community - One Jew at a Time, One Value at a Time: A Project Proposal

Submitted by Nina J. Mizrahi  
For the JCC Association/Mandel Fellows Jewish Educators Initiative  
May 20, 2002

The Pritzker Center for Jewish Education staff includes the Director of the Pritzker Center for Jewish Education, the Director of Early Childhood Jewish Education, an Early Childhood Jewish educator dedicated to direct service, a coordinator of Jewish educational programming, a 10 —hour- per- week Jewish education specialist who assists in resource development, the Director of Shalom Sunday Family School for Jewish families from the F.S.U., and an administrative assistant. Together we serve 14 early childhood centers, eight day camps, one resident camp, and seven centers laid out as four regions. We serve as Jewish consultants for the citywide grandparenting program, as well as any other citywide programs that have a Jewish component.

On July 1, 2002, after several years of planning, JCC of Chicago, in order to respond to the dual challenges of a service crisis and a financial crisis, launched the "New Model." The "New Model" is an agency-wide restructuring based on the creation of a centralized approach our large, geographically dispersed, demographically diverse metropolitan system. Through this change, JCC reaffirmed that it must continue to strive to be a place for all members of the Jewish community to find programs to suit their needs.

At the end of our first year operating in the new model approaches, it is clear that the Pritzker Center for Jewish Education is being afforded the opportunity to define and shape the *neshama* of our agency. The New Model is enabling us to play a key role in fulfilling the agency's core values of fostering Jewish continuity, creating Jewish community and emphasizing Jewish values. More and more we are being viewed as vital partners who need to be engaged in every aspect of the agency. A significant change is in the acceptance of both staff and lay leaders of their responsibility to further the Jewish mission of JCC. With increasing frequency, the Pritzker Center is called upon to provide a Jewish context for policy, program and curriculum, consulting with, teaching and creating resources for nearly every department of the agency. In addition, we are challenging leadership to strengthen their "ownership" of the Jewish mission and to explore the responsibilities that come with being a leader in the Jewish community.

There is growing agency-wide interest in Jewish learning. There is a marked increase in the number of staff and lay leaders attending Jewish study sessions. Weekly Shabbat, holiday and Rosh Chodesh messages sent via email to staff and leadership have been enthusiastically received and are bringing Torah into our everyday lives. It is thrilling to learn that groups of staff members and lay leaders and their families are having impromptu discussions on the parasha as well as other Jewish texts they receive. In addition, messages of healing and comfort written in response to "911," the situation in Israel, and other difficult moments in our JCC community have helped foster a sense of community. This electronic method of communication has also helped people feel more

comfortable engaging Jewishly with one another. All of this is contributing to a growing appreciation for the powerful and positive impact Judaism can have on our daily lives.

Great effort is being put forth in the area of Jewish learning for our early childhood directors and teachers, as well as our day camp directors, promoting both professional and personal Jewish growth. Our early childhood programs are moving toward Jewish accreditation, which reflects the depth of our commitment to infusing early childhood education with dynamic and innovative approaches to incorporating □Jewish□ into every aspect of the curriculum. The Pritzker Center now produces a monthly newsletter for our teachers. We will also be writing Jewish parenting article for the Early Childhood newsletter, as well as for □Grand Connections,□ our newgrandparenting newsletter.

This is the first summer our entire day camp system will implement weekly Jewish value-based units, in addition to their on-going Friday afternoon Shabbat programming. Each week a value will be introduced, with related Hebrew terms and Jewish texts. Campers will read aloud and discuss a story that transmits a particular value. Throughout the week, the value will be reinforced through programs, activities, projects and songs.

The day camp directors, with whom I study on a regular basis, are all supportive of this effort to infuse daily life at camp with Jewish values. The challenge will be in training camp staff to implement these units, especially since there will be limited on-site Jewish educational support. How will we help part-time staff, some of whom are not Jewish, internalize these values to the extent that they have meaning beyond the reading of a story or engagement in a project? How will we evaluate our success in preparing these staff, as well as the extent to which campers internalize these Jewish values? How will we make parents aware of these units? How will we use these evaluations to help us build on this program from year to year?

