



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **USY Launches Major Service-Learning Initiative *The “Danny Siegel Changemaker-in-Residence” Program Will Inspire Teens to See Themselves as Change Agents***

MAY 4, 2014 – United Synagogue Youth is launching a new program to bolster teens’ Jewish identity and their commitment to social justice by providing opportunities to meet and work with people in the forefront of social action, social entrepreneurship, and tikun olam (Hebrew for “repairing the world”). The program is funded by a generous gift from Dianne and Martin Newman of Providence, Rhode Island in memory of their parents, Sylvia and Leonard Zimet and Lillian and Morris Newman.

Called the “USY Danny Siegel Changemaker-in-Residence,” the program will teach teens the key concepts of successful, sustainable social action, give them hands-on experience, and inspire them to see themselves as change agents in the Jewish community and the world at large.

The Newmans chose to name the program for Danny Siegel because of his tremendous impact in inspiring Jewish teens to work to improve the world. A past USY International President, poet, author and lecturer, Danny has shared his passion for “doing good” with generations of USYers, and his name has become synonymous with tikun olam in USY and around the world.

“Our family has benefited tremendously both from USY and from Danny Siegel’s ability to inspire teens to do good,” said Dianne Newman. “This gift will help strengthen USY programming, honor Danny, and give more teens the chance to work with inspiring role models like him.”

The changemaker program will launch in the summer of 2014. A different changemaker will be selected each year based on their accomplishments in social action and passion for working with teens. The individual chosen will spend time with USY’s immersive

summer trips, including USY on Wheels and Mission: Mitzvah, and meet with teens throughout the year at various regional and North American events, including the USY International Convention in December, which brings together some 1,000 people for learning, celebration and social action.

The inaugural Changemaker-in-Residence will be Jessica Abo, a reporter and social entrepreneur who spent her teen years in USY and is a passionate believer in the program's impact. Abo, a self-described "journalist by day, social entrepreneur by choice," dazzled USYers at the group's 2013 International Convention, sharing moving vignettes about striving to be a changemaker all her life. (Abo can also be seen at your local multiplex, appearing in the just-released Spider-Man 2.)

Abo is thrilled to inaugurate the program. "Words cannot express how excited I am to be USY's first Danny Siegel Changemaker-in-Residence," she said. "I can't wait to spend time with the 'Wheelniks' on their USY on Wheels and Mission: Mitzvah buses, and to attend USY International Convention in Atlanta next December. From regional conventions to summer encampments, I know this upcoming year is going to be an unforgettable experience."

Social action has long been a major component of USY, and has grown in response to teens' desire to be involved in meaningful service activities. "Tikun olam is such a powerful way to engage teens," said Rabbi David Levy, Director of Teen Learning at United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. "The changemaker initiative will allow us to expand and strengthen our social action activities and create new ways to build relationships with teens and connect them to Judaism."

### ***About United Synagogue Youth***

USY, the teen engagement program of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, is comprised of 17 regions with over 350 local chapters. Along with its pre-teen affiliate, it includes 13,000 members throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit [www.usy.org](http://www.usy.org).

### ***About the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism***

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).