

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Strengthens Synagogues

La'atid: Synagogues for the Future

How can a synagogue help its congregants gain a stronger sense of Jewish identity? What should a synagogue do to increase its congregants' Jewish knowledge and literacy? How can a synagogue help its congregants live a richer Jewish life?

Three congregations in Greater Hartford, Connecticut (Beth El, B'nai Sholom, and Beth Sholom) were facing these very issues, and were chosen to be part of a special program called *La'atid: Synagogues for the Future*. The initiative was funded by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, the Endowment Foundation of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, Inc. and the Covenant Foundation. This three-year initiative was designed to nurture a strong sense of Jewish identity, increase Jewish knowledge and enrich Jewish living.

The *La'atid* process was developed through a strategic planning process of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford. Gail Weinstein, JESNA Board member and chair of the Commission on Jewish Education of the Jewish Federation of Greater



This past February *La'atid* organized a spirituality and prayer retreat that was attended by 65 participants.

Hartford's *La'atid* planning and oversight committee, noted, "this project was successful due in large part to the leadership of the Federation's forward thinking and to the strategic nature of this initiative. It was also successful because of the initial experimental phase, a pilot program called SIP: Synagogue Initiative Program." The pilot program involved two congregations, Emanuel and Kol Havarim, and was funded by the Endowment Foundation of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, Inc.

JESNA was engaged to help *La'atid* develop a rigorous feedback process that allowed them to monitor their progress throughout the change process — as well as to serve as objective evaluators who would assess their achievement from the outside. Dr. Leora Isaacs, JESNA's vice president for program and organizational learning, worked with Dr. Sandy Waldman Dashefsky, the education director of *La'atid*.

The *La'atid* program was intended to revitalize and enrich congregational life so that the congregational community would be able to develop to its highest potential. To achieve these goals, congregations learned to "do things differently."



Sandy Dashefsky, left front, running a *La'atid* class session called Educational Leadership: A Challenge for Change. Pictured are representatives from *La'atid* and SIP as well as representatives from other local congregations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Dr. Jonathan Woocher

In December of last year, JESNA and the United Jewish Communities (UJC) entered into a path-breaking agreement to become partners in advancing a global “renaissance” in Jewish learning and living. For JESNA, this alliance — in which JESNA manages and staffs the activities emanating from UJC’s Jewish Renaissance and Renewal Pillar as part of our broad agenda for promoting “vibrant Jewish life through Jewish learning” — is a natural extension of our historical mission and mandate. JESNA has been deeply engaged in the work of forging a Jewish Renaissance even before that term became popular. Throughout the 1990s, we spearheaded the national federation system’s growing engagement with what was then being called “Jewish continuity.” It was thus logical that UJC, having adopted Jewish Renaissance as one of the “Pillars” in its new organizational structure, would turn

to JESNA, with our unique experience and expertise, to be its partner in the hard work of translating the rhetoric of Jewish renewal into reality.

From JESNA’s side, the opportunity to expand our programmatic activities through the Jewish Renaissance and Renewal alliance allows us to pursue more fully our vision of what “excellence in Jewish education” entails today. The fundamental connection between Jewish education and Jewish Renaissance is obvious: no other single experience is as powerful a generative force for Jewish commitment and creativity as high quality Jewish learning. There can be no renaissance of Jewish involvement, activism, or spirituality without Torah — Jewish learning — at its core.

But, the relationship is more than an instrumental one. Jewish education is not a world unto itself, and JESNA is not only concerned with what happens in Jewish classrooms. For Jewish education to truly fulfill its purposes, it must be fully engaged with the events, developments, and activities in Jewish life that help to define both its content and its context. In UJC’s organizational structure, Jewish

Renaissance is one of three Pillars — the other two being Human Services and Social Policy, and Israel and Overseas. The agenda for the Jewish community, and therefore for Jewish education, today must explicitly embrace our concerns for *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah*, and for *am yisrael*, *clal yisrael*, and *medinat yisrael*. Our work as an agency, in both our core programs and our Renaissance alliance with UJC, reflects the breadth of our understanding of what “vibrant Jewish life” means in the 21st century. We are committed to bringing Jewish education into intimate relationship with the full range of issues and opportunities with which the Jewish community and the Jewish people are grappling today.

What is happening today in Israel is clearly one of these issues. We at JESNA are deeply concerned both about the violence in Israel in the wake of the collapse of peace prospects with the Palestinians, and about the fact that many American Jews do *not* appear to feel personally connected to the trauma that Israelis are experiencing. We are asking what can be done in our Jewish educational institutions and programs to respond to the

immediate situation and to rebuild the underlying bonds of Jewish community and peoplehood that appear to have weakened. One answer is our initiative, onepeople@jesna.org, to foster more direct connections between Jewish students, educators, and institutions here and in Israel. Our central role in the recent *Mifgash* (encounter) between leading North American Jewish educators and counterparts in Israel is a second response. Through our participation in the Jewish Renaissance alliance we will also be involved in the new Israel Solidarity Initiative being launched by the UJC and the federations, and in trying to build on the great success of **birthright israel** by engaging returning participants in meaningful activities here that keep them connected to Judaism, Jewish learning, the Jewish community, Israel and the Jewish people.

