



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KANSAS CITY EDUCATOR NAMED NEW REGIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR OF USY'S EMTZA REGION

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United Synagogue Youth (USY) is excited to announce the appointment of the new EMTZA Regional Youth Director, Ethan Helfand. A native of Leawood, KS, Helfand will engage, mentor, and inspire the 400 teens in EMTZA region, which encompasses the majority of the Midwestern United States including Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois (with the exception of Chicagoland), North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Montana, and Colorado. Helfand, a member of Congregation Ohev Shalom in Kansas City, brings his experience and passion for working with Jewish youth to his new role.

"I'm thrilled to be back home in EMTZA, the region that I grew up in and have always known as "home,"" said Helfand. "I'm proud to be able to show a whole new generation of Jews the amazing opportunities that USY can provide."

Helfand attended his first convention as Regional Youth Director last month, but he has been going to conventions since long before he could walk. "I attended my first USY convention at only a few months old, and it's fair to say that I've never really left," he said.

Helfand's father was a METNY (New York) Regional President and past EMTZA Youth Commissioner and both his brothers held prominent leadership in both region and international USY. "There really has never been a time where I wasn't connected to USY. Taking on this position feels like a natural transition, something I was meant to do," he said.

A former USYer himself Helfand held several chapter and regional leadership positions as a teen, including President of Ohev Shalom's USY chapter. He also traveled to Israel with USY in 2003 on USY Israel Pilgrimage.

"For close to 30 years, I have known no greater vehicle for changing our world than this organization," he said. "USY is truly the only organization where our teens are given the opportunity to lead and bring their ideas and initiatives to life."

In addition to time spent with the organization Helfand has extensive experience working with Jewish teens, as a past Director of Jewish Education for Herzl Camp in Wisconsin and staff for the American Jewish Society for Service, a summer program that links social justice to Jewish values.

He also holds a master's degree in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University and a B.A. in Judaic Studies from The George Washington University.

“The role of the Regional Youth Director is to partner with our kehillot to help inspire Jewish teens and instill in them a love for their Jewish identity and values,” said USCJ Director of Teen Learning Rabbi David Levy.

“Ethan is a perfect fit, with his long history of leadership in the Jewish community and proven dedication to empowering teens. We are excited to see the great work he will do with the next generation of Jewish leaders.”

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About United Synagogue Youth

USY is Conservative Judaism's premiere youth group, run by its parent organization, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. With over 350 local chapters, USY boasts a membership of thousands of teens throughout the United States and Canada.

For more than 60 years USY has taught the young Jews the values and skills they need to become exceptional leaders in their religious and secular communities. USY's focus on leadership, social action, and relationship building has produced successful alumni with a deep sense of pride in and love for their Jewish identity.

Through year round programming and domestic and international travel opportunities, USY provides meaningful, immersive Jewish experiences, helping teens integrate Jewish rituals and values into their everyday lives.

For more information visit www.usy.org.

About United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is a network of hundreds of North American congregations that are committed to a dynamic Judaism, which is learned and passionate, authentic and pluralistic, joyful and accessible, egalitarian or traditional.

It represents more than one million North American Jews. More information is available at www.uscj.org.