We have also prepared a Jewish value-based resource for our resident camp staff. This resource presents eight Jewish values, each defined and supported by secular and Jewish texts that expand on the value. The goal is to integrate these values into all aspects of camp, from cabin life to specialties to sports, and generally to everyday life. Thus, □Jewish□ will not be approached as a □program,□ but rather as an organic context for building and strengthening relationships and community. We are in the process of adding suggestions for stories and activities that could be used to reinforce the understanding and application of these values.

Appropriate camp staff will receive a binder containing these values, as well as training, which will begin during orientation and continue, hopefully, throughout the summer. Again, there is no on-site Jewish educator to serve as resource and to assist in the application of this resource on a daily basis. How will we help staff select those values which strongly relate to their role at camp and empower them to □own□ these values, making each staff member a □Jewish value specialist□ for their particular value? How will we evaluate the extent to which staff are properly educated and empowered? How will we evaluate the success of the transmission process? How will we evaluate the extent to which these values are internalized by campers and have an impact on behavior,

both on a short and long term basis? How will we communicate the content and context of this approach? After evaluating the overall success of this year's effort, how will we plan for expansion of consciously incorporating Jewish values into daily camp life?

We are also beginning to conceptualize and formulate a plan for a project called, "Jewish Every Day, Everywhere," which will create a working vision for what "Jewish" might look and feel like throughout our centers and within all our programs, and create a plan for implementation and evaluation. This will include the creation of a Jewish values-based overlay to our sports, health and fitness programs. This overlay would include the development of resources and staff training. Another part of this effort will be the creation of a monthly newsletter for staff, suggesting ways to visually reflect the Jewish calendar in lobbies and throughout the building. In addition, we will attempt to articulate one value per month that reflects a Jewish approach to running a center, relating to people and building community. Again, study, training and resource development will be an important part of this project.

It is clear that the focus of our efforts will be on the transmission of Jewish values throughout our agency to staff, leaders, and members/customers/program participants. There are considerable challenges in this effort that extend beyond the selection of values and the creation of resources. How will we impart these values to these three groups? What will be the criteria for evaluating how well these values are internalized? On what basis will we evaluate the impact of this effort on building and strengthening the Jewish dimension of daily Jewish life within our centers? To what extent will this effort impact on strengthening and enriching Jewish community?

Clearly what is laid out above is a multi-year effort that is integral to fulfilling the Jewish mission of our agency as defined through our core values. The motivation for moving our agency in this direction at this time is based upon:

- A marked increase in our lay leadership's understanding of and support for the importance of JCC's Jewish mission, especially in light of what is going on locally, nationally and globally
- Growing willingness of lay leadership to grapple with defining what "Jewish" means for our JCC and how that definition will impact on policy, program and community
- Increasing enthusiasm expressed by both lay leaders and staff for engaging in Jewish study, particularly as a way of exploring Jewish values as timeless and relevant building blocks for Jewish identity and community.
- Deeper appreciation on the part of lay leaders and staff for the importance of creating within the agency an organic context for formally and informally engaging in Jewish life and for transmitting Jewish values
- Realization that while JCC has no "religious" agenda, it can no longer afford to view itself as a "secular" agenda and must play a more influential role in supporting and sustaining Jewish communal life

The challenges for the implementation of this vision are less in the creation of resources and more in the areas of:

- Empowering staff to view themselves as integral to the process of transmitting Jewish values
- Transmitting and modeling these values to staff so they are internalized
- Creating venues for staff to transmit these values to members/customers and to lay leaders, formally and informally
- Creating a mechanism for evaluating our short and long term success in the transmission and application of these values
- Using this effort to consciously build and strengthen Jewish social capital and community
- Determining ways to implement this vision given an inadequate number of Jewish educators on staff, extremely limited financial resources and the sheer size and demographic diversity of our agency.

I would like to develop project that would assist me in further conceptualizing, implementing and evaluating one of the three project areas listed above. At this point I am leaning toward the □Jewish Every Day, Everywhere□ project in our centers because I will have easier and year-round access to staff. I believe that what I learn through this project could be applied to the areas of day and resident camp.