JESNA has always seen the work of strengthening Jewish education as part of a multi-dimensional agenda for strengthening every aspect of Jewish life. We are, therefore, vitally interested and involved in initiatives that address “cutting edge” issues like synagogue renewal or engag-

DAY SCHOOLS

ing the “next generation” of Jewish young adults, even where these issues “spill over” what might be thought of as the boundaries of Jewish education, narrowly defined. We are involved with these issues — and will be even more so as a result of our role in the Jewish Renaissance alliance — because we understand that they are part and parcel of our purpose and vision. To shy away from being part of the coalitions that are taking shape to address the “big” challenges on the Jewish agenda today, whether these being renewing the sense of Jewish peoplehood, transforming our institutions, or finding ways to support the journeys of ever larger numbers of Jews, would be to imply that Jewish education has no role and no stake in the outcome of these efforts. That’s not what we believe, and it’s not what JESNA is going to do.

The Jewish Renaissance and Renewal alliance is a welcome new chapter in the story that JESNA is writing for itself and for Jewish education. We are where the action is, bringing our special perspectives and our special capabilities to the work of creating a vibrant Jewish presence and future. It’s a great place to be.



Pilots A New Approach to Professional Development

JSkyway, www.jskyway.com, a revolutionary professional development network for day schools, completes its pilot year in June 2001. JESNA, Jewish Family & Life! (JFL), and the Nash Family Foundation’s goal was to create an interactive network linking day school educators and schools that would enable teachers to participate in high quality professional development activities regardless of where they live. Aimed at improving both general and Judaic education in day schools, JSkyway allows teachers to learn from professionals, share curriculum and resources and collaborate on projects via web-based live audio, video and data networks.

During this pilot-year, educators from 24 participating day schools (including Conservative, Orthodox and community day schools in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts) had the opportunity to choose from six different online courses: Skills for Effective Teaching, Models of Assessment, Integrated Learning in the Jewish School, New Technologies for Learning – Resources for Jewish Education, Developmental Issues in Adolescence and Teaching Jewish Texts. Participants were also able to learn from each other and from the course facilitators in two different ways: Asynchronously – by discussing topics through threaded email discussion postings, and Synchronously – by communicating through live video discussions (students enjoyed “seeing” their fellow classmates).

Over the course of the year, JESNA evaluated JSkyway by visiting many of the

schools and surveying the participants. Despite the unfamiliarity of the medium, and a steep learning curve in using cutting-edge, and occasionally less than perfectly reliable technologies, the initial feedback from our interviews and surveys has been generally positive. We are encouraged to learn that many teachers liked to use the technology and felt that they benefitted from the custom-designed course materials.

For example, Galya Greenberg, vice principal for Judaic studies at Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Hartford, recently completed the JSkyway course “Integration in the Jewish School.” She comments, “the course stimulated me to re-evaluate our middle school Judaic studies curriculum. I now realize that parts of our curriculum were very fragmented and that we should integrate some of the classes to create a more holistic approach for the students.”

Plans are underway to choose schools for next year’s expanded pilot program. Based on the current year’s experience, a number of changes will be made to the program to provide the schools, participants, and faculty with greater support in using the technologies. The objective is to continue to grow in both numbers and in quality. After all, for JSkyway, “the JSky’s the limit!”

For more information on JESNA’s day school initiatives, please contact Steve Kraus at (212) 284-6893.

Covenant's Ten-Year Report Recognized by the Council on the Foundations

The Covenant Foundation is in the happy business of giving awards to honor outstanding Jewish educators. But, this time, it was the Foundation that was on the receiving end!

The Covenant Foundation recently was named a bronze award winner in the special reports category by the 2001 Wilmer Shields Rich Awards Program for its ten-year report, *The Covenant Foundation: The First Ten Years*. This prestigious award, sponsored by the Council on Foundations and its Communications Network, recognizes effective communication efforts to increase public awareness of foundations and corporate giving programs. The award was presented on May 1 at the 52nd Annual Conference of the Council on Foundations in Philadelphia.

One evaluator described the report as having, “the ability to inspire grantmakers in other fields by its frank and open discussion of the grant-making process and grantee experi-

ence.” Entries to the awards program included annual or biennial reports, newsletters, special reports, public policy campaigns and web sites. This year, over 200 entries were submitted to the awards program.

