

The Advantage

A Publication of the FJMC for Men's Club Presidents



Issue 30

December 2008

Men's Health to be Major Focus For Convention 2009

Don't Talk the Talk....

Walk the Walk!

**Wellness Challenge by the
FJMC Foundation**

The FJMC Foundation for Jewish Life is concerned about the health and wellness of our members. Indeed, while women's health issues are front-page news every day, somehow men's health is rarely discussed.

To symbolize this support for Men's Health, the FJMC Foundation is sponsoring a challenge to our clubs to "Walk to the FJMC Convention."

The Program:

- Clubs must register to participate. 10 men must participate for a club to qualify (or 10% of



- membership for clubs of less than 100 men). It will be the responsibility of the clubs to maintain mileage records.
- Each club that achieves 3600 miles (prorated for smaller clubs) will be recognized at the convention. Mileage is the total of miles walked by all participating members. For those who do other cardio

workouts in a health club, ride bikes, etc., they will earn 2 miles for each 15 minutes of activity (except for walking) allowing them to participate as well.

- Clubs with the largest mileage **per participant** will receive special recognition.
- A final symbolic "walk to the convention" will be held during the convention.

The program will be widely publicized in HaShofar, CJ: Kolot Magazine, and in mailings to club and regional leaders.

Interested clubs or individuals should contact Past President Bob Braitman directly at:

bobbraitman@fjmc.org

In addition, as explained in the article about Torch Awards (see page 4 herein), there is a new Torch Award category involving Health and Wellness.

While winning the
**CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL
OF HONOR**
may be a stretch...

Your club can win a
**QUALITY CLUB
AWARD**

See the
APPLICATION
on the back page.



Convention 2009

Sneak Peak...

Where have the young men gone?

The inscription on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia quotes from the Torah, "You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants." [Lev. 25:9-10].

Today our teenagers arguably have more liberty than ever. Can we reconcile the liberty we give our children with concern for Jewish continuity? That question is at the heart of **Moving Traditions' Campaign for Jewish Boys.**

Moving Traditions is the extraordinary organization behind the groundbreaking program for teenage girls, **Rosh Hodesh, It's a Girl Thing!**

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Convention Sneak Peak, con't

The organization has now turned its attention to boys. *The Campaign for Jewish Boys* is a three-year action-research campaign to help the Jewish community better understand and engage pre-teen and teenage boys.

At the 2009 Convention, **Deborah Meyer**, Executive Director of Moving Traditions, will help us wrestle with the hot topic of engaging teens.

"In this day and age, adolescents drop out of Jewish Life. Boys drop out in even greater numbers than girls," says



Meyer. "If we really want to engage teens, we need to draw on Judaism to help them grapple with the issues they care about most. We need to be tuned into what they think and care about as they mature into men."

Moving Traditions was chosen for the 4th year as one of the "50 most inspiring and innovative organizations" in the Jewish community according to Slingshot 08/09. For more info go to: www.movingtraditions.org. Deborah Meyer will be at the **FJMC Biennial Convention Philadelphia Loews Hotel July 1 – 5th, 2009**. For further info: <http://convention.fjmc.org>



I'm Into Leather. Are You? FJMC's World Wide Wrap



On February 1, 2009, the 9th Annual World Wide Wrap will be held. The "Wrap" is an international program of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs that allows Jews from all over the world to join together to practice and learn about the mitzvah of tefillin.

I have to confess that I wasn't always into "leather" (the tefillin are made of leather). For most of my Jewish adult life, it was a tradition of other men that I viewed from afar. It wasn't until I was saying *Kaddish* for my mother in 2006, and attending morning *minyan* each morning, that I noticed I was the only man without the proper religious attire. So I searched around in numerous drawers to find my tefillin bag, grabbed a copy of the FJMC's video **The Ties That Bind** and placed it into my VCR (that dates me, since it is now available as a DVD on the FJMC website), and tried to relearn how to "wrap" the straps around my arm so that they wouldn't fall down 30 seconds after I had started to pray. It took me a little practice to determine the right degree of tightness. I learned that I shouldn't be so embarrassed, as I've seen other men who have been "*laying tefillin*" considerably longer than I, confronted with the same "fallen straps."

The World Wide wrap has spawned a number of related programs, the most interesting of which (in my humble opinion) is

the "Build A Pair" program. The "Build a Pair" program is a comprehensive and fun learning program to introduce 5th and 6th graders to the joy and mitzvah of tefillin in Jewish life. The kids explore the religious significance of tefillin, how they're constructed, and they practice putting them on ("laying tefillin"). Students write their Hebrew/Jewish names and the *SHEMA* (first line) to insert into pre-made wooden tefillin-like boxes. They decorate the boxes in any creative way they wish, allowing for personal expression. And they compete or cooperate in writing a "wRAP" song to sing at the Big Event.

