HELP, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PROGRAMS FOR JEWISH ELDERS

An Action Guide for Synagogues

AMY L. SALES, PH.D.
SHIRA KANDEL

COHEN CENTER FOR MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

CONCEIVED AND SPONSORED BY
THE GROTTA FOUNDATION FOR SENIOR CARE
The Grotta Foundation for Senior Care created Synagogue HOPE in the belief that synagogues, as the locus for mutual support, spiritual affirmation, Jewish education, and life-cycle celebration could assume a unique role in strengthening the lives of the Jewish elderly. At the same time, the Foundation is convinced that congregations that create opportunities for older adults to participate in the life of their synagogues can become the beneficiaries of the rich and varied resources which elders bring to communities that value their involvement.

Over the past several decades, however, the orientation and resources of many synagogues have been absorbed with the needs of young families, their children, and the quest for Jewish continuity. As a result, Jewish elders often discover themselves to be at the periphery of their congregations’ missions, priorities, and programming. Through Synagogue HOPE, the Grotta Foundation seeks to encourage and assist congregations in making the commitment to reach out to Jewish seniors and to address their multifaceted issues and interests.

This landmark publication, developed so ably by Dr. Amy L. Sales at Brandeis University’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, offers guidance and concrete models of synagogue-based programming for older adults which can be adapted by individual congregations. The Grotta Foundation is pleased to make Help, Opportunities, and Programs for Jewish Elders: An Action Guide for Synagogues available to interested synagogues, and looks forward to learning of their progress, as they begin to create senior programming tailored to the needs of their congregational community. We welcome your questions, comments, inspiration, and partnership towards the success of this endeavor.

Susan R. Friedman

Executive Director
The Grotta Foundation for Senior Care was created in 1993 from the sale of The Grotta Center, a non-profit nursing home and rehabilitation center with a 75-year history of compassionate care for the elderly. As a philanthropic foundation, Grotta has maintained its long tradition of community involvement and its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families. Although nonsectarian in its funding, the Grotta Foundation has a particular interest in the welfare of the Jewish elderly, drawn from its roots in the MetroWest Jewish community. Synagogue HOPE was born out of this special interest and the Foundation’s conviction that community-based synagogues are in a unique position to reach out and address the needs of the Jewish elderly.

The Foundation’s own research indicated that neither the Jewish congregational field nor the aging services network has adequately considered this important potential role for synagogues, or implemented strategies to engage congregations as resources in the continuum of care for older people. As a result the Foundation decided not only to develop a local pilot program for synagogues, but also to fund the national survey of synagogue-based programming for seniors from which this excellent publication is drawn.

Grotta’s experience with its five pilot congregations, funded through Synagogue HOPE, has been most heartening. Supported by the fine technical assistance work of the Jewish Community Center of MetroWest, and strengthened by the tangible spirit of sharing and cooperation among participating synagogues, the project has flourished. The Foundation anticipates that the valuable experience gleaned from this project and the comprehensive resources offered by the action guide will encourage other congregations to join us in this most worthy effort. We look forward to working with other Jewish funders in creating partnerships that establish meaningful roles for synagogues in improving the quality of life for Jewish elders.

Steven Bernstein
President

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREFACE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 1: ASSESSING NEEDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Adult Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Questions from Senior Needs Assessment Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 2: PREPARING CAREGIVERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers – Volunteer Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Programs for Preparing Caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Web Sites for Caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 3: MAKING THE SYNAGOGUE ACCESSIBLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting the Homebound to the Synagogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Ways to Make the Synagogue Accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 4: EZRA: ASSISTING WITH DAILY LIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosher Congregate Meal Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahavath Achim Day Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly Visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder Helpers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 5: LIMUD: EXERCISING THE MIND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torah Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Beth Shalom Computer Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Computer Books and Web Sites of Special Interest to Seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Course in the Synagogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventures in Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 6: KEHILLAH: BUILDING COMMUNITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors Keep in Touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of 101 Ideas for Single-Event Social Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Films of Interest to Jewish Seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Friends: An Intergenerational Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sampler of Intergenerational Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 7: NESHAMA: EXPANDING THE SPIRIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av/Ein Eltza: Marking the Passage to Older Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emanu Elders Retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH 8: HAGIGAH: CELEBRATING OUR ELDERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Israel 75th Anniversary Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Whose Lives Span the Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: Synagogue HOPE Grant Recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: A Sampler of Resources on Older Adults and Aging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

"Dishonor not the old; we shall all be numbered among them."* (Apocrypha: Ben Sira, 8.6)

In the year 2000, one-fifth of the Jewish population in the United States will be over 60 years old. In the next ten years, the ranks of the over-60 will swell as the Baby Boomers begin to reach this age. By 2010, one out of every four Jews in America will be an "older adult." Moreover, with increased longevity, many of us are likely to have three decades of old age. Numbers alone should motivate synagogues to assess their programs and services for older adults and to plan for the future. Synagogues cannot afford to disregard the old. As the religious center of Jewish life, they must rise to the challenges of reaching out to Jewish elders and engaging them in the life of the congregation.

The Unique Role of the Synagogue in Serving Older Adults

Local, regional, and national government and private agencies provide a social service network that offers a range of services for older adults in the United States. In addition, the American Jewish community has a system of care for the elderly that includes Jewish Family Services, Jewish community centers, Jewish community housing, homes for the aged, and other agencies. The synagogue—as a house of study, a house of prayer, and a communal meeting place—has a unique role to play in the network of older adults services.

The synagogue, in its role as transmitter of Jewish values, has the obligation and potential to engage its members in voluntarism.

Jewish tradition teaches that "length of days" is a reward for observing the mitzvot (commandments), and that respect is therefore due those who achieve old age. The synagogue, as the institution that conveys Jewish values, has a unique opportunity to teach its members about their obligation toward the elderly and give them opportunities to engage in gitudin haoahim (acts of loving kindness) toward the elders in the community. Volunteering with the frail elderly gives congregants an opportunity to perform the mitzvot of caring for the sick and those in need. It can enrich their lives by bringing them in contact with those who have lived long and full lives. Congregational volunteers often experience their work with the elderly as a spiritual task.1

The synagogue is a place where older adults can assume volunteer responsibilities and leadership positions.

Jewish tradition associates wisdom with age and it teaches that the elderly have a great deal to offer the community. Older adults can be leaders and mentors. They can be volunteers, with the time, experience, and wisdom needed to help others. In exchange, their volunteer and leadership efforts can bring them social status and recognition. Contributing to the congregation and the community can elevate their sense of usefulness and enhance their self-esteem.

The synagogue is a bet midrash—a house of study for older adults.

The Shalhan Aruch (codex of Jewish law) states that the duty to study Torah is incumbent on the rich and the poor, on the healthy and on invalids, on the young and on the very old (Tehil De'ul, 46:3). Torah study is meant to be a lifelong endeavor. Older adults often find great meaning in Jewish study as they confront the complex moral, ethical, and theological questions that emerge in the discussion of Jewish texts. Some who never had a connection to biblical Judaism discover their attachment to the story of the Jewish people.

The synagogue is a bet knesset—a meeting place for Jewish seniors.

The synagogue can offer older adults a sense of community. Many Jewish seniors feel especially comfortable in a Jewish environment with others who share their religious practices and values. Participation in the life of the congregation overcomes the loneliness that the elderly often experience. It connects them with people of all generations and puts them in touch with the wider Jewish community.

For longtime members, the synagogue offers a stable social environment—a place they have known for many years. These elders generally experience the congregation as a communal extended family. They have marked the major passages of their lives in the synagogue surrounded by other members of the congregation—from their naming, bar/bat mitzvah, and wedding to the same life-cycle events for their own children. This familiarity can be comforting to older adults, especially those who experience significant life changes (e.g., moving into a retirement community) or losses (e.g., death of loved ones).

The synagogue is a bet nefillah—a house of prayer for Jews of all ages.

The synagogue can help people lead Jewish lives through the decades of their older adulthood. In Judaism there is a clear beginning point to one's obligation to adhere to Jewish law (the age of bar/bat mitzvah). There is, however, no corresponding endpoint. Membership in the Jewish community does not expire at age 60. Jews are to observe the mitzvot to the best of their abilities throughout their older years. The elderly who perform the mitzvot, whether in the synagogue or in the nursing home, may feel a greater sense of dignity, self-worth, and connection to the Jewish people.2

Jewish ritual can be a connection to the past. Jewish liturgy resides deep in the identity of some elderly Jews and manages to strike a responsive chord even in those with memory impairment. Jewish ritual and the celebration of the Jewish holidays can help older adults find meaning in life. Jewish observance also structures time, giving shape to the day, the week, the month, and the year. Some older adults say that the one thing they have is plenty of time. Judaism gives time meaning.

Judaism has a great deal to say about the purpose of our lives and the values that should guide us through every stage. The synagogue, as a place of prayer and spirituality, can help the elderly gain understanding and appreciation of their life's journey.
Congregations that owe much to their elder members now have the opportunity to repay them for all that they have done for the synagogue and the community.

Senior members are often the people who built the synagogue. Some of them grew up in the synagogue, married, and raised their own families there. They contributed to the synagogue for many years, and sat on its committees and boards. When a synagogue celebrates its 50th, 75th, or 100th anniversary, it may discover, in a particularly poignant way, the extent to which its elders embody the history of the congregation and carry the institutional memory. In exchange for all that they have given, the synagogue should strive to maintain its older members' connection to the congregation, and provide them with the programs and services they need at this stage of their lives.

Synagogues often give priority to the education of children and life-cycle events for young families—the future of the congregation. But they must also focus their attention on the elders, those who represent the past and have much to offer in the present.