This project provides a wonderful opportunity to move from theory to practice and from practice to theory. The issues of training and evaluation may prove to be particularly challenging. Nevertheless, I hope, with lots of help(!), to realize a vision by creating an organized, systematic, measurable and reproducible approach for implementation and evaluation.

***Project Proposal for the JCC Association/Mandel Fellows Jewish Educators Initiative June 2002***

**Participant: Aliza Orent**  
**Mentor: Barry Holtz**

My project proposal for the JEDI is the development and implementation of a community wide Jewish educational series, along the lines of an □ educational extravaganza, □ a Jewish U. or *Kallah*. More specifically, it will be a week (or two week) long *festival of Jewish living and learning*, consisting of a series of concurrent 90 minutes lectures on a variety of Jewish topics from which participants can choose. The festival would kick off on a Sunday afternoon, and continue throughout the following week(s) in the evenings.

*Background*

The rationale for such a festival is that as of yet, no such learning opportunity has been developed for the Austin Jewish community, while the particular demographics of this community suggests that it could be highly successful and of great importance. For while the community is young, (30s-40s), has a moderate to high income level and high education level, as the majority of Jewish *Austinites* grew up elsewhere and moved to Austin in the past two decades, there is still a great need for community building in an informal setting. Furthermore, with many members parenting young children, many Jewish families have developed a renewed interest in their cultural and religious heritage, but have limited time to take courses. Finally, with the location of the Austin JCC being centrally located, the JCC would lend itself well as a location for the entire community to come together for such a festival with its extended series of intensive study sessions.

*Purpose*

The purpose of the week (or two week) long event will be not only for the community to temporarily engage in Jewish study, but to provide a platform for continuous Jewish learning, and to bring individuals to consider Jewish study as a lifelong journey. One of the goals of the event will be to deepen the sense of Jewish belonging, to motivate the community to continue to pursue their Jewish knowledge and to begin to think about their Jewish beliefs, practices and values. Hopefully, the experience will allow for the launching of future opportunities for classes, workshops, special events etc. both at the JCAA and the synagogues.

Special emphasis needs to be given as well in trying to create a special environment for teens to study in an appropriate atmosphere which is conducive to group building, networking and strengthening of Jewish identity (building of social capital).

*Implementation*

Each synagogue (large and small) and Jewish organization in the Austin area will be invited to participate in the planning of this festival of Jewish living and learning. Each president of a Jewish organization will be asked to provide a lay- person to be an active member of the planning committee. The collaborative nature of the project falls in line with the desire for the JCC to be inclusive and to allow for every agency to feel invested and involved with the life of the Jewish Neighborhood at the JCC and in the creation of meaningful Jewish experiences.

### *Evaluation*

In terms of evaluation, I propose using an evaluation form at the end of each learning session consisting of 5-10 questions. Potentially I might use the technique of an oral evaluation of a few participants and inquire how the interaction and exchange of ideas in the sessions helped to create Jewish memory in Austin. I will also be asking the creators of the Jewish U experience in Atlanta what they have learned in their 13 years of doing their program.

### *Time line*

June- meet with the committee composed of two chairs, the educational directors from the major synagogues, and lay people. Develop budget. Map out the design of the event, and pick two weeks in winter that everyone can agree on. Decide on subcommittees and possible theme. Decide on topics that will appeal to the community.

June-initial meeting with the directors of Jewish education from the three larger institutions.

July- review biographies of potential speakers. Decide on a kick off event.

August-look for corporate sponsors.

September-

October

November — piggy back on the Jewish Book Fair: disperse promotional materials about our event.

December- have marketing campaign ready to hit at the end of the month.

### *Areas to work on in Baltimore*

I need to process how this project could be inspired and enriched by ideas of vision that we talked about in previous seminars. (Especially the concepts of collective memory and social capital). I also need to think about what I need to LEARN to help do this project in a deeper, richer way.

Melanie Levav  
Mandel/JCCA JedI Project

### Project Idea

My project will be an inquiry of Jewish identity among Russian "migr" teens and young adults. The goal of this project is to gain a deeper understanding of the unique needs of "migr" teens and young adults. With a better understand of the distinctive needs of "migr" teens and young adults, JCCs may better serve this population through the creation of new approached that address the Jewish identity development of "migr"s as they differ from their American-born peers.