Covenant has also garnered warm accolades from many friends and colleagues in the field including Marge Goldwater, the executive director of the Jewish Foundation for Education of Women, Henry Grunwald, the former editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., and Roger Hertog, a member of the board of the Avi Chai Foundation. Ms. Goldwater wrote, “*Kol HaKevod* on the marvelous publication celebrating the Covenant Foundation’s first decade...and on all the accomplishments chronicled therein.”

The Covenant Foundation is a partnership of the Crown Family Foundation and JESNA. For copies of the Ten Year Report, please contact the Foundation at (212) 420-0604.



CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNAL JEWISH EDUCATION

A Vision for Excellence: Report of the Task Force on Congregational and Communal Jewish Education

JESNA's congregational and communal Jewish education committee, led by Gail Weinstein, has taken important first steps in implementing and expanding the recommendations from *A Vision for Excellence: Report of the Task Force on Congregational and Communal Jewish Education*. The Report has now received wide distribution on both the community and national levels. Paul Flexner, associate vice president for human resource development, presented on how to use the Task Force Report at the annual NATE (National Association of Temple Educators) Conference. Steve Kraus gave a similar presentation at the JEA (Jewish Educators Assembly) Conference. *A Vision for Excellence* has also been discussed on educational and rabbinical list serves, and will be highlighted at a session of the Rabbinical Assembly Annual Conference in June.

Three pilot communities, Atlanta, Milwaukee and Rhode Island, have chosen to work with JESNA to implement strategies from *A Vision for Excellence* in their individual communities. In addi-

tion, other communities around North America have expressed interest in using our recommendations to enhance the quality of Jewish education in their schools.

The National Jewish Diffusion Network

Jeff Lasday, chair of ADCA (Association of Directors of Central Agencies), updated the committee on the National Jewish Diffusion Network, a joint project of ADCA, JESNA and the education departments of the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements. Its goal is to identify, support, validate, demonstrate and disseminate outstanding models of congregational and communal Jewish education in order to raise the quality of such education nationwide. The Diffusion Network received initial funding to develop a detailed work plan for the dissemination process, but is still seeking additional funding to proceed with the work on a large-scale basis.

For more information on JESNA's congregational and communal education initiatives, please contact Steve Kraus at (212) 284-6893.

NEWS BYTE — Media and Technology

JESNA, along with the Associated Talmud Torahs (ATT) of Chicago and the Board of Jewish Education (BJE) of Greater New York, is sponsoring a special Jewish educator's track at the annual National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) this June in Chicago.

Jewish educators in K-12 and teacher education will learn about integrating educational technology into their settings and how to improve their own teaching and learning with technology. The National Education Computing Association's mission is to advance educational philosophies, practices, policies, and research that focus on the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies.

In addition to the general conference, JESNA, ATT and BJE will be conducting sessions specifically geared for educators in Jewish settings. JESNA will also host daily "Birds of a Feather" sessions for participants to meet and share ideas and resources.

JESNA In Your Local Community



Joe Kanfer and Jonathan Woocher will be telling JESNA's story and meeting Jewish leaders at two upcoming events sponsored by JESNA Board members. Bennett and Donna Yanowitz, together with Harley Gross and Chuck Ratner, are hosting a cocktails and dinner buffet on Thursday, June 14 at Bennett Yanowitz's home in Pepper Pike, OH.

Helene and Ady Berger, along with Diane Troderman and Harold Grinspoon, are planning a pre-Tanglewood brunch at Helene Berger's home on Sunday, August 12.

At both of these special gatherings, Joe and Jon will speak with local leaders about some of the exciting developments in Jewish education today and, specifically, the work being done by JESNA.

If you are interested in hosting a community visit, please contact Ellen Goldstein, our new associate vice president for board and community relations, at (212) 284-6886.

CHAIR'S COLUMN



Joe Kanfer

JESNA at 20 Years: Roots and Fruits

The Roots of JESNA

In the late 1970s, The Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) and the American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE) established a joint study committee to examine what a national Jewish education service agency should be and do. Albert Ratner of Cleveland and

Arthur Brody of MetroWest, NJ, were co-chairs.

That body recommended the establishment of JESNA, an agency serving the federated system. JESNA formally came into existence on July 1, 1981. Fred Sichel was the first President, succeeded by Mark Schlusel. Dr. Shimon Frost who had been heading the AAJE after the retirement of Isaac Toubin became the first executive of JESNA, and when Frost made aliya, David Resnick served as acting executive. Jonathan Woocher was appointed in November 1985, and began to serve in August 1986. Bennett Yanowitz was persuaded to become President and JESNA began to take its present shape.

I will not recount here the full history of JESNA. That is for another day. Without additional research, I would surely leave out many important milestones and fail to mention the significant deeds of our organizational heroes.