Method

Help, Opportunities, and Programs for Jewish Elders is an action guide for congregations that want to initiate or expand their older adult programming. The programs described on these pages were identified through an extensive national search that included a survey sent to 1,500 synagogues, postings on relevant listserves and bulletin boards on the Internet, perusals of congregational Web sites, and networking with synagogue and movement professionals, foundation executives, academics, and representatives of interfaith groups, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and others involved in aging services. These contacts were followed by 75 interviews that generated the information presented herein.

Lessons from the Field

A study of successful programs provides valuable lessons for synagogues that want to develop their older adult services.

Successful programs assess the needs of their senior population and they involve the elders in program planning.

Many of the synagogues in this action guide went through a planning phase before initiating their programs. They conducted needs assessment studies to find out from the seniors what programs and services would best suit their interests and needs. They included older adults on their planning committees to ensure that their ideas were incorporated into the design of the program. They solicited and used input from their elder members.

Successful programs respond to the heterogeneity of the older adult population.

The older adult population is comprised of the so-called young-old (generally ages 65 to 74), middle-old (ages 75 to 84), and oldest-old (85 years of age and older). Within these groups there are well elderly, elderly who provide care giving to others, homebound frail elderly, and those residing in nursing homes.

Each has a different set of needs. There are, as well, older Jews with special needs: Holocaust survivors, Jews from the former Soviet Union, the poor, those suffering from Alzheimer's, and those with marginal incomes.

Synagogues must first find out who comprises the senior population in their communities and then determine how best to reach and serve them. Several of the synagogues represented in this action guide have been able to develop two different aspects to their work with older adults: programs for active seniors and care-giving services for the frail elderly.

Successful programs offer diverse activities to draw seniors into the synagogue.

Synagogues that have created vibrant older adult communities offer a number of educational programs, opportunities for Jewish study, recreational, cultural, and social programs, opportunities for volunteerism, and special worship services and retreats that address the spiritual needs of older adults. The variety of programs draws in large numbers of participants of diverse backgrounds and interests.

Successful programs respond to new definitions of older adulthood.

Moses started his leadership career at age 80. Maimonides wrote ten books on the theory and practice of medicine during his 60s. Golda Metz was 71 when she became Israel's fourth Prime Minister. These Jewish heroes are models for today's older adults. Most people past the age of 60 are educated, vigorous, healthy, mentally alert, and young in outlook. They do not consider themselves "senior citizen" and they will not sit around the Golden Age Club playing bridge. Views of old age will continue to evolve as the children of the 60s turn 60. Successful programs engage their active seniors in ways commensurate with their high levels of education and sophistication. They give them opportunities to use their skills, to have new experiences, and to learn new things.

Synagogues with successful seniors programs ensure that their building and their activities are accessible to older adults.

The Shulchan Aruch (code of Jewish law) states that the aged are to be placed in the front row of the synagogue, facing the congregation (Orach Chayim, 150:5). Not only is this a place of honor, but it also ensures that those whose hearing or vision are failing will be able to follow the service. Accessible synagogues make certain that people can get to the synagogue and that once there they can take advantage of what the synagogue has to offer. Accessibility includes discounted memberships, low program fees, transportation, handicapped access, resources for those with hearing and visual impairment, programs to connect the homebound
to the synagogue, and sensitivity to the special needs of seniors.

Successful programs have funding that assures their continuation.

The synagogues represented in Help, Opportunities, and Programs for Jewish Elders have found numerous ways to support their older adult programs: grants from private foundations, partnerships with the Jewish federation or other agencies, sponsorships by family members or members of the congregation, and various fundraising activities. They have also managed to minimize costs through use of volunteers, in-kind donations, pro bono services from local professionals, and free training and materials from non-profit community organizations. Importantly, most of these programs also receive support from the operating budget of the congregation. This support demonstrates, in real terms, the congregation's commitment to the elderly.

Successful programs have strong leadership.

Successful programs are often spearheaded by the rabbi or other respected synagogue professional. Several programs described herein began with a High Holiday sermon on the obligation to care for the elderly, the values of volunteering, or intergenerational relations. Rabbis who support programming for older adults educate their congregations about their obligations toward the elderly, motivate volunteerism, and provide a Jewish framework for understanding older adulthood, aging, and end-of-life issues.

Successful programs do not rest with a single individual but rather have active committees of volunteers and staff. They have strong leadership—whether professional or volunteer—committed to the program, creative and knowledgeable, and skilled in working with an older constituency. In some instances, a leader from the older adult program also sits on the synagogue board where s/he is able to advocate for the older members of the congregation. A few synagogues, using the model of the youth director, have hired a director of older adult services. This person is a professional whose time is devoted to working with volunteers to build the seniors program. Finally, successful programs involve the young-old who bring leadership and energy to programs targeted to the oldest-old.

Successful programs build over time.

Successful programs allow time for development and growth. For example, the action guide describes a program that began with activities two days a week and then expanded to three days, a program that began with 10 people and then expanded to 20, and a program that began with one educational class then expanded to a selection of courses. All of these programs took at least a year to evolve.

Congregations with successful programs look for links between what they are currently doing and future opportunity. They consider ways to expand a meal delivery program into a friendly visiting program, a social club into a program of Jewish studies, or a bikkur holim (visiting the sick) program into a program to connect the homebound to the synagogue.

Once synagogues have developed a successful program for their older members, they may be ready to develop collaborations with other synagogues or agencies in the community.

Collaboration may refer to: resource sharing, joint training of volunteers or professionals, use of each others' facilities, joint programming, central intake for elder services, and other coordinated efforts. Collaborations can take many forms. For example, synagogues within a community might specialize in the services they offer. One synagogue might assume responsibility for kosher meal services, another for visiting the elderly in nursing homes, and still another for assistance to the homebound elderly. Together, the three synagogues can provide more volunteer services to the elderly than any one could provide on its own.

Collaborations are a challenge. Turfism, misunderstandings, and inadequate communications establish barriers in many communities that are difficult to overcome. Cooperative ventures require all parties to seek ways to complement each others' efforts rather than to compete with them. All involved need to focus on their common goal—the delivery of quality programs and services to the older adults in the community.

Planning for Older Adult Services

Implementation or expansion of programs and services for older adults in the synagogue should proceed from planning to implementation to evaluation and follow-up. 9

1. Build a strong, functional planning group.

Make certain there is appropriate professional staff to guide the work, a committee chair who can provide effective leadership, and a strong lay planning committee that includes older adults. Make certain the planning group is connected to the power structure of the congregation. Successful programs usually have the support of the rabbi and/or an influential advocate on the synagogue board.

2. Develop a profile of the older adults in your congregation.

Use the synagogue's membership database to assess how many people in each decade of life belong to the congregation. Note where they live (by zip code and by type of residence), how long they have been members, their family status, occupation, and roles they have played in the congregation. Make calls to nursing homes and assisted living residences to find out how many Jewish elderly live there. Work with the rabbi and others to ensure that you have a complete list of the older adults in your congregation.
3. Look at the programs and services currently offered by your congregation.
Find out how older adults currently use the synagogue. Do they come to worship services? to Sisterhood events? to Torah study classes? You may find that, although there is no designated seniors program, the elderly are served and included in a variety of ways. If there is a designed program for older adults, look at how often activities are offered, attendance, and program content.

4. Find out about other resources in the community.
Research what organizations in your community offer by way of older adult services. Contact Jewish Family Services, the Jewish community center, assisted living complexes, and so on. Where are the other members of your congregation getting their social, volunteering, leadership, educational, and religious needs met? With what agencies or organizations might your synagogue form partnerships? Find out what is going on in your community for Jewish older adults and consider how the congregation fits into the larger picture.

5. Conduct a needs assessment of your older adult population.
Ascertain the needs and interests of the seniors in your congregation. Ask about the kinds of programs they would like to attend in the synagogue and the kinds of assistance they need. Let them know that you are interested in their views and want them to have a hand in determining the direction of the synagogue’s older adult program.

6. Use the results of the needs assessment to define your priorities.
Priorities should be determined by: your constituents, their needs and interests, community resources, and the congregation’s capacity to undertake a particular project.

7. Plan for implementation.
Planning entails:
• specifying the target audience (young retirees, frail elderly, widows, elderly immigrants, etc.)
• establishing specific, measurable goals (e.g., the number of volunteers you want to recruit to your volunteer program and the number of service hours to be provided each month)
• determining space, facilities, and materials needed for the program
• assigning human resources (leaders, volunteers, staff, and professionals needed to run the program)
• setting a budget
• creating a public relations plan
Plans should also include ways to make the program accessible to older participants. Consider the time of day the program is offered, transportation,

assistance needed in the synagogue building, special materials needed (e.g., large print readings), and so on.

8. Raise funds for the program.
Determine start-up costs, potential revenues from program fees, and the amount needed to sustain the program over time. Look at a variety of sources for program support. Establish a line item in the synagogue budget to support older adult programming.

9. Get the word out.
Inform the public about the program through announcements from the bimah, flyers in the synagogue lobby, posters, announcements in the synagogue bulletin and program guide, advertisements in the local Anglo-Jewish press, and so on. Successful programs usually report that the best form of advertisement is word of mouth.

10. Build the program.
Once the program has been implemented, you will be able to enhance and expand it. Solicit feedback from participants, either informally or through surveys or telephone interviews. Use their feedback to improve the current program and to develop new areas. Encourage them to use word of mouth to help grow the program.
Using the Action Guide

Help, Opportunities, and Programs for Jewish Seniors presents program models in each of the following areas:

- Needs assessment
- Volunteer training
- Synagogue accessibility
- Care giving and assistance with daily life
- Educational programs
- Social programs
- Religious/spiritual programs
- Programs that celebrate the elders of the congregation

Each section includes sample programs with detailed information on participants, schedule, space and facilities, program activities, program accessibility, human resources, program costs, and publicity. At the end of each program there is a replication advice for synagogues that want to use this program idea.

