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Moving Traditions

Emboldening teens to thrive by fostering self-discovery, challenging sexism, and inspiring meaning and connection in Jewish life

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Moving Traditions knows what it's like to be a teen. Remember all of the social and personal challenges: sexuality, gender roles, relationships with parents, depression, anxiety, and more. This organization is a leader in helping Jewish teens address these challenges within safe, Jewish communal spaces, so that they can thrive—growing up confident and compassionate, and finding meaning and connection in Jewish life. It trains Jewish educators to draw on ancient Jewish wisdom and the latest in adolescent psychosocial development to help teens explore their identities and ethics, communicate face-to-face, and build healthy relationships. To make sure it reaches teens wherever they are (even in the summer), Moving Traditions partners with congregations, camps, and other Jewish institutions to train staff and professionals, including 14 organizations in the Chicago area. Moving Traditions emboldens teens by fostering self-discovery, challenging sexism, and inspiring a commitment to Jewish life and learning.

Teens who are connected to a “community of values,” with adult mentors and supportive peers, are more likely to flourish. For many teens Moving Traditions serves as this community, and the organization is not afraid to broach the difficult and awkward topics that come up at this life stage, including consent, pleasure, and sexual objectification. For eighth graders and older teens, Moving Traditions rebooted its **Rosh Hodesh** (for girls) and Shevet Achim (for boys) curricula and expanded programming to start earlier, at the critical transition from tween to teen. It's piloting a **b'nai mitzvah** program at eight congregations, using Jewish wisdom to help families explore what it means to become a teen—as well as to parent one—and training 17 clergy and educators in how to facilitate this program themselves. Moving Traditions is guiding Jewish teens on the pathway to adulthood, helping them to make lifelong connections to Judaism and its many traditions through self-discovery, mentorship, and positive peer-to-peer relationships, and that's a tradition that should continue for years to come.