The Fruits of JESNA

How little regard the organized Jewish community had then for the possibilities of Jewish education. How great the foresight and accomplishments of our founders in the face of disinterest and even hostility.

Today Jewish education has emerged as the centerpiece of the Jewish renaissance. The early work of our founders was prescient. Did they ever imagine we would

have traveled so far?

Yet, until dollars fully follow sentiment, until pay scales for Jewish educators equal espoused regard for Jewish education, and until Jewish literacy universally enriches Jewish lives, our work remains unfinished. Today's leaders will require a similar ability to "see around the corner" with the sustained conviction our founding leaders possessed.

Our sage Rabbi Tarfon said "It is not our responsibility to complete the task, but neither may we desist from it."

Perhaps, and appropriately so, 20 years is only half the journey toward Jewish education fulfilling its full promise.

Highlights from Kallah 2001 Ft. Lauderdale, Florida — February 2–4:

Leaving Egypt: Our Journeys through the World of Jewish Education

Who Will be Our Educators in the 21st Century?

The Kallah officially kicked off Friday morning with an interactive dialogue between top level lay and professional leaders from across the continent organized by JESNA and the Association of Directors of Central Agencies (ADCA) to explore successful models of educator recruitment, development and retention. Panelist Ari Schuchman, described JSkyway (discussed further on page 3 of this issue). Janice Alper, representing *Morim LATideinu* (Teachers for Our Future), gave an enthusiastic report on her avocational teacher project in Atlanta. Jeffrey Lasday discussed St. Louis' involvement in the national Jewish Educators Corps initiative, which recruits and

trains university students and encourages them to seriously consider careers in Jewish education. Finally, Danny Margolis talked about Boston's Educators for the Jewish Renaissance project, a recruitment, development, retention, and placement program that places educa-

tors in full time positions, while offering mentoring and training. JESNA Board member, Helene Kalson Cohen, chaired and moderated the session.

The second half of the JESNA/ADCA session featured Marge Sasse, executive director of human resource development for Broward County Public Schools, who presented on state-of-the-art profes-



Helene Kalson Cohen, JESNA Board member, moderating the panel discussion.



Board members and central agency directors brainstorming during Marge Sasse's session.

sional development programs for teachers in public education. It was evident that public and Jewish education, though dramatically different in scope and context, are, nevertheless, grappling with a number of similar challenges in the arenas of teacher recruitment and professional development, and that we can learn from successful models in the public arena. Participants broke into groups and brainstormed strategies for addressing persistent questions such as: What is needed to attract qualified candidates to the teaching profession? What can be done to retain quality educators?

Kallah Scholars in Residence: Joe and Gail Reimer

Over Shabbat, we were honored to have had the opportunity to learn with Joe and Gail Reimer, focusing on the theme, *Leaving Egypt: Our Journeys Through the World of Jewish Education*. Using Parashat Bo as their point of departure, they guided the Kallah participants through text study and small group discussions that highlighted the many ways in which slavery and freedom still play out in our lives, and in our efforts to improve Jewish education. Their text-based presentations offered us an outstanding opportunity to experience the rewards of interactive, highly participatory adult Jewish learning.



From left to right: Ari Schuchman, communications director for JSkyway; Janice Alper; Jeff Lasday, ADCA chair; and Danny Margolis.

New Initiatives, New Partnerships, Education

Saturday evening at the Kallah was a celebration of some of the many new initiatives that are changing the face of Jewish education in America.



Bruce Yudewitz, planning director for the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, offers remarks during the Saturday evening reception.

possible by these new investments. Their stories, including the role they played in helping to advance Jewish education, were representative of the stories that many of their colleagues could have told as well.

The highlight of the evening reception was a tribute to Blanche and Neil Sosland of Kansas, two of JESNA's and Jewish Education's biggest supporters. When describing Blanche and Neil, words like modest, down to earth and humble are always used. These words are always accompanied by phrases like, Jewish education advocates...longtime



Helen Cohen and Shirley Solomon, Kallah's co-chairs, flank Jonathan W.

New Investments, Successes in Jewish

ADCA Kallah was devoted to celebrating new initiatives that are making a difference in education in North Florida. Over the past five years, ADCA has focused an increasing amount of its energies on building partnerships with central agencies for Jewish education with a growing number of individuals who are investing in the field of Jewish learning and living. Some of our central agency representatives, Daniel Bennett of Broward and Chaim Botwinick of Palm Beach, described exciting developments in Jewish education in their communities made through investments and partnerships. ADCA's role is to facilitate these new initiatives,

and success stories. ADCA's role is to facilitate these new initiatives, and success stories. ADCA's role is to facilitate these new initiatives, and success stories.