The action guide is a starting point. It is intended to motivate congregations to increase their services for older adults and to stimulate creativity among program planners. The key concept in this regard is adapt, not adopt. Your synagogue is a unique place given its geographic location, population, size, facilities, resources, and leadership. It has its own culture and history and a particular role it plays in the community. You will need to consider how a program idea should be modified to fit the particulars of your congregation.

It is said that the prosperity of a society can be judged by the way in which it treats its elderly. We hope this volume will help synagogues enhance and expand the work they do with older adults so that they may enjoy the riches that come to congregations that respect and care for their elders.

Assessing Needs

Needs assessment is a logical first step in developing programs and services for seniors. Needs assessment clarifies which programs to institute, which to expand, and how to modify existing programs and services to better meet the needs of older adults.

A needs assessment serves several purposes:

- It tells the senior members that their opinions are important. It gives them an opportunity to express their views and to make known their needs and preferences.
- It raises awareness within the congregation—and among the seniors themselves—of the possibilities for meaningful programs for this age group.
- It provides the information that programmers need to make important decisions about the allocation of limited material and human resources.
- It helps those responsible for the seniors program to advocate for increased or improved services for older adults within the congregation.

Several of the programs presented in this guide emerged from needs assessment studies. Some of these were formal studies. The congregation received technical assistance from professional researchers, developed instruments for gathering information, and collected data with surveys and focus groups. Others used a semi-formal method. They created questionnaires with lists of possible programs and services, and asked respondents to check the ones of greatest interest to them. Still others were quite informal. Leaders of the seniors program asked those who came to events what else they would like in the future. Regardless of the level of formality or technical sophistication, these approaches share a common element: They all asked the seniors for their opinions.

4 The Jewish Community Center MetroWest coordinated technical assistance to the synagogues that were grantees of the Grotta Foundation's Synagogue HOPE project. For more information on their training program contact Tracy Horowitz, Director of Older Adult Services. Tel: 973-736-3200
Lessons from Successful Needs Assessment

1. Successful needs assessments involve key "stakeholders" in designing the study and in considering how to use the results. Stakeholders include synagogue staff, volunteer leaders, and the seniors themselves—anyone with an interest in the well-being and involvement of the congregation's older members.

2. Successful studies ask questions that give staff and volunteer leaders the information they need to make programming decisions. The needs assessment is not an idle exercise but rather is designed to provide information that is pertinent and useful to programmers.

3. Successful needs assessment studies make certain to get responses from a large percentage of the senior members and to listen to diverse people. They understand that older adults are not a homogenous group and that not all programs are suitable for everyone. They seek to understand the diversity of interests and needs among older adults.

4. Successful studies are conducted in a timely manner. Information is gathered and analyzed without delay so that answers to questions asked today can inform next season's programming.

5. Successful studies use the information they generate. Surveys are tabulated and focus groups are analyzed. The data do not sit in a file cabinet but are shared with those who can help build a strong and vibrant program for the congregation's older members.

Senior Adult Survey

Main Line Reform Temple is a large suburban congregation of some 1,200 families. Although the synagogue offered an array of programs, it had none geared specifically to older adults. An analysis of the congregation's database revealed that one-third of the members were in their mid-fifties or older. The cantor was aware that people who were once familiar faces around the synagogue were no longer coming to programs or worship services. Yet she had no idea why this group was less involved, what their interests were, and whether or not the synagogue was meeting their needs. At the same time, the congregation was indebted to this group for they were the generation that had built the synagogue and had remained longtime contributors.

The only way to find out what the congregation could do for this group was to ask. The method chosen was the Senior Adult Survey.

Senior Adult Survey

Target Group: The Senior Adult Survey was sent to all members of the congregation who were at least 55 years old.

Program Description: With the professional guidance of the cantor, a taskforce was convened to determine how the synagogue could program more effectively for its older adults. The taskforce assisted in the design of the Senior Adult Survey. They examined the results of the survey and used them to establish an extensive program for seniors.

Program Goals: The survey was conducted to ascertain how the synagogue could best meet the needs of its older members. It was designed as a communications tool that would give every senior in the congregation the opportunity to express his or her views.

Main Line Reform Temple Beth Elohim
410 Montgomery Avenue
 Wynnewood, PA 29096-1399
 Tel: 610-649-7800
Participants
The survey was sent to all adult members of the congregation who were 55 years of age or older. Husbands and wives each received individual copies. Of the 600 questionnaires mailed out, 350 were returned. Respondents came equally from men and women. Most of the respondents were between 60 and 80 years old.

Developing the Questionnaire
The cantor drew up a first draft of the survey.1
- The draft was pilot tested with a group of seniors at the synagogue. The pilot test revealed that the instrument was too long and contained redundant items.
- The congregation appointed a Taskforce on Senior Adults, comprised of older adult members. The taskforce was charged with overseeing the survey and the subsequent implementation of a seniors program.
- Working with the cantor, the taskforce shortened the questionnaire, took out redundant or confusing items, and eliminated items they felt could make respondents uncomfortable (e.g., questions on income or work status).

The final version of the Senior Adult Survey was three pages, concise and focused.

Questionnaire Contents
The questionnaire was sent with a cover letter signed by the rabbi. The letter acknowledged the role that seniors had played in the congregation and encouraged them to fill out the survey.

The first page of the survey offered simple instructions to respondents. They were told to try to answer all of the questions to the best of their ability and to return the completed survey in the enclosed envelope.

Survey items included the following:
- Demographics: sex, age, marital status, and living situation (live alone, with spouse or companion, in an assisted living situation, with children, or other)
- Transportation: form of transportation generally used (own car, public transportation, taxi cabs, friends, etc.)
- Preferred time for program
- Preferred program length: single programs versus ongoing for several weeks or months
- Checklist of activities: which religious, educational, and social activities most interest the respondent
- Checklist of needs: type of caretaking or assistance respondent needs (e.g., hospital visits, meals for homebound, transportation)

Checkslists are preferable to open-ended questions (such as "What do you want?") because people often cannot articulate unmet needs. Checklists are

based on current offerings in the synagogue, programs on the drawing board, or other programs that the congregation could reasonably implement.

Surveys of seniors in other synagogues have also asked:
- Whether or not the person lives in the community year-round (to adjust the programming calendar for "snowbirds" or those with summer vacation homes)
- Interest in volunteering
- Types of activities the individual currently enjoys and/or would like to learn
- Proximity to the synagogue (asked directly or ascertained through ZIP code analysis)
- Whether or not the person has family or close friends whom s/he sees regularly
- Other organizations to which the respondent belongs (to understand better the individual's network and support system and to explore the need for coordinated services with other organizations in the community)
- Health concerns (for insight into potential caretaking needs and relevant programming)

Administering the Survey
The survey was sent to each member of the congregation who was age 55 or older. It was printed on bright-colored paper so that it would stand out in the mail. A stamped envelope with the synagogue's address was included, to make return of the survey as easy as possible.

Using the Results of the Survey
Tabulated survey responses showed mixed results on the preference for daytime versus evening programming (influenced somewhat by age) and a clear preference for one-shot programs. Many expressed an interest in Torah study, a book club, or a money management group. There was little interest in providing or receiving volunteer assistance.

The findings of the survey were presented at a dinner that launched Prime Timers, the new seniors program organized by the Taskforce on Senior Adults. According to staff, the survey and the program have increased the participation of older adults in the synagogue, given them a more positive feeling about the congregation, and enhanced their feelings of connection and self-worth.

Making It Happen
The survey at Main Line Temple was overseen by the lay taskforce of older adults. They assured that the survey would ask the right questions and that results would be used.

The project was directed by the cantor, who had a background in social work and was familiar with survey research. Such expertise was important for the analysis of the survey. The cantor hand-calculated overall responses and sorted
them by age group, sex, and other key variables that helped the taskforce see the variety of interests and concerns within this population.

A secretary received completed surveys sent to the synagogue and delivered them to the cantor each week. She typed up the comments respondents wrote on the surveys so that this information, too, could be shared and discussed.

Program Costs
The Senior Adult Survey was paid for by the synagogue. Costs included printing the questionnaire and return envelopes, postage to mail to each individual, and return postage. A survey like the one described here costs between $1.00 and $1.50 per person.

If there is a large number of surveys and a complex analysis is desired, the budget should also include a line for clerical and technical assistance.

Getting the Word Out
Surveys provide useful information only if people respond to them. The synagogue promoted the survey with announcements at worship services and notices in the Shabbat bulletin. Extra copies of the survey were left at the synagogue for those who wanted to fill it out while they were in the building.

Main Line Temple had an excellent response rate with little follow-up. Other congregations, however, report that they need to do systematic follow-up. They send out a reminder or a second copy of the survey, hand out additional copies of the survey at meetings where seniors are present, and make outreach calls to encourage people to fill out the survey or to answer the questions over the telephone. Some programmers say that a telephone call is the best way for them to get the information that they need.

Replication Advice
1. Before undertaking a needs assessment, make certain that volunteer leaders and synagogue staff support the study and are committed to using the results. Needs assessment must be followed by action.

2. Get input from seniors in developing the survey questions. As members of the target audience, they can point out how the wording of particular items will sound to the older adults who receive a questionnaire. They may suggest topics that should be avoided or that should receive special attention in the survey.

3. Pilot test your instrument, regardless of how clear and simple you think it is. Have five seniors in your congregation fill it out before you distribute it to the rest of the membership. Their feedback will help you create a survey that suits the senior respondent and still addresses your informational needs.

4. Keep it simple. Many seniors prefer surveys that are short and easy to read, understand, answer, and return. Lengthy questionnaires that move from topic to topic are likely to confuse older participants. Having to find a stamp and write the synagogue's address on the envelope can be a deterrent to some respondents.

5. Get responses from as many older adults in the congregation as you can. Make certain that various groups of seniors are represented in your sample (e.g., younger and older, snowbirds and year-round residents, those who are married, widowed, divorced or single).