For additional information, check out the FJMC's website for the "Wrap" page. On the "Build A Pair" page, you'll be able to see a video of one group of "builders" rapping their wRAP. And, early December is a good time to order your "Build A Pair" kits so that you'll have them to use in February.

Does Your Term of Office Expire This Spring?



If your term as club president expires this May or June, now is the time to take steps to nominate your successor. While dictators may wish to be "elected for life," a Men's Club President aspires to the most significant position.... being the Past President.

Of course, ideally, you should have had a successor in mind when you took over so that he could "learn the ropes," but not

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Term Expiring, con't

all Men's Clubs have that luxury. But it really is important that you get the new officers set up so that they can learn their jobs and hit the ground running.

Another reason to think about the new officers this far in advance is that shortly you will need to come up with a program schedule for the fall. Many synagogues do their room assignments for the entire following year in May and June, and you don't want the Men's Club to be left out. And it's important that the new officers have a hand in the program planning.

If your club's bylaws are anything like my club's, you will need to put a notice in the synagogue newsletter announcing the new slate of officers and specifying the date of elections. That slate needs to be submitted to the editor in March or April, depending on when your elections are held. So you need to appoint a nominating committee soon, and they need to have time to meet.

If your bylaws don't already specify who serves on the nominating committee, it's a good idea to get a couple of past club presidents, as well as a couple of younger guys who might know some younger men in the synagogue to get involved.

Presenting Probably Perfect Programming for the Polar Period

As you'll be receiving this issue in early December, if you don't have a program scheduled about Chanukah, you'll have precious little time to put one (or

more) together, but here are some ideas for the winter season.

• Chanukah & All Those

Shards A wonderful program for the younger men in your congregation and their young children, is to have children make a very special *Chanukah*. When my wife and I were in Israel in August 2007, we visited an archeological excavation which had unearthed thousands of shards (broken pieces of pottery) from the *Hasmonean* period, the period of Judah Maccabaeus and his brothers. Since most of the shards have no historical value (as determined by Israeli archeological authorities), we accepted the guide's offer, and I took a handful home. Later, I glued them onto a board, on which Chanukah candles sit. Viola! I have a *Chanukah* made of material from the period of the historical events of the holiday. Now, for your program, take some clay pots (if they are broken, even better), break them up into small pieces, have a rectangular base of wood which you glue them on, and there you have your Chanukah menorah. Add some stories, some chocolate gelt, and possibly a little history, and you've got a wonderful program.



• Profiles in Courage With January 19th being Martin Luther King Day, and January 20th the inauguration of President Obama, bring in someone to talk about how the election of our nation's first black president will change perceptions, and what this

means to the struggle for equality of all people. Or there may be someone in the synagogue or at the local college or university who can speak about historical figures who demonstrated courage that our current leadership might want to emulate. Or ask your Rabbi to suggest a black minister who he/she knows who might be willing to discuss how Obama's election may impact on Black/Jewish relationships.

• Tu B'Shevat February 9th is the New Year for Trees. If your synagogue or religious school doesn't have a *Tu B'Shevat* Seder, create one for Sunday, February 8th. The custom of holding a **Tu B'Shevat** seder dates back to the Kabbalists who lived in Israel in the 16th century. Just typing the words '*Tu B'Shevat* seder' into your browser search engine will provide a wealth of seder ideas. And, you can incorporate our partnership with JNF into the program by asking everyone to purchase a tree in Israel, or contribute towards purchasing of trees.

• Presidents and the Jews February is the month of the federal holiday of President's Day. If you're in a larger city, you might be able to find a university or college professor who could talk about Presidents and their relationship with Jews and the Jewish Community. Recently, historians revealed that Lyndon Johnson, while a young congressman in 1938 and 1939, arranged for visas to be



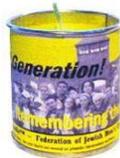
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Program Ideas, con't

supplied to Jews in Warsaw, and oversaw illegal immigration of hundreds of Jews through the port of Galveston, Texas. Then there is Harry Truman, and his relationship with Edward Jacobson, his former law partner. Jacobson urged Truman to meet with Chaim Weizmann, then president of the World Zionist Organization, and probably influenced Truman's decision to be the first nation to recognize Israel upon its creation.



• **Start Preparing for Yom HaShoah Day.** All right, it doesn't take place in the winter, but rather the spring. Yom HaShoah begins on the evening of April 20, 2009. But you'll need to start now, ordering your Yom HaShoah candles, since this kind of program is difficult to throw together at the last minute. Are any of your shul or club members survivors, or children of survivors? They can tell compelling and meaningful stories of their lives, or what it was like to live with someone who survived.