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(Non-)Trivial Pursuits: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About JESNA

Inspired by the ever-popular board game, Trivial Pursuit, JESNA developed its own version of this challenging game to help Board members understand better what JESNA does and how it operates. Jonathan Woocher, master of ceremonies, asked each of the four teams a series of questions about JESNA. The categories included 'our six core areas of activity,' 'names and contents of our publications,' 'the Campaign for Jewish Living and Learning,' 'the Renaissance and Renewal alliance,' 'special projects,' and 'board and staff.'



Team members from Winning Team #3 proudly don their yellow hats, which they received as prizes.

JESNA supporters...leaders in the field of Jewish internet resource development...and, above all...examples to us all. We were honored to recognize a family whose impact on Jewish education in their local community and in our global Jewish community is so remarkable.

Blanche and Neil are true *menschen*. Faced with a mis-timed Florida shower that arrived just as Joe

Kanfer presented them with a beautiful *tzedeka* box, they offered gracious thanks, and then helped, along with the rest of the JESNA Board, to re-assemble the party inside. The remainder of the evening was spent dancing to the music of Lisa Segal, Ronit Ben-Arie, and Sharon Alcalay Leibovici, musical entertainers also known for their original educational children's music.



From left to right: Moshe Papo, ADCA Kallah co-chair and executive of Broward County central agency; David Frank, president of Broward County central agency; Dr. Barry Alter, president of Broward County Federation; Gary Rubin, executive director of the Broward County Federation.



From left to right: New Board members Fran Friedman, Richard Cohen, Ann Jaffe, and Debbie Shapiro with Richard Krugal, board development chair.



Blanche and Neil Sosland accept a special gift from Joe Kanfer, seconds before the downpour.

JESNA Speed Dating

"Speed dating" is the latest approach to helping young people find potential partners in a "hurry-up" world. For the JESNA Board, it proved an effective way to encourage Board members to get to know one another and establish connections that go beyond our work together. In a concentrated dose of seven seven-minute, one-on-one encounters,



Board members get to know each other during JESNA's Speed Dating session.

Board members got to exchange thoughts and experiences on such questions as, "Tell me about someone who influenced you Jewishly?" We trust that when it comes to discovering shared interests, these "daters" found that they had much in common, and perhaps even that their coming together at JESNA was *bashert!*

EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

When we at JESNA ask communities and our colleagues to name the number one issue that they are struggling with today, one item consistently tops the list: the persistent, across the board shortage of quality Jewish educators.

For this reason, JESNA has made recruitment of Jewish educators one of its highest priorities as well. Today, JESNA's pace-setting efforts encompass four programs, the largest single educator

recruitment endeavor in North American Jewish education: the Lainer Interns for Jewish Education; the Jewish Educators Corps; the Campus Jewish Educator Recruitment Initiative; and the Graduate Seminar on Career Choices in Jewish Education.

In this issue of @jesna.org we provide updates on two of these programs. Our upcoming issues will have updates on the highly successful Lainer Interns for Jewish Education and the Jewish Educators Corps.

Campus Jewish Educator Recruitment Initiative

Advancing Jewish education begins with recruiting the next generation of educators, from teachers to youth workers to educational leaders. With support from the Crown family, JESNA has embarked on an extensive recruitment initiative in partnership with Hillel, the JCC Association and the Foundation for Jewish Camping to encourage university students to pursue careers in Jewish education. By targeting select schools with high Jewish student enrollments and active Jewish studies programs and Hillels, we are identifying young adults with both an interest in their Judaism and a history of involvement during their high school and college years. Throughout the 2000-01 academic year, Rachel Brumberg, human resources associate, with the help of JESNA representatives from central agencies and alumni of the Lainer Interns program, has created a presence at over 20 universities in North America – spanning the continent from the University of Washington to New York University. New opportunities for begin-



ning a career in the field are presented along with detailed information about graduate study in either Jewish education or Jewish communal service. With the publication of our new poster/brochure and the “2001 Guide to Academic Programs in Formal and Informal Jewish Education,” JESNA is creating a tangible presence among the university population while enticing them to think seriously about joining us as Jewish educators for a new generation.

Graduate Seminar on Career Choices in Jewish Education

JESNA recognizes the potential of young adults who spend a year studying and learning at one of Jerusalem's many continuing education and yeshiva programs. To encourage them to translate their interest into a professional career, JESNA established the Graduate Seminar on Career Choices in Jewish Education. Building on the outstanding success of the Lainer Interns for Jewish Education, the seminar provides an introduction to various career paths in the field of Jewish education while, at the same time, we feed the students' bodies and souls with the nourishment that is at the heart of

the Jewish experience.

Sally Klein-Katz, a veteran Jewish educator in both North America and in Israel with experience in formal and non-formal settings, serves as the program coordinator and mentor to the participants. Jeff Waldman, a student at the Liberal Bet Midrash at HUC and a graduate of the University of Michigan, raves that “the Jewish educators Sally has assembled for the program have really rounded my perception of the field. Where once my vision was quite narrow, I now see an open plane where I can best utilize my creative and communicative skills.”