6. Be clear that a needs assessment survey is not a guarantee of program success. Respondents may say that they will participate in a particular program if the synagogue offers it. However, responses on a survey do not always match behavior. The survey provides a guide to program planning. The hard work of building a successful program still remains.

7. Re-survey the senior population every three to five years. The population of seniors in a congregation is constantly shifting as people age, retire, lose spouses, move into assisted living facilities, and so on. Numbers will change; needs and interests will evolve. It is important for the congregation to keep up-to-date with its older members.

1 For more detailed information on the Senior Adult Survey, contact its author, Cantor Nancy Rose Ginsberg at Temple Sinai, 208 Summit Avenue, Summit, NJ 07901. Tel: 908-273-4921.
A Sampler of Questions from Senior Needs Assessment Surveys

### Need for Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you need assistance with daily activities?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What type of assistance do you currently use or need?</td>
<td>Current Use</td>
<td>Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker/home health aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income tax assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance claim filling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Temple Israel**
30 Riverside Drive
Dayton, OH 45405-4940
Tel: 937-486-0750

### Program Accessibility

What time of the day is good for you to participate in programs at the synagogue?
- [ ] During the day
- [ ] In the evening

When would you like to see more programming? (Check all that apply)
- [ ] On weekdays during the day
- [ ] On weekdays at night
- [ ] On the weekends during the day
- [ ] On the weekends at night
- [ ] In the summer during the day
- [ ] In the summer at night
- [ ] Other (Please specify)

**Main Line Reform Temple Beth Elohim**
410 Montgomery Avenue
Wynnewood, PA 19096-1399
Tel: 610-649-7800

### Preferences

Valley Beth Shalom is planning activities and programs to enable senior or retired members to develop a network of associates through creative activities and community service. Please indicate the activities or programs you would be interested in and/or suggestions for other valued and meaningful programs.

- **Computer Skills and Connecting with the World**
  This Computer Club will teach you how to enjoy using a computer, help you purchase appropriate, reasonable equipment, and show you how to sign onto the Free Network ($15 annual fee).

- **Mitzvah Woodcraft Shop**
  Learn from experienced experts how to use woodshop equipment. Exercise your imagination and create wonderful things out of wood for your home, for the temple, for others in need of your skills (e.g., toys for children from indigent homes).

- **Photography Club**
  Learn from experts how to frame a good picture, see the world and people with an artistic eye, learn to use darkroom equipment and develop your own pictures, and be part of the photo-historian team of VBS.

- **Tax, Investment, Personal Services (TIPS) Club**
  Do you have questions about finances, wills, trusts, bequests, ways to protect your future financial and personal needs, travel, etc.? Then TIPS might be something we ought to start at VBS.

- **Community Service: Significant Volunteering**
  Check here if you would be interested in opening the door to developing new and significant associations by volunteering in temple, Jewish community, social, cultural institutions or causes.

- **Do you have suggestions for other programs? If so, write below.**

Valley Beth Shalom
15730 Ventura Boulevard
Encino, CA 91346
Tel: 818-788-6000
Volunteer Opportunities
Please check the areas you would be interested in assisting with.

- Friendly Visitors
- Respite Care
- Hospital/Shut in Follow-up
- Bereavement Follow-up
- Para-rabbinics
- Special Needs/Family Assistance
- Transportation Assistance
- New Member Welcome (Telephone Calls)
- Mitzvah Day

Other: ________________________

Best day of week for meetings: ________________________
Best time of day for meetings: ________________________

Congregation B'nat Jeshudah
712 East 69th Street
Kansas City, MO 64131
Tel: 816-363-1050

PREPARING CAREGIVERS

Whether they are family members or synagogue volunteers, caregivers need training to prepare them to assist the elderly. Caregivers may approach the task with good intentions and a strong sense of obligation. However, they may not have the special knowledge and skills they need to work effectively with the elderly. They need to learn:

- about the aging process
- how to provide daily care
- how to communicate with the elderly
- how to access resources in the community
- how to manage difficult family issues concerning the aging member
- how to make decisions regarding living situations, health care, and the like

They need to feel empowered as caregivers. They need support, encouragement, and recognition for this work. And they need to feel that the synagogue is interested in and concerned about the care of the elderly.

This section presents exemplars of caregiver training from synagogues and other agencies that create training programs for congregations.
LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Successful training programs are led by expert facilitators. Effective trainers are knowledgeable individuals who can explain the material, answer questions, and provide reassurance to volunteers and family members.

2. Successful programs provide written training materials that are comprehensive, yet simple and clear. They make no assumptions about what people know. They provide detailed information about all aspects of caring for the elderly.

3. Successful programs are practical. They teach volunteers and family members what they need to know to provide quality assistance and to make decisions about the care of the elderly. Training sessions focus on concrete, day-to-day tasks and issues.

4. Successful programs are rooted in Judaism. They convey Jewish thought on responsibilities for aging parents and Jewish views of aging, death and dying. Caregivers derive meaning and strength from Jewish teachings.

INTERFAITH VOLUNTEER CAREGIVERS—VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers (IVC) organizes community projects that bring together congregations to recruit, train, and mobilize volunteers who provide in-home assistance to those in need. Some 1,000 IVC projects are in operation across the country.

“Underlying the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers Program approach is the heartfelt belief that religious faith can be translated into commitment to helping others. Throughout the nation, congregations of various faiths are providing a multitude of direct services to people who need caring contact. Through this participation in an Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers Project, many Americans are introduced to voluntary service and begin to assume responsibility for the well-being of their community” (From Celebrating Ten Years of Interfaith Volunteer Caregiving)²

The IVC of Southwestern Pennsylvania is comprised of 45 congregations, including 8 synagogues. Seed money for the initial project came from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation. The work is now supported in part by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Faith in Action Program.

Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers—Volunteer Training

Target Group: Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers provides training and support for synagogue members who have volunteered to care for frail homebound elderly in the congregation and in the wider community. The majority of volunteers are active members.

Program Description: Training is a 2½ hour orientation. It covers volunteer responsibilities, the operation of the IVC program, community resources, and other information essential for safe and effective care giving.

Program Goals: The training helps volunteers feel comfortable and confident dealing with the frail elderly and it teaches them to handle their volunteer responsibilities effectively.

Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers of Southwestern Pennsylvania

555 Grant Street, Suite 20
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Tel: 412-232-4809

Temple Sinai

5505 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
Tel: 412-421-8492
Participants

IVC of Southwestern Pennsylvania has 175 volunteers who provide assistance to over 200 frail elderly in the region. About a fourth of these volunteers are from Temple Sinai. The majority of volunteers are active retirees.

Schedule

All IVC volunteers must participate in a training session in their congregation. Training is held on an as-needed basis. The session lasts two to three hours. It is offered during the day or evening at the group's convenience.

Program

The training is designed to help volunteers effectively provide basic support to a homebound person. The training is based on a set of comprehensive, detailed, and simple-to-read materials provided to all participants. The training session highlights key points in the volunteer materials and answers the new volunteers' questions.

Training emphasizes the following points:

Roles and responsibilities. Volunteers have job descriptions that specify their responsibilities and the appropriate roles for them to assume in caring for the frail elderly. Volunteers can provide transportation, shopping assistance, chore and handyman services, yard maintenance, friendly visiting, meal preparation, and respite care. They are expected to:

• take their commitment seriously
• treat the people they serve with respect and dignity
• respect the privacy of those they serve
• attend orientation and training sessions
• provide monthly reports to the congregational coordinator on their volunteer hours and services provided

Volunteer boundaries. People who volunteer through faith-based organizations are often motivated to heal the world and thus take on more work than they can reasonably handle. The training tries to prevent volunteer burnout and avoid undue liability by establishing manageable and appropriate boundaries at the beginning of the volunteer's career.

Confidentiality. Volunteers sign a pledge that they will observe confidentiality and maintain the privacy of the people they serve.

How the IVC program works. IVC has a system of care giving that all volunteers need to understand and follow. The training includes an explanation of each step:

1. An agency or individual requests service from the IVC project office.
2. The IVC project director refers an appropriate request to the congregational coordinator. (Requests that are not appropriate to IVC are referred elsewhere in the community.)
3. The coordinator assigns a volunteer and notifies the project director that the match is complete.
4. The volunteer provides service, keeping a record of the hours.
5. The congregation coordinator periodically contacts the volunteer and the elder to ensure the match is satisfactory.

Expectations. Each volunteer activity is detailed on a separate page in the training manual. There are full explanations of what the volunteers should do when they take an elderly person to the doctor, assist with grocery shopping, make a friendly visit, and so on.

Record keeping. IVC needs to monitor the number of clients, services provided, hours of volunteer time being provided to the community, and so on. The project director collates volunteer reports to produce an overall annual report that documents IVC's accomplishments. These data are useful for congregations, the community, and current and potential funders. Volunteers, however, are often recalcitrant record keepers. The training emphasizes the importance of complete and accurate record keeping and urges the volunteers to help IVC in this regard.

Community resources. Allegheny County, with its high percentage of senior citizens, has many resources for the elderly. Volunteers need to know about these resources and how to access them. Training materials include a handbook that lists meal programs for the elderly, healthcare services, financial assistance for utility bills, and so on. Volunteers are urged to call IVC staff with questions they cannot answer on their own or from the handbook.

Specialized Training

Some IVC Projects offer specialized training, on an as-needed basis, for volunteers who are serving people incapacitated by Alzheimer's disease, multiple disabilities, or AIDS, or people who may need hospice or prolonged respite care. These volunteers require skills beyond those needed for normal daily assistance, and they must be well-trained before being placed in these demanding situations.
Volunteer Liability
Questions about volunteer liability commonly arise at training sessions. IVC of Southwestern Pennsylvania carries excess liability insurance that covers volunteers beyond the coverage they have as individuals or through their congregation. The insurance covers both personal injury and automobile liability. The cost of the insurance is based on the number of volunteers. IVC of Southwestern Pennsylvania pays $1,400 per year for 200 volunteers. Training takes on added importance for the program since volunteers are covered by the IVC policy only if they have participated in the training.