• **Purim Costume Ball**

This can be as simple or as elaborate as you want to make it and can even be turned into a big fundraiser if you have an honoree and a donor book. With Purim beginning on the evening of Monday, March 9, 2009, the Saturday evening prior can



make a wonderful program / costume party for adults of all ages. If you want to be sure of greater attendance, plan it with the Sisterhood. You can have a great time both planning and participating in such an event.

• **Super Bowl Party**

The most significant sports event of the year is always a way to get men, particularly younger men, to a Men's Club program. Depending on your synagogue's *kashrut* policy, a quick run to one of the warehouse marketers (Costco, Sam's Club, etc.) can provide you with sufficient beer and food to nosh on, or you can turn to local food purveyors for (vegetarian) pizza.



Torch Awards Adds New Categories

For those of you who are relatively new to the FJMC and Men's Club, one of the ways which you can distinguish your club as being an exemplary and excellent one.... is to win a Torch Award. Torch Awards are given for excellence in programming. And, whether your club has a relatively small membership, or a "cast of thousands," excellence isn't measured by the size of your club, but in the creativity and originality of your ideas.

This year, there are three new categories: **Men's Health Programs**, which include physical and mental health, and other fitness and wellness programs; **Shomrei Ha'arets Programs** are those programs

which involve environmental concerns; and a **Special Torch Award** is being offered to clubs that have a plan to install - or have already installed - a solar *ner tamid* in their shul.

These categories have been added to the traditional categories of **FJMC Programs**, including the World Wide Wrap, Hearing Men's Voices, Yom Hashoah Yellow Candle Remembrance Program, Keruv, Brotherhood Shabbat; **Club Administration**, including fundraising, publicity, membership enhancement, leadership training, and more; **Israel/Masorti Olami Programs**, including programs that spread understanding or raise funds for Israel or Masorti causes worldwide; **Non-FJMC Programs**, including social functions and social action programming, ranging from softball to feeding the homeless; **Youth Programming** for college age and younger, such as working with your local Koach, Hillel, USY, Hebrew school or Schechter school; and **Best Overall Activities**, reflecting a club's high standard of planning and implementation of a full year's activities as judged by the sum of the club's overall activities.

And, in an effort to stimulate creative programs, the gold award, the highest Torch Award that is given, will recognize not only excellence in programming, but innovative programming ideas.

For more detailed information about the Awards, download the Torch Award Guide at <http://torchaward.fjmc.info/>.

There you'll find a wealth of material describing club

Torch Awards, con't p.5

Torch Awards, con't programs which have won awards in the past. If you have further questions, contact your Regional President or the Torch Award Chairperson at:

TorchAwards@fjmc.org.



Always on the Lookout for
Interesting programs
FJMCAvantage@fjmc.org

FJMC Communications Overhaul - Web Site Redesign in Progress



“The times they are a changing” says the song. With the Internet playing a greater and greater role in the way people obtain information, the FJMC’s web site is in the process of undergoing a major redesign to make it easier to navigate and find important information.

Under the able stewardship of FJMC Board Member Scott Swirling, a website developer has been retained to do the actual work. Based on “sneak peeks,” the FJMC’s Advantage editor believes you’ll be well pleased. The first “release” is scheduled for late December. So, after you receive this Advantage in your hands, I suggest you go to www.fjmc.org, and see the work in progress.

And some of you may have noticed that the FJMC’s Torchlight has not been arriving

at your mailbox. The FJMC and the other Conservative/Masorti partners (Women’s League, United Synagogue, and the Rabbinical Assembly), have combined their resources to publish a joint magazine, “CJ” which should have been arriving in your mailbox this last year. The magazine gives considerably broader exposure to the groundbreaking programs of the FJMC, and the most recent issue has worthwhile articles from our FJMC leadership. If you haven’t checked it out yet or misplaced your copy, you can read the articles on the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism’s web site, www.uscj.org.

Ask Allan

Dear Allan:

My term as club president expires this June, and I can’t find a successor. What can I do?

- Not Wishing to be President for Life

Dear Not Wishing:

You have a couple of options. First, see if you can get co-presidents. People are more willing to step forward if they don’t have to shoulder the whole responsibility. I’ve also heard of a way of going with no real president at all. You have one vice president who runs the meetings, and that’s all he does. Another vice president plans the programming. That works as long as people carry out their responsibilities.

Another possible solution is to have a different president each month, but that really gets complex. You might also ask a past club president to take it again. You also might ask your rabbi or some elder statesman in the Men’s Club to step in to prevail on someone to help out.