Now completing its sixth year, the Graduate Seminar brings the message to about 25 young adults in Jerusalem, as well as a comparable number of participants who are participating on UJC's OTZMA program. When they return to North America, we encourage each of the young adults to maintain contact with JESNA through the New York office where they tap into our wealth of resources on career opportunities and graduate study in the North American Jewish community.

For more information on JESNA'S recruitment initiatives, please contact Paul Flexner at (212) 284-6879.

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

The Everetts Help Launch JewishJobFinder.com

Thanks to a lead gift from Henry and Edith Everett, JESNA, along with a number of partner organizations, is preparing to launch JewishJobFinder.com, the first-ever centralized resource for employers and job-seekers within the worlds of Jewish education and professional leadership.

This ambitious project will have a dramatic effect on the Jewish job market, making it possible for the first time to go to a single web site to find job listings in a variety of Jewish settings and agencies. At the click of a mouse, site visitors will have access to hundreds of positions throughout the continent, and a good deal more. The site will be easy to navigate, with color-coded and graphic-rich pages, and will offer information on career paths, job openings, internships, and training opportunities. In addition, a featured monthly profile will offer

glimpses into the lives of individuals at various stages of a career in Jewish education and communal leadership.

JESNA is working on this exciting initiative in partnership with the United Jewish Communities (UJC), the developers of FedWeb, a web portal project that provides local federations and agencies with the template and content to build their own web sites. As a result, JewishJobFinder.com's database will also be available through FedWeb's 'Career Center.' Jewish Family & Life! (JFL), the leading Jewish web company in North America, and Xworld, FedWeb's designer, are undertaking the design and construction of JewishJobFinder.com.

In addition to UJC, JESNA is partnering in developing JewishJobFinder.com with many other organizations who have already established a web presence of their own, but are nevertheless eager to

broaden their exposure through JewishJobFinder.com. These include: Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, JCCA (Jewish Community Centers Association), JEA (Jewish Educators' Assembly), NATE (National Association of Temple Educators), NAA (North American Alliance for Jewish Youth), CAJE (Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education), Camp Ramah, The Foundation for Jewish Camping, and JCPSC (Jewish Communal Professionals of Southern California).

We welcome your participation in this exciting initiative! For more information on how your community can get involved in JewishJobFinder.com, please contact Judith Goldstein at jugoldstein@jesna.org or (212) 284-6894.

JESNA's Web Site Has a New Look

JESNA staff has been busy redesigning our new web site — www.jesna.org — which is expected to launch this summer. The new site will clearly reflect JESNA's work in our six core areas:

- improving DAY SCHOOL quality and affordability;
- revitalizing CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNAL EDUCATION;
- engaging and empowering JEWISH YOUTH;
- RECRUITING AND DEVELOPING Jewish educators;
- utilizing MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY to enhance Jewish learning and teaching; and
- using RESEARCH AND EVALUATION to promote improvement.

The site will also reflect JESNA's interest in a number of other important educational arenas, including Adult Jewish Learning, Early Childhood Education, Family Education, and Special Needs Education.

Both lay and professional leaders will benefit from the comprehensive information about JESNA's work in these areas, including

publications and links to other resources. The site will feature:

- committee and task force reports and discussion areas
- a calendar of JESNA and Jewish education events
- recruitment materials for new professionals entering the field of Jewish education
- mid-career change and placement information
- a database of Judaic software
- annotated links and teaching tips to facilitate the integration of media and technology in Jewish education
- annotated resources for Jewish and general education, including the areas of early childhood education, media and technology, special needs education, and more.

The JESNA web site will also house the Sosland Online Resource Centers, the first of which will be developed over the course of the upcoming year, and the Jewish Educators' Electronic Toolkit.

For more information on JESNA's media and technology initiatives, please contact Caren Levine at (212) 284-6898.

YOUTH INITIATIVES

Kol HaNa'ar Conference to Strengthen Community Youth Initiatives

Communities today face tremendous challenges trying to engage their Jewish youth in Jewish education and other activities for an extended period beyond Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Many are seeking new programs and strategies that will keep teens involved and attract those who have already dropped out. The *Kol HaNa'ar* conference, the first national conference on Jewish youth for community volunteer and professional leadership in more than half a decade, is being organized to help communities take advantage of model programs and resources that can enrich the experience of local teens. The conference will be an opportunity for sharing conceptual frameworks, for networking with colleagues, and for developing new skills in planning and implementing strategies for servicing Jewish youth.