This inquiry will be conducted through the examination of two new programs aimed to engage "migr" teens and young adults in Brooklyn, NY:

- **Madrich** is a new comprehensive camp counselor training program at the Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst. The goal of Madrich is to provide serious informal Jewish education with the express purpose of developing and strengthening Jewish identity among Jewish "migr" youth. It is funded by a grant from the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, through the Institute for Informal Jewish Education at Brandeis University.
- **Ogonyok** (small flame in Russian) is a new collaborative program of three JCCs in Brooklyn. It will be a network of chavurot designed specifically for "migr"s ages 22-30. The goal of Ogonyok is to engage young adults who are beginning their careers and families of their own in informal Jewish education, to enrich their lives and their connection to their Jewish identity.

### Rationale

Current statistics from the New York Association for New Americans show that approximately one out of every five Jews in New York was born in the former Soviet Union. Given the density of the "migr" population in Brooklyn, this is perhaps the best location to examine the Jewish identity among Soviet "migr"s in the US. Over 80% of the members and clients at the Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst were born in the former Soviet Union. Synagogues in Brooklyn have not been attracting "migr"s in the same way that Jewish community centers have proven successful in engaging the "migr" community. In fact, a recent study conducted by the CUNY Graduate Center, the one Jewish institution that the majority of subjects had affiliated with was the Jewish community center.

We know from more than 10 years of experience working with "migr" youth in our agency that Jewish identity is strong among "migr" youth. However, the indicators of that strong identity cannot be measured using the survey instruments designed for American-born Jews. While living in the former Soviet Union, Jews did not feel they had to increase their knowledge base or their practice of traditions in order to be recognized as Jews. Once here, many Jewish "migr"s are surprised by the response of American-born Jews who question whether or not these newcomers are "truly" Jewish. New Americans from the FSU are often alarmed by the sense that they need to convince their American born peers of the integrity, sincerity and quality of their Jewish identity. As such, new ways of inquiry need to be developed in order to really understand the Jewish identity issues of Soviet "migr" teens and young adults.

## Workplan

1. Consult with □experts□ in the field of Jewish identity research:
  - Bethamie Horowitz
  - Riv Ellen Prell,
  - Egon Mayer
  - Barry Chazan
  - others as recommended by Mandel/JCCA faculty
2. Identify and consult with □experts□ in the field of Soviet □migr□s
3. Develop quantitative and qualitative measures of Jewish identity for □migr□s
4. Administer surveys
5. Compile findings
6. Write article for Journal of Jewish Communal Service, other publications

## Timeline

### Spring 2002

- Begin inquiry
- Consult with □experts□ through readings and in person
- Development of initial survey of Jewish identity among □migr□ teens
- Collection of baseline data from teens

### Summer 2002

- Continued consultations

### Fall 2002

- Collection of post-summer camp data from teens
- Evaluation of summer camp counselor training program Jewish identity programming
- Development of more comprehensive survey for young adults
- Collection of baseline data from young adults

### Winter 2003

- Examination of findings to date
- Begin writing article

### Spring 2003

- Collection of post-program data for teens
- Collection of post-program data for young adults
- Publication of findings

## Evaluation

The effectiveness of this project will be seen in Centers□ ability to conceptualize new and more effective ways of addressing the Jewish identity needs of the □migr□ population we serve. More specifically, the success of this project will be demonstrated through the publishing of an article about how JCCs serve the unique Jewish identity needs of □migr□ teens and young adults.

Wall Art Project  
Springfield Jewish Community Center  
Department of Jewish Education

Rabbi Jonathan Perlman, Director of Jewish Education

May 8, 2002

## Theory

What message does the physical plant of the JCC communicate? Our JCC provides functional space for classes, physical education, pre-school, food service, and entertainment but its Jewish character has not been defined. A synagogue can make use of symbols which are religious and cultural. Inscriptions can allude to meaningful texts found in the Bible and other literature. Visual culture has its roots in the design of the Mishkan and serves an aesthetic function as well as an educational one. There are a number of examples from the mishkan itself: the mirrors on the copper laver, the fire pan plating for the altar, and the interior design of the Holy of Holies. Synagogues borrow art from the mishkan in design re: the ark, the menorah, and other architectural details.


