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Engaging teens in Jewish community through middle and high school by training educators as mentors and offering teens the opportunity to explore fundamental questions of identity and society.

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founded

2005

board chair(s)

Sally Gottesman

2015 expenses

\$2,398,896

Moving Traditions



Every middle and high schooler could use a little help these days, a mentor who can guide them as they navigate ever more intense academic pressure, Facebook bullies, gender confusion—all the issues that can force them to grow up too fast and send them in the wrong direction. Moving Traditions offers that help through its signature mentor-led youth programs that have provided a sense of community and promoted self-discovery, self-esteem and independence in more than 15,000 Jewish teens since 2005. Each year, Moving Traditions trains more than 100 mentors, working with a small-group model where these adults get to know teens in a holistic way that lasts for years, creating a Jewish connection and sense of identity in these kids that stretches well beyond the bar or bat mitzvah.

Moving Traditions was founded by women—the chair and executive director are both women—and its Rosh Hodesh program for girls is particularly strong, as an independent 2015 evaluation of the program makes clear: Eighty-one percent of girls said Rosh Hodesh had helped them strengthen or acquire leadership skills, 93 percent said it increased their connection with Jewish girls and women, and 89 percent said the program has helped them think about how they treat other girls. And the boys’ program, Shevet Achim, now in its fourth year, is reaping similar results: As one participant wrote: “Shevet Achim is the best thing my mother ever forced me to do.” There are other youth programs for Jewish teens, to be sure, but none follow an ongoing mentorship model that engages teens to look at and explore the tough issues that define their lives now, including gender identity (programs and curricula for LGBT youth are in progress), peer pressure, gender equity and work-life balance. With the help of Moving Traditions, more teens are growing into adulthood with confidence, a sense of community and an enduring commitment to being a part of the Jewish community, however they identify themselves.