

## Teens Connecting to Themselves and Each Other in Jewish Community



*Ariana Handelman is a 7th grader in her second year of Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! at Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago, IL.*



*Andrew Sobelsohn is a 12th grader in his fourth year of Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood at B'nai Jeshurun in New York City.*

*Rosh Hodesh* is different from other Jewish experiences I've had because we are learning about how to live life with our friends and in a community, as Jews.

After a *Rosh Hodesh* session where we talked about bullying and how to treat other people, I started noticing how a few kids at school were being ignored. There was one girl who no one ever talked to. I could tell she was lonely, so I went up and started spending time with her. I would not have done that without *Rosh Hodesh*.

Before I started going to *Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood* I never thought the Torah was relevant to my teenage life. However, my group leader brings in texts that we can apply to our lives as we mature from teenage boys into young men.

In one session, we looked at a muscle car ad and the values of manhood we saw in it: money, power, and the beautiful woman in the passenger seat. But then someone said, "Wouldn't the most manly car be a minivan, since it shows someone who's a father and takes care of other people?" In my group I was exposed to perspectives that countered the values promoted by the media of what it means to be a man.

### Slingshot Guide to Innovation 2014-15



Moving Traditions has been chosen for *Slingshot 2014-15*—our 9th year in this guide to Jewish innovation—and

for the second year in a row has been named one of the leading Jewish organizations committed to impacting the lives of women and girls. According to *Slingshot 2014-15*, "Moving Traditions offers time-tested programs that are unlike anything else offered for girls and boys in the Jewish community as they figure out what it means to be an adult in the world."

### Moving Traditions is Growing



Central to Moving Traditions' approach is training group leaders to mentor and guide teens. Each year we train more group leaders, and each year we have more groups.

# A “Table-less Tisch” for Jeffrey Schwarz

Jeffrey Schwarz was honored for his commitment to community and to innovation by Moving Traditions on April 3, 2014 in Manhattan.

The evening, like Jeffrey, was unique.

Our European grandfathers sat at a *tisch* (table in Yiddish) to sing, drink, and tell stories. This event “Moved the Tradition” by re-imagining a *tisch* for 2014 as open and accessible to both women and men, and by omitting the table, allowing for a warm and intimate environment.



Sally Gottesman, Chair of Moving Traditions, Jeffrey Schwarz, former Moving Traditions Board member and Benefit honoree, and Deborah Meyer, Moving Traditions Executive Director.

## Leading Innovation



In June, Rabbi Tamara Cohen, recognized Jewish feminist activist, teacher, and writer, joined Moving Traditions as Director of Innovation. Tamara is infusing training, professional development for Jewish educators, and curricula with cutting edge understandings of gender and Jewish spirituality.

Ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Tamara previously worked as Director of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs at the University of Florida and has worked on Jewish feminist projects and publications for Ma'yan: the Jewish Women's Project at the JCC in Manhattan, Hadassah, the Jewish Women's Archive, and Ritualwell.org.

# Making Space for Teens to be Jews



For decades Jewish educators have struggled with a serious problem: while 65% of Jewish teenagers have a bar or bat mitzvah, half of those teens drop out of Jewish life completely within two years of their b'nai mitzvah.

Andrea Gardenhour, Director of the Center for Youth Engagement at the Stephen S. Wise Temple in Los Angeles is always looking for ways to reach the

teens in her community. “Teens want to speak and be heard, influence and affect, innovate and create. They want to actively participate in their own spiritual development and they want to be leaders. Our role is to hear them, advocate for them, and provide the emotional and social spaces for them to grow,” she says.

Stephen S. Wise began running *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* groups six years ago, and added *Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood* groups in 2011. This year they will graduate their first group of girls.

The key, Andrea says, are the group leaders. The right group leader will create an environment where teens can deeply and honestly explore the issues they're struggling with. “Teens won't always share their worries and concerns with schoolteachers, parents, or even friends, but in a safe social forum, they have a natural space to do so,” says Andrea.

One girl in particular sticks out in Andrea's mind. Last year an eighth grade girl joined one of their pre-existing *Rosh Hodesh* groups. She had no substantial Jewish experience, no real friends, and no desire to share emotionally with a new community.

To her surprise, she was immediately embraced by her peers. Their deep support was life-changing. *Rosh Hodesh* gave her a loving and non-judgmental group of friends who empowered her, and made her feel valued.

“Today,” Andrea says, “she attends summer camp, is a Madricha in our Religious School, and an avid youth group member.