What is the cultural/historical place of the JCC? How does visual art shape community consciousness? Defined as a Bet Am, how does a JCC look the part?

In answer to some of these questions, my project has a number of goals in mind:

- The project should be planned and executed by the community
- The project should create an ambience that defines the mission of the program space
- The project should be accessible to literate and non-literate Jews (and non-Jews)
- The project should be aesthetically pleasing

## Practice

Our playscape has a framed frieze that wraps around three sides of the room on the top of the wall. The architect foresaw that one day that there would be artwork in this space. The room functions as a big playroom for children with soft play equipment and play mats. It has become the hub of the pre-school wing of the building and the space for young parents to socialize after drop off and before pick up time.

One of the missions of our pre-school is to nurture the natural curiosity and intelligence of our children in the day care and nursery school programs. I have often thought that the expression found in Proverbs 9:10  comes to mind when I think about early childhood education. My interpretation of this expression is not that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom but that Wisdom begins with

wonder. □ Children are endowed with awe at an early age. I want to illustrate the message that this pithy saying expresses: the connection between wonder and spiritual growth.

Part of the display will be designed by a resident artist who will illustrate  
Ⓢ ❖ 📖 ♦ 🌊 ♦ with a rendering of the seven days of creation. Next to this will be an illustration of themes connected with wisdom: a Torah scroll, children studying books, etc. It is important that the display have a communal dimension. It should be a testimony to one generation's view of this theme. For this reason, we will use the opportunity of the JCC Maccabi Games this summer to complete this project with a permanent installation of decorative tiles illustrating the theme. Maccabi teens who come to □hang time□ (for athletes that have been eliminated from competition or waiting for competition) will decorate 4X4 tiles with paints illustrating wondrous aspects of the world: flowers, trees, mountain landscapes, rainbows, sun, planets, stars, animals, etc. These framed tiles will be placed on the wall underneath the frieze with the verse. On an opposite wall will be the words □Wisdom Begins with Wonder.□

The ambience will create a Jewish focus to the room and will draw the attention of adults and children alike.

#### Future Projects:

- A similar frieze hangs above the cybex stations in the fitness room. I want the inscription on the frieze to read  
♦ □ □ ⊕ ♀ ▲ ♦ 📖 □ □ ⊙ ♀ Ⓢ ○ □ Ⓢ □ ⊙ & 📖 According to effort is the reward). This is the Jewish rendition of □no pain, no gain.□ I think this would provide ambience to the room and also material for discussion
- I am also interested in placing □Did you know□ information stations in several areas of the building. I discovered this delightful use of space while waiting on line to use the bathroom at the underwater observatory in Eilat. There was a nicely designed plaque on the wall with a hard clear plastic cover that explained how whales urinate. There are at least 3 or 4 spaces in the building where we could use the space to educate the public on Jewish ritual, Jewish values and concepts.

# JCC Association/Mandel Fellows Jewish Educator Initiative Project Proposal

**Dr. Paul Radensky**  
**Assistant Director**

**92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y Bronfman Center for Jewish Life**

We are fortunate that across the country, but especially in urban centers such as New York, Jewish education programs for adults proliferate. While these programs vary, with the exception of a few particularly innovative programs, such as the Sunday morning sukkah building demonstrations at Home Depot in Long Island, most Jewish education programs are text-based. In a text-oriented culture such as Judaism this approach clearly has its place. When this sort of program is the only thing offered however, those who are not well suited this style of learning are left out.

Based on the educational strategy that posits that people learn best when they are both mentally and physically engaged, I would like to propose a new kind of introduction to Judaism course. I would like to call it, tentatively, □Experiential Judaism.□ On ten consecutive Sunday mornings, students would participate in a nearly wholly experiential program. The order of the topics would have to be worked out, but the schedule might look something like this:

1. Visit sofer (Torah scribe) in his shop for demonstration and Q & A.
2. Visit synagogue for tour with and talk with the rabbi.
3. Visit mikvah with tour and talk with the takerin (Mikvah lady).
4. Attend brit milah with talk by mohel afterward
5. Visit kosher restaurant to talk with owner/chef about kashrut, kosher food business.
6. Attend wedding ceremony.
7. Spend morning in a rabbinical seminary/yeshiva. Meet with rabbinical students.
8. Participate in visiting sick with a Bikkur Holim Society.
9. Visit funeral chapel and meet with members of the Chevra Kadisha.
10. Visit a Jewish cemetery.