Dear Allan:

It seems like our club should have more money in our treasury than it does. I know it’s difficult to believe, but I think our treasurer might be siphoning off some funds. What should we do?

- Frantic

Dear Frantic:

Unfortunately, this happens. Of course, it’s a very serious matter, not only because it is a crime (embezzlement), but it’s also undermining of the very charitable nature of the Men’s Club and congregation.

This is not something that you can handle by yourself. You should immediately share your suspicions with one other person whom you respect and trust. This could be a past club president, the synagogue’s Executive Director, or your rabbi.

There are a couple of safeguards you should institute right away if you’re not already doing them. First, you should require two signatures on all checks, and you should require receipts in advance before you sign checks. If the person you suspect is the one who is collecting cash, such as admissions to events, simply change the person doing that. If you’ve really nailed the guy, he not only needs to resign, but he must make restitution. And the Executive Director must be made aware of the situation at that point. After all, this is a misuse of both the congregation’s name and financial status that is involved.

BE A WINNER!!

If you have a specific Men’s Club question or problem, send it to FJMCAvantage@fjmc.org. The best letter or two will get to select a Free Book from the FJMC Collection.

Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs Quality Club Award Criteria

2008-2009

(For activity from June 1, 2008 until May 15, 2009)



BOLD indicates a required element.

International Level (4 are required and your club needs 1 of the other 5)

- 1. Sending a club member to the 2009 FJMC convention (other than congregational clergy) (NOTE: Must be registered by May 15, 2009)**
- 2. Registration for the World Wide Wrap**
- 3. Purchasing and distributing Yom Hashoah candles**
- 4. Having dues paid in full to the FJMC as of May 15, 2009, and not having any past due balances**
5. Having a membership list submitted since May 15, 2009.
6. Purchasing FJMC books or materials
7. Having a member as an elected regional or FJMC officer (i.e. not a member of a Board of Directors or Trustees)
8. Having a member (other than one in #7) actively serving on an FJMC committee
9. Having registered for a booth at the 2009 FJMC Convention Program Fair by May 15, 2009.

Regional and Club Levels (1 is required and your club needs 8 of the other 14)

- 1. Having a member attending an FJMC consultant-led regional club training OR a regional retreat (The January 2009 LDI and Keruv training will count for this element.)**
2. Having a member attending a regional honoree program, such as a man-of-the-year event, **OR** some other regional event that is not training
3. Holding a program to enhance Jewish observance (other than distributing candles or holding a Wrap) (Examples: Hebrew Literacy; Art of Jewish Living course; Torah study with the Rabbi; selling sukkah kits; Build-A-Pair Program.) This is meant to include some kind of hands-on activity and not simply a Sunday morning speaker on the matter.
4. Holding a Men's Club Shabbat
5. Holding a Hearing Men's Voices program or Keruv program (Examples: any program on men's health; discussion of father-son relationships, men's spiritual being, or men and their work. Keruv programs are eligible only if the Men's Club is directly involved.)
6. Holding a synagogue service project (Examples: ushering; printing a synagogue directory; a clean-up project around the synagogue; project to look through synagogue tallisim to pick out those that are worn and need to be retired)
7. Holding a community service project (Examples: delivering food to the needy; holding religious services at an assisted living home; collecting books and toys for an orphanage)
8. Holding a father-child program or youth support activity (Examples; father-child bowling or attending a pro sports game; youth art contest; Camp Ramah scholarships; program on safe driving)
9. Participating directly in activity on the international level to help Masorti Judaism (Examples: contributing mezuzot, FJMC books, prayer books, tallisim, tefillin, etc. to foreign congregations; corresponding with foreign synagogues to encourage their participation in the World Wide Wrap; contributing funds to Masorti synagogues or other institutions affiliated with the international Masorti/Conservative Movement)
10. Having someone in place as of May 1, 2009, to be the next club president (does not need to have the formal title of First Vice President, but a person must acknowledge his willingness to serve, and his name must be submitted to satisfy this element)
11. Regular activity to inform members of activities and/or meetings (Examples; club newsletter; group e-mail; telephone tree; postcards; regular program advertising in synagogue newsletter)
12. Has a written and adopted budget for the 2008-09 program year
13. Has a published calendar of activities for the 2008-09 program year
14. Participated in a joint program with another Men's Club (other than a regional activity) (can be with a Men's Club outside of the Conservative Movement) Name(s) of other Men's Clubs must be submitted to satisfy this element.
15. Provides a subsidy of at least \$100 for club members to attend the 2009 FJMC convention

THE EXTENT OF A CLUB'S ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE SENT TO BOB KAPLAN AT

consultrk@hotmail.com or

1483 Hastings Drive, London, Ontario, Canada N5X 1B2

so that it is received by June 1, 2009