Making It Happen
Training is conducted by the professional staff of the local Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers.

Program Costs
All training and training materials are provided free of charge by IVC.

---

A Sampler of Programs for Preparing Caregivers

Volunteers for a Friendly Visitors Program
B'nai Jehudah (Kansas City, MO) trains its volunteers before they make their first visit to Jewish elderly in nursing homes. The training materials include:

- Background information on the elderly. Materials cover emotional, psychological, and physical issues associated with aging.
- Suggested activities to do when visiting residents at nursing homes. For example: listen and learn about the individual; teach or learn a craft; play cards, checkers, or chess; help mend clothes; listen to or play music; read or write letters; go for a walk; assist at meal times; read aloud, etc.

Handling yourself during a visit. For example: do not become involved in the patient’s personal problems; do not show obvious alarm at things that may come up during conversation; do not make promises you cannot keep; do not ask prying questions, etc.

Handling patient complaints. Volunteers are trained to be a “listening ear.” They are taught that complaints are often manifestations of the person’s poor health or general unhappiness with living in a nursing home. They are to notify the volunteer coordinator about complaints only if they have a genuine concern about the individual’s care. They are to avoid becoming trapped in a conflict between the resident and staff, the resident and his/her family, or between two residents.

Guidelines for a successful visit. For example: be a good listener, be sensitive to the needs of others, encourage manageable levels of independence and participation in activities, and respect confidentiality.

Congregation B'nai Jehudah
712 East 69th Street
Kansas City, MO 64131
Tel: 816-363-1050

You and Your Aging Parent
Temple Emanu-El (Dallas, TX), in collaboration with Jewish Family Services, offers a five-session course for the adult children of aging parents. The program meets for one and a half hours each week at the synagogue. Licensed social workers from JFS provide workbooks and facilitate the sessions. The program gives participants information as well as encouragement and support. The five sessions are:

- Values clarification: Your responsibility to your parents
- What you can reasonably expect of your parents
- What your parents can expect from you
- The aging process
- When to consider changing your parents' living situation or lifestyle

---

For detailed information on how to develop an IVC project, request a copy of the Handbook from the National Federation of Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, 368 Broadway, Suite 103, PO Box 1939, Kingston, NY 12403. Tel: 914-331-1358.
As Families Grow Older

The Miller Center for Older Adult Services is a not-for-profit community service of the Winner Park Health Foundation. The Center has created a program that congregations can use to help families with aging members make informed choices when dealing with the challenges and opportunities of aging. The program, entitled As Families Grow Older, is a complete package that includes a planning and program guide and a participant workbook for each module. Staff from the Miller Center are available to provide technical assistance to congregations interested in conducting As Families Grow Older workshops. The modules cover these topics:

Understanding family dynamics
Accessing community and personal resources
The challenging health issues of aging
Making choices about living arrangements
Exploring the financial and legal issues of aging
Living and dying in your faith

Materials will be available through the National Council on Aging, 409 Third Street SW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20024. Tel: 202-479-1200.

A Time To Prepare: UAHC Guide

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations has published a practical guide for determining the wishes of family members regarding extraordinary medical treatment and financial arrangements at the end of life. The manual helps caregivers anticipate many of the decisions that must be made when a death occurs. It also offers a Jewish perspective on dying, death, and mourning.
Rituals for death, mourning and funerals
Opportunities, options and struggles in the golden years: how families can work together

The congregation has also published a booklet entitled A Jewish Guide to Death and Dying. The guide provides thoughtful and useful information on the following topics:
Planning ahead: A guide for the living
At the time of death
The funeral service
After the funeral
Coping with grief

Appendix: Ethical wills, Mourners’ Kaddish, El Malei Rachamim

Temple Emanu-El
8500 Hillcrest
Dallas, TX 75225-4288
Tel: 214-706-0000

Chapter 2: Preparing Caregivers

A Sampler of Web Sites for Caregivers

www.aahsa.org (American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging)
This Web site offers information on high quality health care, housing, and services for seniors.

www.ageinfo.org (Eldercare Locator)
Sponsored by the federal Administration on Aging, the Eldercare Locator is a nationwide directory assistance service that helps locate local support resources for older adults.

www.arclab.org (Aging Research Center)
Aging Research Center is a Web site for researchers and lay people who want to learn more about the aging process.

www.caregiver.org (Family Caregiver Alliance)
Family Caregiver Alliance is a San Francisco-based site that links to many other resource sites and offers a wealth of valuable and reassuring information to caregivers.

www.choices.org (Choice in Dying)
Choice in Dying users can research states’ special requirements for living wills, advance medical directives, and the like.

www.cje.net (Council for Jewish Elderly)
An affiliate of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, CJE provides information on services for older adults and their families, resource information, and publications.

www.ianet.org (Interactive Aging Network)
Caregiver Resources on the Interactive Aging Network links to a wide variety of materials for caregivers-in-training.

www.nfivc.org (National Federation of Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers)
The IVV Web site discusses topics such as fundraising, long-term health care, and other topics related to care giving.

www.nt.sympatico.ca
This site reviews and rates health-related and care giving sites on the World Wide Web.

www.ppc.com (Philadelphia Geriatric Center)
Philadelphia Geriatric Center is a Jewish-sponsored private, nonprofit organization that provides aging services in the Philadelphia region. Their Web site deals with aging concerns and links to national resources for seniors.
Synagogue accessibility is a fundamental issue in programming for seniors. If older members cannot get to the synagogue or take part in programs and worship services once there, the seniors program has failed. Synagogues that are accessible make it possible for their older members to continue to come to the synagogue and to be part of the life of the community. Their efforts to include the elderly send the message that older adults are welcome in the synagogue and valued by the congregation.

Accessibility includes:

- discounted memberships
- transportation (See Chapter 4: Assisting with Daily Life)
- handicap access (e.g., ramps, handicap bathrooms, stair climbers, elevators)
- resources for those with hearing and visual impairment
- programs to connect the homebound to the synagogue
- sensitivity to the special needs of seniors
Connecting the Homebound to the Synagogue

Temple Israel is a 113-year-old congregation with some 700 adult members, at least half of whom are over age 50. In addition, there are a number of elderly members who are in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or living independently as single adults. Many of these elderly members are isolated from the synagogue. "They can't drive, or they are afraid to go out at night, or they ache too much—all are obstacles to connection." Temple To Go and Roberta's Network use technology creatively to help the older members of the community maintain their ties to the congregation.

Temple To Go and Roberta's Network

Target Group: Temple To Go and Roberta's Network are for the elderly who are unable to come to the synagogue. This includes those who live in nursing homes, are convalescing from an illness, are in the hospital, or are too frail to come to services, as well as those who have to remain home to care for a loved one.

Program Description: Temple To Go provides the homebound elderly with tape recorders and monthly tapes of services and programs at the synagogue. Roberta's Network broadcasts electronically from the synagogue so that participants at home can listen to services and programs through their telephones.

Program Goals: As people age, their ability to connect to the congregation diminishes. These programs use technology to combat the inevitable separation from the synagogue and to maintain the older adult's connection to the congregation.

Temple Israel
333 25th Street N.W.
Canton, OH 44709
Tel: 330-455-5197

Temple To Go

Participants
Temple To Go serves the Jewish elderly in nursing homes, those who are homebound, and those who otherwise cannot get to the synagogue for worship services and other programs. Temple To Go is available to members and non-members alike. Currently 15 to 20 people use the service.

Identifying Participants
- The program has developed a list of Jewish residents in nursing homes, those in extended convalescence, other homebound elderly, those who have to remain at home to care for a loved one, and those who live too far from the synagogue for regular attendance. When the rabbi or volunteers make visits to these elders, they ask them if they would like to take part in Temple To Go.
- Information about Temple To Go was given to the professional geriatric outreach worker at Jewish Family Service who makes it available to the nursing home and homebound clients she visits on her rounds.
- Information about the service is published periodically in the synagogue bulletin. The notice explains what the service is and that it is free of charge. The bulletin also regularly notes which programs are being recorded for Temple To Go. Referrals to seniors who need the service often result from these announcements.

Service Provided
Twelve to fourteen times a year, programs are recorded and tapes are duplicated and distributed to the elderly who are unable to be physically present in the synagogue. Tape recordings are made of one worship service a month plus music programs or lectures. The purpose of Temple To Go is not education but connection. Experience has shown that the ill or the elderly respond with deep emotion when they hear familiar Shabbat or holiday melodies. The worship services recorded, therefore, are usually regular cantorial services with a sermon by the rabbi.

Equipment
Services or programs are recorded directly through the synagogue's public address system onto a master cassette tape. When the rabbi leaves the bimah, to engage the congregation in discussion for example, he simply removes the microphone from its stand and carries it with him in order to capture comments from the floor.

The service or program is recorded using an auto-reverse tape recorder that can record 90 minutes of programming nonstop.

The synagogue purchased a high-speed, one-two-three monaural cassette duplicator to copy tapes for distribution. The duplicator makes three copies simultaneously. It takes 1 1/2 minutes to copy a 60-minute cassette.

Each participant in the program is given a small cassette tape recorder. A volunteer visitor from the congregation or the geriatric outreach worker from
Jewish Family Service brings the recorder and shows the participant how to use it. These recorders have internal speakers so they can be used without earphones. Participants do not have to worry about losing earphones and they can listen to the program with a caretaker, spouse, or other family member if they choose.

A mailing list on the synagogue’s computer has the name and address of each participant. The software, “My Advanced Mail List and Address Book,” makes it easy to update the address list and to print mailing labels.