“*Rosh Hodesh* changed her world and continues to reshape ours.”

**Moving Traditions' programs have inspired more than 14,000 teen girls and 1,600 teen boys to apply a gender lens and Jewish values to their lives.**

# Making Guys Into Mensches



Brett Lubarsky has been a *Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood* group leader for five years, and has created a powerful bond with his groups of teen boys as he helps them deal with their most challenging issues.



When I was a teen I had several great Jewish male role models, and I went to an all boys Jewish summer camp, so I had safe nurturing places where I could foster deep relationships. As an adult, I wondered where those spaces are for today's teen boys.

Then, five years ago I was invited by Moving Traditions to help pilot-test what became *Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood*.

We thought our freshmen piloting group would last only a year, but last spring my “babies” graduated high school. During the four years that we met, I watched them grow and support each other as they struggled with what it means to become Jewish men.

For example, in 10th grade one of the boys in my group began spending most of his time in a new romantic relationship. His friends in the group felt dropped and started making a series of passive-aggressive and angry comments.

Through the *Shevet Achim* group, we were able to dig deeper and get them to express the real issues – their

behavior was motivated by feelings of abandonment and confusion. They missed their friend.

## A Home Base Where Boys Are Safe

For teen boys, *Shevet Achim* provides social and emotional support where they can come together and experience *shlemot*, wholeness.

The program acts as a home base for boys to navigate their Jewish journey and their journey through high school with a group that really supports and knows them deeply.

Moving Traditions allows us to reach boys with quality programming that teaches them—in Jewish community—how to build strong and open relationships, gives boys a sense of trust, and provides them with the skills and language to solve problems.

Brett is the Boston *Shevet Achim* Fellow, one of five men from around the country selected in 2014 to mentor other *Shevet Achim* group leaders.

# Making Up the Rules: Personal Values on Social Media Building Safety and Privacy Online

Before you speak, you are the master of your words. After you speak, your words become your master.

– *Orchot Tzaddikim Ch. 21*

Setting appropriate boundaries online is one of the serious challenges facing teens today.

In *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* and *Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood*, teens have the opportunity to figure out for themselves what is okay to share on social media, guided by Jewish texts and a Moving Traditions-trained group leader.

Here is the kind of checklist for posting on social media that teens might create in a *Rosh Hodesh* or *Shevet Achim* group:

Is this funny without being mean?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do I know who can see this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Can I imagine talking to my parents/adults in my life about this post?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Would I like this if I saw someone else post it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Would I say this to someone's face?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
This post can never really be deleted. Is it something I can live with forever?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Am I using this post to take a risk that I feel good about?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is this post contributing to people's stereotypes about girls/boys?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
When I look at my last 10 posts, do I like the picture they paint of who I am?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

# MOVING TRADITIONS at a Glance

## Moving Traditions' National Footprint



We're growing! Moving Traditions is inspiring teens with gender awareness and meaningful Jewish experiences, now in Chicago and Denver as well as in Boston, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia.

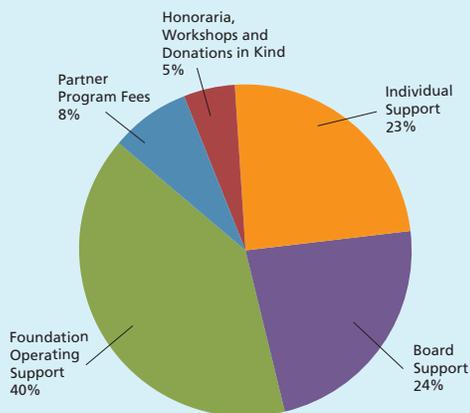
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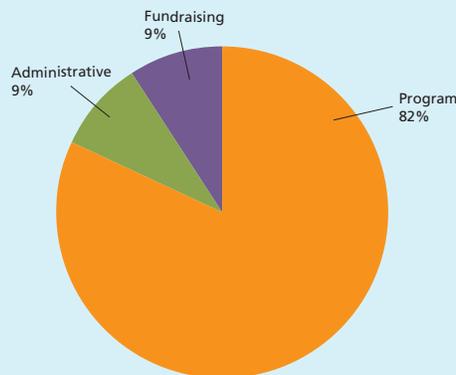
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Moving Traditions inspires people to live fuller lives—and to work for a better world for all—by advocating for a more expansive view of gender in Jewish learning and practice.

We deeply appreciate the generous support from many individual contributors to Moving Traditions and from:



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