Kol HaNa'ar will run from Sunday, October 14 through Tuesday, October 16, with a special session on Wednesday, October 17 for community youth professionals only. Participants will include professionals and volunteers from local agencies such as central agencies for Jewish education, federations, JCC's, and community high schools, as well as national youth-serving organizations. Plenary sessions and workshops will cover topics such as current Jewish identity trends among adolescents, creating a youth education vision statement, professional recruitment and training, out-

reach strategies, integrating Jewish learning with social action, the arts, and technology, development of lay leaders, and financial resources for youth programming. Those attending the conference will bring back to their communities knowledge, skills and a greater appreciation for what is possible in the youth arena.

Major financial support for *Kol HaNa'ar* and for the Youth Initiatives Portfolio, a resource for community youth planning, programming, and personnel development that is being assembled for the conference, is coming from the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Jewish Community Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

Kol HaNa'ar is being organized by JESNA in partnership with the Institute for Informal Jewish Education at Brandeis University and the Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. Other partner agencies include: ADCA (the Association of Directors of Central Agencies); JCCA (the Jewish Community Centers Association), NAA (the North American Alliance for Jewish Youth); NCSY (National Conference on Synagogue Youth); UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations); and USCJ (United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism).

For more information on JESNA's youth initiatives, please contact Devorah Silverman at (212) 284-6887.

NEWS BYTES — Recruitment

“Every Jewish Child Deserves a Qualified Jewish Teacher”

Professional development in Jewish education was the focus of two important meetings in May. The National Board of License in cooperation with JESNA, CAJE, the AIHLJE, ADCA and the Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Agency for Israel hosted a two-day regional conference on the theme “Professional Development and Professionalism in Jewish Education” in Braintree, MA. The conference, coordinated by BJE of Greater Boston, focused on the creation of new community based strategies for addressing the chronic shortage of qualified educa-

tional personnel for our educational institutions.

Two days later, the JESNA Task Force on Professional Recruitment, Development, Retention and Placement met in its final session at the JESNA office in New York. Plans were developed, under the leadership of Sandra Gold, task force chair and Paul Flexner, JESNA's lead staff person, for translating the Task Force's four working groups' recommendations into a formal plan of action and to share this message with the Jewish community. A full report of the Task Force is now in preparation, which will both challenge the Jewish community to formally address the issues and will provide a clear agenda for guiding the work of

JESNA and the Jewish communities throughout the continent.

Mifgash

In March, JESNA played a key role in the first-ever *Mifgash* (Encounter) of key Jewish educational leaders from North America and Israel. The *Mifgash*, sponsored by ADCA and planned with the help of Paul Flexner and David Resnick, focused on developing a shared agenda for Jewish education. Many recommendations resulted, ranging from bringing North American educators to Israel for short-term training programs to broadening the use of Internet and satellite communications technologies. These issues and others will be discussed at next year's *Mifgash*.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

La'atid's philosophy was to bring together broad-base representation of professionals and lay leadership within each of the three congregational communities and have them design and implement visionary experimental action plans together. They also focused on Torah study as an important dimension of their growth. In addition, the congregation representatives participated in joint courses and seminars that assisted them in the creative work done within each congregation. The changes and collaborative processes introduced through *La'atid* are being incorporated into the congregations' cultures and ways of doing business.

La'atid begins with the premise that we all have different Jewish backgrounds. Perhaps not everyone gets meaning out of prayer, and not everyone can read and understand Hebrew. *La'atid* understands that people have different perspectives on how God plays a role in their lives. However, *La'atid's* goal is to take people wherever they are and help them understand a little more about being Jewish and expand their involvement in Jewish learning and living. *La'atid* identified and developed new leaders, designed exciting, innovative programming, and engaged wider segments of the congregations in the resulting programs.

Each congregation learned to meet the distinctive needs and wishes of their congregants – to increase Jewish knowledge and thereby comfort at services; to provide support groups for intermarrieds and parents of intermarrieds; to develop study and celebratory *havurot* for young adults and those without extended families; to provide programming for families with young children as well as adults who are beyond childrearing years, to offer oppor-

tunities for *Tikkun Olam*, etc.

Through *La'atid's* carefully crafted model involving formal course work, conferences, and intensive ongoing on-site mentoring and consultation, each congregation developed its own unique vision and goals and successfully planned and implemented programs towards achieving them. Karen Trager, executive director of the Commission on Jewish Education of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, commented “a major element of *La'atid's* success was the concentrated mentoring role of on-site facilitators guided by Dr. Sandy Dashefsky.”

La'atid was an enormously engaging initiative for all three congregations. Each congregation was able to involve previously uninvolved members – and even to attract new members, because they were so invigorated. Some previously uninvolved members even became actively involved in the *La'atid* committees. New programs have attracted impressively large numbers of participants in all three congregations. They have brought together families and individuals who had previously not been connected to the congregation or to each other, thus fostering much deeper feelings of community.