Getting the Tapes to Participants
Volunteers who have received training in the operation of the high-speed duplicator do the mailing. They are given:
• the master tape
• blank tapes (purchased in bulk, 100 to a box)
• cardboard mailers
• mailing labels
• return address labels
• cassette tape labels identifying the service or program (e.g., “Shabbat worship, April 25, 1998, Yom Hashoah Commemoration”)

The volunteers duplicate the tapes, put address labels on the boxes, bend and fold the boxes, put the identifying labels on the duplicated tapes, insert a tape into each box, and take the finished packets to the synagogue office to be mailed.

Preferably, the delivery of the tapes becomes part of a regular volunteer visitation program. When members of the congregation deliver tapes, they can also check in with the participants to find out if there is anything else they need.

Uses of the Program
The Temple To Go program has been adapted to a variety of uses. For example:
• Families record funeral services with eulogies. Before the cars leave for the cemetery, copies are made and given to the mourners to share with friends and family members who could not be present.
• Wedding ceremonies are taped and copies made before the reception begins. A copy is sent to family members who were unable to be present in the synagogue.
• Tapes of special lectures are given to individuals studying for conversion.
• Tapes of lectures, musical programs, and other special events become part of a tape collection that can be borrowed from the synagogue library.

Program Costs
After the initial investment in equipment, the program is inexpensive to maintain. The initial investment includes the auto-reverse tape recorder and the high speed duplicator ($900 to $1400).

Tape recorders given to participants cost about $20 each at a discount store. The cost per person per tape (including tape, mailer, and postage) is about $1.

Replication Advice
1. Organize the administration of this program so that it can be handled easily by volunteers. Having address lists computerized, buying supplies in bulk, training volunteers in the use of the equipment—all help to move responsibility for the program from staff to volunteers.
2. Get people into the program before they are too old to learn how to manage the tape recorder. If the elderly start the program before they seriously need it, they can learn how to put in the tapes and how to turn on the tape recorder. Then they can manage the tapes independently even as they age and their ability to learn these skills declines.
3. Use creative ways to fund a Temple To Go program. A single donor at Temple Israel made the Temple To Go program possible. There are, however, other ways to fund such a program. For example, families can be invited to contribute a year’s worth of programming for an elderly relative on the occasion of a birthday or other simcha. Or members of the congregation can buy a year’s worth of programming for an elderly person. The cost is low and the return is great.
Robert's Network

Participants
Robert's Network serves the elderly who are unable to be physically present in the synagogue. It has been of special value to those who find themselves in the hospital over the holidays or at the time of a family life-cycle celebration (bar or bat mitzvah, wedding, or funeral).

Service Provided
Robert's Network connects the elderly to events at the synagogue by providing a live hookup into the synagogue. High Holiday services are broadcast each year; regular services are broadcast once a month; and special events and programs are broadcast on an ad hoc basis.

Equipment
The technology allows the synagogue to broadcast worship services, weddings, funerals, bar/bat mitzvah services, lectures, or other programs held in the sanctuary, social hall, or library anywhere in the synagogue connected to the public address system (with either the plugged-in or wireless microphone).

The technology for Robert's Network comes from TRZ Communications. An electronic device, an auto answer coupler, connects the synagogue's public address system to the synagogue's fax/modem line. The computer at TRZ picks up the broadcast through this line. To find out more about TRZ, contact Thomas Zawistowski (1 Cascade Plaza, Akron, OH 44308. Tel: 800-846-4630, ext. 6. Fax: 330-374-6249).

People at remote sites—anywhere in the country—dial into TRZ to receive the broadcast over their telephone lines. Because rotary phones will not work with this system, the synagogue buys an inexpensive touch-tone phone for any elderly member who needs one. Also, many seniors do not have a speakerphone that would allow them to listen to the service hands-free or to share it with caretakers or family members. The synagogue purchases simple battery-operated amplifiers ($10 at Radio Shack) and sends volunteers to the participants' homes to set them up.

Broadcasting a Service
The process for using this service is as follows:

1. The rabbi notifies TRZ of the program(s) he wants to broadcast. The system is very flexible and requires little planning. It is even possible to call on the same day to arrange for a broadcast that evening. He lets TRZ know what time the service begins and how long it runs.

2. Before the service begins, the rabbi plugs in the jack, turns on the public address system, and dials the 800 number which goes into the TRZ computer.

3. Participants dial this same 800 number from their home phones. When it connects, they hear a recorded announcement: "If you want to listen to a live broadcast at Temple Israel, press 1." They are then instructed to enter a credit-card number or a billing code.

Uses of the Program
In addition to assisting the homebound elderly, the program has served to connect out-of-town family members to life-cycle events held at the synagogue. For example, when a grandfather died, the grandchildren who lived a great distance away were able to dial in to hear a live broadcast of the funeral.

Program Costs
The initial installation of TRZ's electronic hookup device costs $150. Listening to an entire service costs the receiver about $12. There is no membership or access fee. Users are charged only for the time they are on the line. If a person dials in late or disconnects before the service is over, there is no charge for the unused portion. The annual cost per person is $120 for Shabbat services (10 services a year) plus 60 for the High Holidays.

Getting the Word Out
The week of a broadcast, the synagogue sends out a notice to its mailing list of elderly and homebound adults. In some cases, a copy of the notice is also sent to a designated person at the nursing home who will make certain the connection is made.

One side of the notice has specific step-by-step instructions in large print:
- You need a speakerphone. If you do not have one, the synagogue will provide it.
- You need a touch-tone telephone. If you do not have one, the synagogue will bring you one.
- You need to dial (the 800 number).
- When you hear the announcement about the temple broadcast, press ' 1.'
- When you are asked for the charge code, press (charge code).

The other side of the notice tells which service is being broadcast and what the topic is.
Replication Advice

1. Make the service easy for the elderly to use. Provide simple instructions in large print. Provide photocopies of the service for participants to follow if the prayer book is too large or heavy for them to manage. Have volunteers or caretakers help them set up the telephone. Make certain that those who want to access the broadcast are able to do so.

2. Before a broadcast, double check that everything is in place. Make certain that TR2 has the correct schedule for the broadcast. Test the line before the service begins. Do not assume that the technology will take care of itself.

3. Encourage the elderly to request the service and then to use it. With the technology in place, the challenge to the congregation is optimizing its usage. Outreach is needed to identify seniors in need, to bring them the materials they need to access Temple To Go and Roberta's Network, and to help them use the technology to remain connected to the synagogue.

A SAMPLER OF WAYS TO MAKE THE SYNAGOGUE ACCESSIBLE

Temple Telephone Talk

Temple Emunah-El (Dallas, TX) has an ongoing telephone visitation program. Every other Thursday at 2:00 p.m., the rabbi and director of older adults take part in a telephone conference call with the congregation's homebound elderly. There are currently 15 to 20 people on these calls. The director begins by welcoming each participant and doing a roll call. For the next 10 to 15 minutes, the rabbi talks about the Torah portion of the week or about a Jewish holiday or issue. He asks the group questions and engages them in discussion. The conference call has become a "virtual havurah" and the participants have all come to know each other well.

The call is set up by Conference America (Tel: 800-925-8000). Charges, which are calculated per person per minute, generally total $30 to $70 a call. This expense is covered by the congregation's Sisterhood and Brotherhood.

Temple Emunah-El
8500 Hillcrest
Dallas, TX 75225-4288
Tel: 214-706-0000

Equipment for the Hearing Impaired

Beth Emet The Free Synagogue (Evanston, IL) has installed two kinds of systems to assist the elderly whose hearing is failing. The first sends a radio signal from the microphone on the bimah, or other microphone, to a transmitter that the participant wears on a belt pack (like a walkman). An earphone connects to the belt pack. There is a control dial so the individual can set the volume as loud as needed. A second system is for members who wear hearing aids. These participants are given a necklace that plugs into a receiver. The receiver sends the audio signal directly into the hearing aid. These systems were installed by Barlowe Sound Inc. (PO Box 687, Skokie, IL 60076)
Tel: 847-670-7987

Beth Emet The Free Synagogue
1224 Dempster
Evanston, IL 60202
Tel: 847-869-4230

Sensitivity to the Special Needs of Seniors

Located near a Jewish home for the aged and a Jewish retirement community, B'nai Israel (Rockville, MD) is sensitive to the needs of older adults. It has sought solutions for their needs and attracted individual donors who have paid to implement these solutions.

Vision. B'nai Israel ordered large-print prayer books from United Synagogue. They found, however, that there were no large-print books for the High Holidays and that the ones they had were too heavy for the elderly to manage. The synagogue made their own large-print copies and assembled them into
Chapter 4: Ezra: Assisting with Daily Life

Ezra: Assisting with Daily Life

Synagogues have an obligation to care for the Jewish elderly in their communities. They have congregants who can be inspired to become volunteer caregivers. And they have members who are seniors in need of assistance with everyday life.

The elderly sometimes feel abandoned by their synagogues. Many are delighted when a representative of the congregation calls, visits, or sends a note. To them it is an affirmation that they remain valued members who still have a place in the congregation.

For these reasons, synagogues around the country are organizing volunteer programs to provide older adults with transportation and assistance with everyday chores. These programs help seniors maintain their quality of life and their independence. At the same time, they enrich the lives of those who give help. Many of the volunteers in these programs are themselves older adults.

Although these programs are designed to meet everyday needs, enlightened programmers understand that the key to this work is companionship. Loneliness is a prevalent issue for the elderly. The friends, siblings, and spouses of many have died and their children have moved away. Loneliness is compounded for the infirm or homebound. The activities and assistance which take place during a visit are often less important to the elderly person than the companionship the volunteer offers.
LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Successful programs have strong rabbinic leadership. Many congregations undertake volunteer programs for the elderly only after the rabbi has dedicated a High Holiday sermon to the obligation to care for the elderly and has urged the congregation to take action.

