



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **United Synagogue Youth's 65<sup>th</sup> Annual International Convention in Baltimore to Focus on Empowering Teen Advocacy**

### **More than 700 Hundreds Teens Will Engage in Social Justice Projects for Local Community**

**New York, NY, December 7, 2015** – This December 27-31, more than 700 teenagers from United Synagogue Youth (USY) will gather in Baltimore, MD to celebrate, learn and give back at USY's 65<sup>th</sup> International Convention. A program of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), USY is America's largest Conservative Jewish youth group.

The theme of this year's convention is Think More. Do More. B'more. focusing on teen advocacy with education tracks picked by the USYers themselves, including sessions on combating anti-Semitism, political activism in US/Israel relations, LGBTQ issues and gender equality, race and poverty, mental health awareness and more.

"Our USYers are on their way onto the college campus and have made it clear that they want to arrive better prepared for the challenges that lie ahead," said Rabbi David Levy, Director of Teen Learning for USCJ. "They all have the potential to be great leaders in the Jewish community and beyond, and at this convention we hope to empower them to do so."

USY will partner with several organizations at the convention to educate and equip the teens to take action including the Anti-Defamation League, Sojourn, KESHET, AVODAH, U Mattr and AIPAC. Throughout, the teens will also hear from and be inspired by leading professionals in the field of social justice including Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel keynote speaker, American Jewish World Service President Dr. Ruth Messinger, renowned "Mitzvah Man" Danny Siegel, Center for Citizen Empowerment and Transformation CEO Sam Daley-Harris, and USY's 2015 Danny Siegel Changemaker-in-Residence and Cleveland social entrepreneur Matthew Fieldman.

In conjunction with local agencies, the entire convention body will participate in several hands-on social action projects including creating school supply kits, blanket making, food preparation, and compiling winter necessities packages for the homeless. Local Baltimore partners include the Weinberg Housing

And Resource Center, various other local shelters, Living Classrooms, several area hospitals, and more. In order to strengthen USY's partnership with other Jewish youth groups, these projects will be delivered to the Baltimore community by BBYO teens during their February 2016 convention.

The teens will also engage in Israel-related projects in honor of Ezra Schwartz, a former USYer who was recently killed by a terrorist attack in Israel. Schwartz died while delivering food to soldiers in Gush Etzion, so to honor his memory and commitment to Israel the teens will participate in a letter writing campaign for the Israel Defense Forces.

"In the wake of the violence earlier this year, we are pleased to bring hundreds of USYers and their optimism for the future to Baltimore this holiday season," said the USCJ CEO Rabbi Steven Wernick. "We are proud that our teens' enthusiasm for and dedication to *tikun olam* will make a lasting impact on the community."

In addition to social justice, the convention will bring together Jewish teens from across North America to celebrate, interact with, and spread their ruach (spirit) to the local community. The teens will explore Baltimore landmarks, including the inner harbor and the National Aquarium; get a taste of Israeli culture with musical guest Hatikva 6; and celebrate 65 years of USY conventions, an annual gathering designed to bring together a critical mass of teens to celebrate their Jewish identities.

This year's convention is sponsored by Beth Israel Congregation, Beth El of Montgomery County, The Associated, Butler Motor Coach, the Jewish Theological Seminary, William and Ellen Bresnick (opening session), Diane Schillit (Day of Service), Rabbi Jacob Blumenthal, Steven, Ariel, and Daniel Novick (Seaboard USY Alumni event), and Diane and Martin Newman (USY Danny Siegel Changemaker-in-Residence initiative).

### **About USY**

United Synagogue Youth (USY) is Conservative Judaism's premiere youth group, run by its parent organization, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. With more than 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. To learn more, visit [www.usy.org](http://www.usy.org).

### **About USCJ**

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is a community of North American kehillot (congregations) committed to a dynamic Judaism that is learned and passionate, authentic and pluralistic, joyful and accessible. USCJ creates the spiritual, intellectual, and managerial network that empowers our kehillot to fulfill their sacred mission and connects them with a common sense of community, shared mission and purpose. To learn more, visit [www.uscj.org](http://www.uscj.org).

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