The ‘content’ of the programming introduced by the *La'atid* initiatives was fundamentally educational (as opposed to social or financial, etc.). In all cases, the social bonding and spiritual connection came about primarily through Jewish learning and collaborative visioning and planning for the future. Each congregation introduced creative ongoing educational programming through *La'atid*. One of the rabbis, new to the community, commented that the types of program-

ming and thirst for knowledge brought about through *La'atid* was exactly what he would have wanted to initiate – but it would have taken many, many years to accomplish without *La'atid*.

Dr. Isaacs (working closely with Dr. Dashefsky) assisted the *La'atid* synagogue leadership throughout the initiative in developing and utilizing appropriate evaluative tools. “The JESNA evaluation process enabled the *La'atid* congregations to make necessary mid-course corrections such as expanding the *La'atid* committee structures, developing more effective PR and communications mechanisms to promote ripple effects, and creating celebratory events and rituals to recognize accomplishments and fuel future efforts,” commented Dr. Dashefsky. All fine-tuning and mid-course corrections further enhanced the success of the *La'atid* project.

“I realized that conducting an in-depth, impartial evaluation process provided serious accountability that assisted the funders and the community in recognizing the success of *La'atid* and in considering the next steps in expanding the *La'atid* initiative to new congregations,” Dr. Dashefsky further noted. The community is also discussing continued assistance for the present *La'atid* synagogues (phase 2) with the development of a segment specifically focused on innovative school change. As the initiative expands in the future, JESNA will continue to provide mechanisms for accountability, feedback, and impartial evaluation on all levels.

For more information on JESNA's research and evaluation initiatives, please contact Leora Isaacs at (212) 284-6899.

RENAISSANCE AND RENEWAL ALLIANCE

The Jewish Community Discovers “GenX”

A two-day consultation focusing on the often elusive age group of “20 to 30 somethings” was held March 12–13 in Washington, DC, sponsored by the UJC-JESNA Jewish Renaissance and Renewal alliance and the Schusterman Family Foundation. The consult, entitled “Putting the Pieces Together: An Exchange on Jewish Adults in their 20’s and 30’s,” brought together approximately 60 leaders of programs serving Jews in their 20’s and 30’s, representatives of community organizations, and Jewish funders interested in this age group.

The purpose of this invitation-only gathering was to begin thinking about how to engage this under-served, mis-served and mis-understood age group that has, until now, rarely been addressed seriously on a national level by the organized Jewish community. The first day featured a panel of five young Jewish professionals who focused on topics such as: social

justice, spirituality, education, culture, and philanthropy. Panelist Marcella Kanfer, from Jewish Family and Life!, talked about ways to involve this age cohort by using the concept of philanthropy. The notion of giving, which is an inherently Jewish act, is a way to attract young people. She explained that one of our goals should be to encourage this group to be more philanthropic and involved with community service.

Highlights of the afternoon included a presentation called “Beyond the Hype: The Naked Realities of Generation X.” David Morrison, president of Twentysomething, a marketing firm that specializes in 24–37 year olds, shared the marketing techniques and strategies that GM, Nokia, and Apple Computers use to market to this age group.

The second day was completely interactive, giving participants an opportunity to develop strategies for facilitating ideas. Interactive workshops allowed participants to further articulate their dreams and to think about issues such as: what obstacles are involved, which organizations to partner with, and who needs to

receive training?

Although the consultation did not solve the problem of how to engage, empower, and serve this age group more effectively, it did put in motion a new process of networking that promises to yield a richer and more productive conversation about these challenges. The complexity of working with this age group is now clearer – how different, for example, a graduate student is from a young working professional. The consultation also left everyone with a list of ideas and visions for what the Jewish community *can* do, ranging from steps that are eminently doable today to others that will require far-reaching, long-term efforts. The bottom line is that 20- and 30-year-olds *are* our “next generation,” and we can no longer afford simply to wait for them to come to us.

For more information on the Renaissance and Renewal alliance, please contact Susan Sherr at (212) 284-6987.

OUR PURPOSE: Vibrant Jewish Life *through* Jewish Learning

OUR VISION: Leading *the* Communal Commitment *and* Mobilization *for* Excellence *in* Jewish Education

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JESNA – the Jewish Education Service of North America, Inc. was created in 1981 as the Jewish Federation system’s educational coordinating, planning and development agency. JESNA is widely recognized for its leadership in six different areas, including media and technology, research and evaluation, engaging and empowering Jewish youth, educator recruitment and development, day school education, and congregational and communal education.

JESNA is a national, non-profit agency governed by a board of directors comprised of lay and professional leaders in Jewish education from across North America, including individuals from the major Jewish religious movements. JESNA is a beneficiary of Jewish federations throughout North America and other private and communal funders.