



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USY 67th Annual International Convention in Chicago to Focus on Teens as Agents of Societal Change

GRAMMY-NOMINATED ARTIST MATISYAHU TO PERFORM AT CONVENTION

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New York, NY, December 14, 2017 – This December 24-28, nearly 1,000 Jewish teenagers, educators, staff, and alumni will gather in Chicago, IL at USY, USCJ's youth movement, 67th International Convention.

The largest gathering of Conservative and Masorti Jewish teens, the convention will bring together young adults from across the globe to experience and give back to the local Chicago community, engage in interactive learning, gain leadership skills, and build a strong Jewish future.

Over five days, the teens will participate in programming around the convention theme, *D'ror Yikra: The Road to Freedom*, be treated to a private performance from Grammy-nominated artist and internationally recognized performer Matisyahu, and hear from keynote speakers Rabbi Michael Siegel, Senior Rabbi of Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago and Pastor Chris Harris of Bright Star Church in Chicago.

"We want to empower our teens to be active leaders in their communities," said Leslie Lichter, Chief Innovation and Implementation Officer, USCJ. "The convention will be a gathering place of ideas from top educators and professionals that we hope will inspire USYers to be the voice for change in today's world."

Reflecting on the current political and cultural landscape, teens will examine the concept of freedom through interactive educational workshops focusing on hot topics at home and abroad including religious freedom in Israel, freedom of expression, human rights, current refugee crises, and how sociopolitical factors affect choice.

USY will partner with several organizations to educate and equip teens to be a voice for change including StandWithUs, AIPAC, Repair the World, HIAS, the iCenter, Jewish Child & Family Services, Anshe Emet Synagogue, and the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

Translating learning into action, teens will then participate in hands-on social action projects, volunteering at more than 30 local organizations around the Chicagoland area on Christmas Day including FCHN Soup Kitchen, The Ark, Lincoln Park Community Shelter, the Anixter Center, and H.O.M.E. The teens will also take part in ongoing charitable activities over the course of the convention, collecting donations for local Chicago agencies including Tree Hugs, Cradles to Crayons, and Open Books.

“We are utilizing the potential that hundreds of teens collectively possess to make change,” said Noah Lee, USY International President 2017. “We are going into the Chicago community on Christmas because we understand the importance of this day to many. I hope to see many local people healthier, safer, and better fed on Christmas because of USY's efforts.”

In addition to experiential and educational programming, the convention is a celebration of the culmination of the year, fueled by the *ruach* (spirit) of the USYers. The teens will spread joy to the local area, exploring downtown Chicago including Navy Pier and Millennium Park.

The convention is sponsored by Vivian and Jeff Saper, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Keshet, Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation, ZBT, AEPi, Butler Motor, the Jewish Youth Directors Association, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El Highland Park, IL, NOAM Olami, AEPI, Hillel, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

A detailed convention schedule and further program information are available upon request.

About USY

USY is USCJ's youth movement for Conservative Jewish teens across North America. For more than 60 years, USY has taught young Jews the values and skills they need to become exceptional leaders in their religious and secular communities. USY empowers 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. Through year round programming and

USY USCJ's youth movement

domestic and international travel opportunities, USY inspires in teens a deep sense of pride in and love for their Jewish identity. To learn more, visit www.usy.org.

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