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USCJ Announces USY Reorganization to Strengthen Its Member Congregations' Capacity for Teen Engagement

Double the Amount of Staff in the Field and Centralized Operations

New York, NY, September 13, 2016 – The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) announced today a reorganization of its youth movement, United Synagogue Youth (USY), to better achieve USY's mission of helping kehillot (sacred communities) empower Jewish youth to develop leadership skills, a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and a commitment to inspired Jewish living through meaningful and fun experiences rooted in authentic Jewish values.

“Teen engagement is a priority for USCJ and a keystone habit of any thriving congregation,” said Rabbi David Levy, Senior Director, Teen Learning. “The reorganization allows USY to better partner with our kehillot in order to engage teens in meaningful Jewish journeys, preparing them to make Jewish decisions in the real world.”

“For more than 60 years USY has engaged more than 150,000 teens,” said Rabbi Steven Wernick, USCJ CEO. “This reorganization will enable us to build upon the program's robust legacy as a leader in teen engagement and reach more teens with our transformative Jewish experiences.”

Guided by USY's mission and vision, a committee spent the past several months collecting feedback from more than 1,000 parents, chapter staff and current USYers to evaluate the organization's current strategy, business process and structural design. The committee was led by professional and lay leaders and included congregants, rabbis, teens, alumni and youth professionals.

Their work resulted in several changes designed to invigorate the organization, including doubling the number of field staff and centralizing operational functions. Specifically:

- Establishing Field Engagement Associates and Teen Engagement Interns across North America. This additional staff will enable USY to supplement congregations' capabilities and capacity to directly engage more teens locally providing compelling Jewish experiences

- Aligning regions and staff with USCJ districts to better engage local communities in a collaborative, passionate, and welcoming Jewish future
- Centralizing operations staff to coordinate logistics allowing field staff to focus on relationship building
- Establishing an education manager to develop turn-key programs for chapters/regions focused on shared educational themes that allow for in-depth “Continental Conversations” across the organization
- Continuing to assess USY’s programming and policies to make sure that they remain in alignment with our vision

These changes will roll out over the next 12 months as part of an implementation plan currently in development.

“USY lets teens make meaningful connections and inspires and empowers the next generation of passionate, committed Jewish leaders,” said Ethan Feuer, USY International President. “The changes will allow even more teens access to inspirational role models who can help us find our voices in the world.”

About USY

United Synagogue Youth (USY) is Conservative Judaism’s premiere youth group, run by its parent organization, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. 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.

About USCJ

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is a network of North American kehillot (sacred communities) 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 its 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.

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