2. Successful programs work hard to enlist volunteers. They find potential volunteers through solicitations at High Holiday services, appeals to Sisterhood and Brotherhood, announcements in the synagogue bulletin, surveys mailed to members or handed out at the synagogue, and other means. Successful programs have lists of volunteers who will help balance a checkbook, shovel snow, rake leaves, help in the house, provide transportation, read, or perform other everyday tasks with or for the elderly. The more extensive the list, the more likely the right match can be made between the elder in need and the volunteer.

3. Successful programs make every effort to identify the members of their congregation who need volunteer assistance. Lists are developed from:
   • individuals known to the rabbi and other professionals in the synagogue
   • referrals from social workers in the community, geriatric workers at Jewish Family Services, nursing home administrators, and others who regularly care for the elderly
   • calls from family members (both in town and long-distance caregivers)
   • notices sent out to members
   • announcements or surveys at worship services asking for names of members who need care and companionship
   • outreach calls by members of the congregation's Caring Committee, volunteer corps, or other group responsible for managing volunteer services for the elderly

4. Successful programs have coordinators—either professional or volunteer—who are responsible for handling requests for assistance, matching those in need with those who have the skills, time, and commitment to help them, and monitoring the quality of service provided to the elderly.

KOSHER CONGREGATE MEAL PROGRAM

Through its L’Chayim Program, the Quad Cities Federation provides services to older adults in Davenport (IA), Bettendorf (IA), Moline (IL), and Rock Island (IL). There are approximately 280 elderly Jews in these communities. The program’s mission is to alleviate the problems of aging (including loneliness, poor nutrition, and depression) and to promote social activity and a sense of well-being among the area’s elderly Jewish population. The program is coordinated by a professional with training in gerontology.

Since 1983, L’Chayim has sponsored a kosher congregate meal program.

The program provides weekly meals at the Tri City Jewish Center, the area’s Conservative synagogue, and occasional meals at Temple Emanuel, the Reform congregation.

Kosher Congregate Meal Program
Target Group: On-site meals are served primarily to the frail elderly. Home-delivered meals are provided to shut-ins-Jewish elderly who are recuperating at home, those who are unable to prepare their own meals, and those in nursing homes or assisted living facilities that do not provide kosher meal service.

Program Description: Twice a week (one lunch and one dinner) hot kosher meals are served at the synagogue. Once a month there is a special Shabbat dinner. Frozen kosher meals are also delivered to those in need. The food is prepared by a caterer and served and delivered by volunteers.

Program Goals: The program’s duty is to serve meals but its deeper purpose is to get people out of their homes and into the synagogue, to give them an opportunity to socialize, and to ward off the isolation so common among the elderly.

Jewish Federation of the Quad Cities
209 18th Street
Rock Island, IL 61201
Tel: 309-793-1300

Tri-City Jewish Center
2715 30th Street
Rock Island, IL 61201-5000
Tel: 309-788-3428

Temple Emanuel
12th and Mississippi
Davenport, IA 52803
Tel: 319-326-4419
Participants
Most of the participants in the kosher congregate meal program are Jewish seniors who are synagogue members. Non-Jewish seniors come to the program through Project NOW (the local community action agency) or through a retirement community that busses in participants once a month.

The noontime meal is primarily for the frail elderly. More active seniors are encouraged to come to the evening dinners.

Home-delivered meals are available to Jewish seniors recuperating at home after a hospital stay, those who are physically or mentally unable to shop for and prepare their own meals, and those in elder care facilities or hospitals where kosher meals are not available.

The program serves over 3,000 meals a year (both on-site and home-delivered). Depending on the weather, 15 to 20 people come to the Monday noon meal and 30 to 60 come to the Wednesday evening dinner. When there is a special program, attendance can be as high as 80 to 100 participants. Some 35 to 40 people receive home-delivered meals.

Schedule
Meals are served twice a week: lunch every Monday and dinner each Wednesday. Shabbat dinner is served once a month. Lunch is at noon, dinner is served at 5:15 p.m. (before nightfall).

Twice each year, meals are also served at Temple Emanuel, the Reform congregation.

Preparing and Serving Meals at the Synagogue
The L'Chayim coordinator, in consultation with the caterer and the participants, plans the menus for the month. Her goal is to provide full, healthy meals—more than just soup and sandwich. The kosher congregate meal program is a meal site of the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging and its meals, therefore, must meet federal nutritional guidelines. The menus are checked by a dietician at Project NOW, the community action agency that has subcontracted to the Jewish Federation.

A month in advance, the caterer orders the kosher meats, which are delivered from Chicago and stored in two freezers at the synagogue. (One freezer was donated by a member of the community; the other was purchased with program monies.) The caterer also buys the groceries for each meal.

The coordinator purchases the necessary paper goods and plasticware in bulk. These are stored in the synagogue in a space designated for the meal program. The synagogue's china and glassware are used at Shabbat dinners or dinners with special programs that bring in large numbers of people.

Participants are asked to call the Federation to make meal reservations one day in advance. At that time they can also request transportation.

The caterer prepares the meals in the synagogue's kosher kitchen. Synagogue staff set up tables and chairs in the social hall. Volunteers set the tables, serve the meals, and clear the dishes. Most of the volunteers are active seniors.

To make the tables attractive for participants, the coordinator decorates them with a vase of flowers or special decorations for each of the American and Jewish holidays.

There is a program after each meal, such as:

- A biweekly study session or discussion of current events with the rabbi
- A flower arranging workshop
- A performance of holiday songs by the cantor
- Performances by local musicians

Home-Delivered Meals
Extra portions of meals served at the congregate meal program are packaged in aluminum containers and stored in the freezers for later home delivery. Each package contains a complete meal: meat or fish, vegetable, a starch, and canned fruit. Participants who receive these meals can heat them in the oven or remove them from the container and microwave them. The portions are generally enough for two meals. Stored meals have a fresher life of about four months.

These packaged meals are delivered in one of three ways: Volunteers deliver them; participants pick them up; and/or participants take them home after attending a meal at the synagogue.

Volunteers
Volunteers learn about the program through their synagogues, advertisements in the community newsletter, and surveys that the Federation periodically sends to the seniors in the Jewish community. There are two meetings a year to keep volunteers informed about the community's needs and to recognize their contributions.

The teenagers in BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth Organization) occasionally volunteer in the congregate meal program. On days when the frail elderly come from the retirement home, the teens help participants get off the bus. They bring them into the building, get them seated, and attend to them through lunch.

Making the Program Accessible
Every effort is made to provide transportation for program participants. Rides are available from the coordinator, volunteers, and Project NOW (which has vans and buses driven by professional staff). Federation pays Project NOW for its transportation services.

In addition, a private taxi company has donated its services. It picks people up and takes them home free of charge. Participants who want to use this service notify the coordinator when they make their reservation for the meal.
Making It Happen
The kosher congregate meal program is a partnership of three agencies:

- Project NOW, which holds the contract with the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging to serve meals to senior citizens;
- the Jewish federation, which administers the kosher meal program; and
- the synagogue, which provides the space and facilities.

Key to the program, however, are the volunteers who serve the food, join with participants at mealtime, and deliver meals to the homebound.

Program Costs
The major costs of running the kosher congregate meal program are rent for the synagogue, food, supplies, and salaries for the coordinator, cook, and waitresses.

Participants are asked for a suggested donation of $3.50 for lunch, $5.00 for supper, and $5.50 for Shabbat dinner. The suggested donation for those under 60 is $6.00 a meal. Participants put their payment in an envelope at the meal so that actual donations are anonymous. There is also a $1.00 charge for transportation although people rarely pay the fee.

The program receives $5.00 in federal funds for each kosher meal served. Federation subsidizes the balance.

Getting the Word Out
A monthly flier is sent to all Jewish community members over age 60. It contains the dates, times, programming, and menus for that month’s meals; a solicitation for volunteers; and information on making reservations for meals.

Replication Advice
Continuously seek ways to sustain and enlarge the program. The program’s viability depends on continuous high attendance. Build the program by providing transportation for participants, making special arrangements with nursing homes and retirement communities, offering interesting programs that can attract a variety of people, having good publicity, and actively reaching out to seniors in the community.

3To find out how your synagogue can become a kosher congregate meal site, contact your local Area Agency on Aging. See Appendix B.

AHAVATH ACHIM DAY CLUB
Day clubs are designed on the social model of adult day care centers. Many churches in Atlanta, Georgia have day clubs but until recently there was none in a synagogue. Ahavath Achim, a large Conservative congregation, decided that it could serve the Jewish elderly well by opening a day club that would bring dependent older adults into the synagogue for day services. Within a year of its opening, the program became financially self-sufficient and expanded from two to three days a week.

Ahavath Achim Day Club
Target Group: The Ahavath Achim Day Club is for older adults with mild to moderate memory or physical impairment.

Program Description: The program meets from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. three days a week. It includes physical exercise, social programming, and a hot lunch. Two professionals and a corps of volunteers assist participants and help them enjoy a day of activity.

Program Goals: The program’s philosophy is to bring joy into the lives of dependent seniors. Its activities are designed to help them remain active, involved in the synagogue, and connected to the community.

Ahavath Achim Synagogue
600 Peachtree Battle Avenue NW
Atlanta, GA 30327
Tel: 404-355-5222
Participants
The Day Club is for older adults with mild to moderate memory or physical impairments. The program's director interviews applicants and assesses their needs and abilities. Those who are not suited to the Day Club are referred elsewhere.

Some participants have Alzheimer's disease and others have suffered strokes. About half use canes. One person in a wheelchair comes with a personal attendant. Participants are given only minor assistance with physical needs. For example, volunteers will cut up their food but participants need to be able to feed themselves.

Although not required for entry into the program, all of the current participants are Jewish and are affiliated with a synagogue.

At the present time, there are eight participants in the program. The maximum capacity is fifteen.

Schedule
Initially the Day Club met only two days a week, Wednesdays and Fridays. After one year, a Sunday option was added. Participants can choose to come one, two, or three days a week. They are billed a month in advance and are later reimbursed for days they do not use.

