



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **USY Implements Organizational Changes to Strengthen Capacity for Meaningful Teen Engagement**

**New York, NY, May 1, 2017**—Building on a 60 year legacy of instilling a commitment to inspired Jewish living in teens, United Synagogue Youth (USY), the youth movement of USCJ, has initiated several organizational changes to better support teen engagement on a local level in member synagogues. The changes include doubling field staff, hiring supervisory staff to oversee chapter relations, and districting regions to increase access to newly centralized educational and operational resources.

“We are excited to expand resources and team of Jewish educators across North America, who, through their passion and expertise, will enable us to reach a greater number of teens with USY’s transformative experiences,” said Rabbi David Levy, USCJ’s Senior Director, Teen Learning.

In March, USY promoted Maury Jacobs, formerly SWUSY (Southwest USY) Regional Youth Director, and Julie Marder, formerly CHUSY (Chicago USY) Regional Youth Director, to USY/Kadima Engagement Supervisors. In this capacity, they will develop training and resources to better support kehillot’s teen engagement activities.

Abby Kerbel, formerly Seaboard USY Assistant Regional Youth Director, was also promoted, to Teen Education and Leadership Outreach Manager, responsible for creating curricula and fostering cross-continental learning around issues important to teens. USY is also seeking field engagement associates and teen engagement interns who will be strategically located across North America with attention to geography and local participation numbers.

USY’s regions, though they will remain intact geographically, will be grouped into 11 larger areas better aligned with USCJ’s organizational structure. Each region will be overseen by a Regional Teen Engagement Director, who will work with USY/Kadima Field Engagement Associates and Teen Engagement Interns to support local chapters. Both the current regional structure and teen leadership boards will stay the same, while resources such as education curricula, will be realigned and redistributed to maximize engagement.

Finally the youth group will continue to update its programs and policies on a rolling basis in accordance with its mission, vision, and several key guiding principles including: joyously celebrating a dynamic Judaism; developing leadership; creating a safe space for teens committed

to inclusion and equality; introducing teens to meaningful Jewish living and engaging spiritual experiences; and emphasizing a commitment to Jewish learning, Israel, and tikun olam.

“We are confident that these structural improvements will help USY better deliver essential services to the Conservative Jewish community in alignment with USCJ’s mission of creating authentic, dynamic Jewish experiences,” said Rabbi Steven Wernick, USCJ CEO. “Our kehillot are the first touchpoint for teens to meaningfully engage with Jewish life, and we are invested in helping them, and the next generation of Jewry, thrive.”

USY began this reorganization process last summer to ensure that it continues to efficiently and effectively offer compelling experiences through a Jewish lens to prepare teens to make Jewish decisions in the real world. The structural changes now being put into place came about after months of collecting constituent feedback and evaluating current strategy, business procedures, and structural design.

This revealed both a desire and need to improve communication and collaboration between USY’s chapters and regions. Constituents felt their chapters were under supported and that the lack of strong, qualified adult advisors negatively impacted teens’ interest and investment.

“USY impacts hundreds of teens across North America each year, in large part due to the youth professionals who serve as teachers, mentors, and role models on our Jewish journeys,” said Noah Lee, USY 2017 International President. “They inspire in us a love for Judaism and a sense of belonging to the Jewish people.”

### **About USY**

United Synagogue Youth is Conservative Judaism’s premiere North American youth group, run by its parent organization, USCJ. For more than 60 years USY has empowered youth to develop friendships, leadership skills, a sense of belonging to the Jewish People, and a commitment to inspired Jewish living through meaningful and fun experiences rooted in Conservative Judaism’s approach to learning, spiritual expression, and social responsibility. To learn more, visit [www.usy.org](http://www.usy.org).

### **About USCJ**

USCJ 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](http://www.uscj.org).

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