The idea with this kind of program is that through experiencing Jewish life (and death) first hand, the students will develop a much great appreciation for it. Moreover, they will become acquainted with a number of the committed Jews in the community (and the nature of the site visits can vary depending on what exists in the particular community). Finally, the students will develop deeper bonds with each other since their experiences will be more profound than if they had met solely over texts in a classroom.

Downsides. The main disadvantage that I see so far with this program is that it demands a lot of organizational energy from the group leader, in terms of arranging all the visits. This might be counterbalanced by the fact that the group leader will not have to deliver a lecture each week. This program would probably not work well in small communities that lack specific Jewish institutions such as a mikvah, kosher restaurants, Jewish funeral home, etc. Another possible problem with this kind of program is that it takes place entirely or almost entirely outside of the host institution, such as a YM/YWHA or a JCC. As such, it will not be an effective tool in bringing people into that institution's physical space. On the other hand, this might be compensated by a stronger perception of the sponsoring agency as the "source" for things Jewish.

Evaluation: This will take place in a number of stages. First of all, the group leader will seek feedback from the participants at the end of each session. At the end of ten weeks, the participants will be asked to complete evaluation forms. Finally, the participants of each program will be surveyed a year after the program is completed to determine to what extent this program deepened their Jewish commitment and how their Jewish commitment is now being expressed.

Jonathan Fass

Preliminary Assignment for Mandel Fellows, June 2-5, 2002 Seminar

In preliminary discussions with Rabbi Gordis we have discussed the possibility of developing a community-wide day of Jewish learning with the underlying goal of uniting the diverse factions within the Stamford Jewish Community. The Jewish Community Center may be uniquely situated within the community to serve as a neutral space for this program. This program would include sessions with both Jewish educators and Rabbis from the Stamford community as well as Jewish professionals from New York City, Yale University, and Hartford. Sessions throughout the day would include lectures, traditional Jewish study in *hevruta* (learning pairs), and a keynote presentation from a noted Jewish educator. In addition to learning opportunities for adults, the Jewish Community Center would offer a variety of learning opportunities for young children, teenagers, and members of the Jewish community with special needs.

The Jewish Community Center of Stamford is the largest, and oldest, Jewish agency in the community serving 1900 membership units. Despite its history, the Center is also perceived to be the "least Jewish" agency in the organized Jewish community. The remainder of the organized Jewish community of Stamford includes the Stamford Jewish Federation, three synagogues (one of each denomination), and two *havurot*. As a result of this organization, the Jewish community of Stamford believes itself to be deeply divided ideologically, politically, and culturally. In conversations with both lay leaders, members of the greater Jewish community and Jewish professionals the consensus is that the Stamford Jewish Community is deeply fractured and in need of opportunities to come together as a community. The Jewish Community Center hopes that the Department of Jewish Life can help to bridge the diverse elements of the Jewish Community through a united recognition of the importance of Jewish learning and a shared goal of ensuring the future of the Jewish people. The image of the Jewish Community Center as a strong supporter of Jewish education and the broad Stamford Jewish community may be improved by the success of this project.

Previous meetings of The JCC Association/Mandel Fellows Jewish Educators Initiative have identified the need to create a sense of "neighborhood" and "social capital" within our Jewish communities. I believe that a community-wide learning initiative would begin the development of "social capital" within the fractured Stamford Jewish community. If developed with the primary educational goal of building connection within the community, as opposed to developing well educated Jews, the program may have a significant impact in closing the divisions within the community. If the program's success was evaluated on its ability to create community, we may find that the Center has achieved its community goal of serving the entire Jewish community "Jewishly." I would understand this program to be a success if, at its conclusion, the Stamford Jewish community was witness to Jews from all backgrounds discussing both the Talmud and their children's little league.