Space
The Day Club meets in two classrooms in the synagogue that are otherwise not used during the day. Activities are held in one room; lunch is served in the other where there is a large conference table. The Day Club has its own bulletin board and staff have brought in plants and pictures to decorate the space.

Joining the Day Club
In addition to meeting with the director, applicants to the Day Club need:
- a completed medical form signed by a physician
- an agreement form, signed by a responsible family member, in which the family agrees to pay for services used and to abide by the program's policies and procedures

The Day Club is not a drop-in program. People remain in the program for an extended time and they come on a regular basis. The resulting group is stable and caring, "like a family."

Program Outline
The Day Club runs from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Participants arrive, have coffee, and settle in. The director welcomes everyone and reviews the agenda for the day. Before lunch, there is physical exercise and one activity. For example, the group may discuss current events, work in the garden, do a crossword puzzle together, or have a visit from the children in the preschool.

One of the participants sets the table and lunch is served at 12:15 p.m. Meals are prepared by the community's kosher meals-on-wheels program (operated by Jewish Family & Career Services). The meals are hot, nutritious, and certified kosher. The meals program has a dietician on staff who will order appropriate food for participants with special needs. The Day Club picks up the prepared food and heats it when the group is ready for lunch.

Afternoon activities are scheduled from 1:15 p.m. until closing time.

Activities
Day Club programming is active and social. The philosophy of the program is to focus on abilities rather than disabilities. Here are a few examples:
- The director of the program, trained as a music therapist, often plays music for the group. She has found that participants who cannot communicate well with words still fully remember the lyrics of songs from their younger years.
- The Day Club has a community action project that melds arts and crafts with service to others. The participants make cards for members of the congregation who are in the hospital. The rabbis bring these cards on their visits to the sick. Most of the participants in the program were once active synagogue members. This project enables them to continue to contribute.
- The Day Club has its own garden outside the educational wing of the synagogue. One of the congregants built three raised beds which the participants plant with flowers and vegetables. A horticultural therapist has worked with the group and a gardening volunteer comes regularly. The participants tend to the garden and occasionally do a project with plants (e.g., making topiaries on Tu b'Shevat). The garden is an important activity for the elders and a beautification project for the synagogue.
- Two of the participants in the Day Club are former presidents of the synagogue and others were members of the Board. On Synagogue Presidents' Day, current and past presidents spoke of their work in the synagogue. The event honored the older past presidents and gave current leadership a chance to see the Day Club in action.

Other activities include arts and crafts projects, intergenerational activities with the synagogue's preschoolers, holiday celebrations, and the like.

After lunch, the program brings in people from the community—speakers, comedians, musicians and others—who entertain the participants. The guests bring variety to the program and give participants a sense of connection to the community.
The Jewish Environment
The Day Club’s positive effect derives in part from its Jewish milieu. Yiddish language is heard on occasion. Hebrew blessings are recited before and after lunch. There are special programs for all of the Jewish holidays. Shabbat is celebrated each Friday at 2:15 p.m. at which time the group lights Shabbat candles. Twice a month the rabbi leads the Kabbalat Shabbat service; other times it is led by a volunteer from the congregation. To make it easier for participants to follow the service without having to locate pages in the siddur, the Day Club has created its own simplified, large-print prayer book with only the songs and prayers used for the service. The Shabbat program concludes with a kiddush. The traditional melodies of services and the blessings strike a responsive chord in participants, even those with failing memory.

Making the Program Accessible
The Day Club does not provide transportation. Participants are brough to the program either by a family member, an attendant, or a transportation company. The synagogue building is accessible to those with disabilities. The Day Club is covered by the synagogue’s liability insurance.

Making It Happen
The Day Club has an advisory committee that meets every other month to address current issues and plan for the future. On the committee are individuals with backgrounds in education, counseling, psychology, medicine, and aging. There is a part-time professional director who administers the Day Club and runs the program on Wednesdays and Fridays, and a part-time assistant director who works in the program on Fridays and Sundays. The program is largely staffed by volunteers who are enlisted through the synagogue. Two volunteers, out of a corps of ten, work each day. They help the participants with lunch, escort them to different rooms or the garden, and assist them with the various activities. Volunteers are trained in working with seniors. They learn about memory impairment, first aid, assisting the elderly, doing activities with them, and so on. The training is conducted yearly by the Alzheimer’s Association. No charge.

Program Costs
The synagogue raised seed money to start the Day Club. After a year the program became self-supporting. Operation expenses include salaries, lunches ($3.50 per meal), and materials. The annual program budget is approximately $20,000. Participants pay $26 per day. Seed money for the Sunday option came from an individual donor. The Sunday program, too, is expected to become self-supporting.

Getting the Word Out
The Day Club is advertised in the synagogue bulletin and as part of the synagogue’s advertisements in the local Anglo-Jewish newspaper. Many people hear about the program through word of mouth. Getting the word out is a constant challenge.

Replication Advice
1. A Day Club cannot be established overnight. Allow adequate time for start-up. Ahavath Achim began with a two-year planning process that included a needs assessment and a market analysis.
2. Network with other organizations and associations that are involved in similar work. They are a source of much information and support. Ahavath Achim received materials and consultation from the Alzheimer’s Association, which helps congregations set up respite programs for Alzheimer’s patients. They also received advice and assistance from a day club operated by a church in their neighborhood. Indeed, the two clubs now train their volunteers together and they pool resources to maximize their cost effectiveness.
3. Get the support of the synagogue. The synagogue must be willing to raise the seed money to finance the program until it becomes self-supporting. Ahavath Achim had a fundraising luncheon and solicited individuals for contributions to start the program. The program would not have been established without this support from the congregation.
4. The Day Club depends on its reputation for attracting participants. Programs with weak professional leadership fizzle.
5. Keep costs to a minimum. Take advantage of donated materials, volunteer entertainment, and other opportunities that enhance the program while containing expenses.
6. Build a strong volunteer corps. Educate the volunteers and build a positive relationship with them. Their commitment is important to the smooth operation of the program.

---

*Ahavath Achim has produced a booklet on how to start a synagogue-based day club. To request a copy, contact the program director, Minda Gordon. Tel: 404-355-5222.


2 To order The Respite Care Guide, contact the Alzheimer's Association, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1000, Chicago, IL 60611-1676. Tel: 800-272-3900.
FRIENDLY VISITORS

Congregation B’nai Jehudah is the oldest and largest congregation in Kansas City, Missouri. Almost half of the members of B’nai Jehudah are over age 55. The congregation has a variety of avenues for involving its active senior members and using their talents. Older adults are trained to lead daily worship services or help with bar mitzvah and wedding rehearsals. They serve as ushers at Shabbat services. They can attend a monthly seniors’ lunch with the rabbis or weekly Torah study, and they can join one of the congregation’s havurot comprised of older adults. The congregation is beginning a study and enrichment program for active seniors.

The congregation also provides post-hospital/shut-in telephone follow-up (volunteers call members of the congregation who have returned home after hospitalization), bereavement follow-up (volunteers call or visit congregants who have recently experienced a loss), and transportation assistance (volunteers provide occasional transportation to senior members of the congregation who wish to attend worship services and programs at the synagogue).

Friendly Visitors was established by B’nai Jehudah to serve the older adults who are unable to come to the synagogue.

Friendly Visitors

Target Group: Friendly Visitors is for elderly Jews residing in nursing homes.

Program Description: Six times a year, Friendly Visitors volunteers go to over 20 nursing homes to visit with the Jewish residents and to deliver gift bags to them. Volunteers often form ongoing relationships with the residents and, in addition to delivery days, make regular visits throughout the year. The program maintains lists of the Jewish residents of nursing homes, recruits and trains volunteers from the congregation, organizes the preparation and delivery of gift bags, and monitors the nursing home visits.

Program Goals: The purpose of Friendly Visitors is to enhance the quality of life of the elderly by bringing companionship to those who are isolated or lonely.

Congregation B’nai Jehudah
712 East 69th Street
Kansas City, MO 64131
Tel: 816-363-1020 ext. 129

Participants

Friendly Visitors serves the Jewish residents of 21 nursing homes in Kansas City. The program currently reaches between 150 and 175 Jewish elderly.

Schedule

Six times a year, volunteers deliver holiday gift bags to nursing home residents who are Jewish. Packages are delivered for:

1. High Holidays (September)
2. Shabbat (October)
3. Chanukah (December)
4. Purim (February)
5. Passover (April)
6. Shavuot (May)
7. Shabbat (July-August)

Volunteers can arrange their visits on a flexible schedule. However, they are advised that the best times to visit nursing home residents are mid-morning, after 2:00 in the afternoon, or early evening hours.

Service Provided

Each volunteer delivers gift bags to one nursing home where s/he visits with six to eight residents. Volunteers are also encouraged to establish a connection with residents, preferably congregation members, whom they will visit regularly beyond the deliveries of holiday gift bags.

The synagogue’s program director maintains a list of the nursing homes and their Jewish residents. One week prior to visiting day, she sends a postcard to the nursing homes’ activity directors to notify them that a member of the congregation will be coming to visit. The week of the visit, a staff member or volunteer from the synagogue calls the nursing homes to confirm the names of the Jewish residents and their room numbers.

On the Sunday morning of the delivery, a group of volunteers gathers at the synagogue to assemble the gift bags. They line them with tissue paper and fill them with a colored napkin, juice, a piece of fruit, a cookie, small challah, or other holiday food, and a small gift (a cup or mug, packet of tissues, a comb, lotion, or other toiletry item). It takes volunteers about an hour to prepare the bags for delivery.

Each volunteer receives a Friendly Visitor delivery form with the name and address of the assigned nursing home, the name and telephone number of a contact person there, a list of the Jewish residents who will be visiting, and the residents’ room numbers.

Volunteers need to make their deliveries on that same Sunday so that they do not disappoint the residents who have been notified of the visit.