Volunteers check in when they arrive at the nursing home and identify themselves as a Friendly Visitor from the synagogue. They spend a short time visiting with each resident on their list. If residents are asleep, they leave the package in their room. If residents are not in their rooms, the volunteer tries to locate them to deliver the gift bag and to visit.

**Volunteer Recruitment**
Volunteers are recruited on an ongoing basis through notices in the synagogue bulletin, the annual program guide, surveys which ask members about their interests and solicit their involvement, and telephone calls to new members. Of these methods, telephone calls have proven to be the most effective.

**Volunteer Training**
Prior to their first visit, volunteers receive an orientation, facilitated by synagogue staff or volunteer professionals. (See Chapter 2.) The training includes:

- background information on the elderly (emotional, psychological, and physical issues)
- suggested activities to do when visiting residents at nursing homes
- handling yourself during a visit
- handling patient complaints
- guidelines for a successful visit

**Volunteer Expectations**
Volunteers are expected to be responsible and to follow through on their commitment to visit. They are told that accepting an assignment as a friendly visitor means making a sustained commitment to be a friend. They are reminded that the elderly person depends on their visit and will be disappointed if they do not arrive when expected.

Volunteers keep a record of their visits to nursing home residents. The record includes: name of resident, name of nursing home, date of visit, length of visit, summary of visit, and any special concerns. They send a copy to the synagogue's program director every quarter.

**Making It Happen**
Congregation 3rai Jehudah has a social work intern who meets with Jewish nursing home residents, with special attention to those who are members of the congregation (approximately 50 individuals). He provides regular information that helps the Friendly Visitors program maintain up-to-date lists of residents.

The volunteer chairperson of Friendly Visitors enlists volunteers three to four weeks in advance of a delivery, decides on the contents of the gift bag, and assures that all of the materials are ready for volunteers when they arrive at the synagogue.

Synagogue staff handle the administration of the program—contacting nursing homes, maintaining lists of residents, and so on.

**Program Costs**
Materials cost between $1.00 and $1.50 per bag. The total budget for the year is $800 to $1,000. Some of this expense is covered by donations received during the year. The balance comes from the congregation's general budget.

**Replication Advice**
1. **Assign volunteers and/or staff to make regular calls to the nursing homes for up-dated information.** The most challenging aspect of the Friendly Visitors program is maintaining an accurate list of nursing home residents who are Jewish.
2. **Provide training to volunteers before they make nursing home visits.** Training can be done with written materials, over the telephone, or in person. Volunteers need information about the elderly and guidelines for handling their visits successfully.
3. **Encourage volunteers to keep written records of their activities.** Have a professional from the congregation contact volunteers to find out whom they have visited and if there are special concerns of which the rabbi, social worker, or other professional should be made aware.
4. **Contact a local school of social work to find out about engaging a student intern to help the synagogue maintain connections with the Jewish elderly in nursing homes.** Social work interns need to be supervised by an accredited professional on the synagogue staff. Interns benefit from their synagogue-based training and experience. In exchange, they bring fresh energy and manpower to the synagogue's program for the elderly.
Elder Helpers began with a planning grant from the Jewish Heritage Foundation. With this grant, Jewish Family & Children Services conducted a needs assessment study that included a survey of over 7,000 Jewish households and focus groups with older adults, the children of older adults, and community leaders. The primary need identified was transportation for day and evening events. In focus groups, seniors expressed sadness over losing their ability to drive and annoyance at the lack of affordable, reliable transportation in the city.

Elder Helpers set its priorities based on the needs identified by the study as well as on what the program realistically could provide. These were:

- transportation
- companionship
- short-term opportunities

Elder Helpers
Target Group: Elder Helpers is a volunteer program designed to assist independent-living Jewish elderly in the community.

Program Description: Elder Helpers is a consortium of eight Jewish congregations and five communal agencies in Kansas City, Missouri. Elder Helpers provides a central telephone number for families or the elderly to call for referrals to services—whether their needs are for transportation, companionship, or assistance with everyday tasks. The synagogues provide volunteers and help identify seniors with needs. The program screens and trains these volunteers, matches them with elders, and monitors the services provided. The program is professionally managed. It assures that the elderly and their families are well treated and have confidence in the services they receive. It encourages synagogues to collaborate in the delivery of services to Jewish older adults throughout the community.

Program Goals: The purpose of the program is to use volunteer resources to improve the quality of life for seniors and to keep them independent as long as possible.

Jewish Family & Children Services
925 Ward Parkway, Suite 106
Kansas City, MO 64114-3324
Tel: 816-333-1172

Participants
Elder Helpers serves elderly Jewish residents of the community, regardless of synagogue affiliation.

Schedule
Volunteers are expected to make a minimum 15-week commitment. The schedule, however, is flexible. Some elders do not want a volunteer to come every week. Others want someone to come the same day every week so that they can schedule all their errands on that day.

Services Provided
Elder Helpers provides three services to older adults in the Jewish community:

- transportation
- companionship
- short-term opportunities

Transportation. Elder Helpers provides essential transportation—for medical appointments, grocery shopping, clothes shopping, and other necessary trips out of the home. The model is one of companionship and advocacy. Rather than simply provide transportation, Elder Helpers volunteers serve as escorts. For example, volunteers pick up clients and take them to their doctors’ appointments. If a client chooses, the volunteer will sit with her in the waiting room, go into the doctor’s office with her to help clarify communications, pick her up at the door afterwards, stop at the pharmacy to pick up a prescription, and then, before leaving her, make certain that she is comfortable at home.

Volunteers are advocates for the elderly. If a volunteer sees that an elderly has an inadequate diet, for example, she notifies the social worker at Elder Helpers who then takes appropriate action.

Companionship. Some volunteers provide companionship in the elder’s home, visiting one or two hours a week, for a minimum of 15 weeks. Volunteers determine how best to use that time, whether it is playing cards with the elder, helping him/her around the house, or other activities. At the request of the elder, some volunteers bring along young children.

Short-term Opportunities. Elder Helpers also seeks members of the community who can provide special services to the elderly on a short-term basis with no particular time commitment. Many people volunteer to do hairdressing, to help with tax preparation or bookkeeping, to teach computer skills, and to share other skills and talents with the elderly.
Volunteer Screening

Elder Helpers thoroughly screens volunteers to assure that those who work in the program are safe and responsible. The screening process entails the following steps:

1. **Application.** Prospective volunteers must come into the Elder Helpers office to complete a short application form and to be interviewed. The application form asks for:
   - name
   - social security number
   - address
   - home and work telephone numbers
   - age
   - marital status
   - children
   - employment information
   - whether or not the applicant is Jewish and is a member of a synagogue
   - past volunteer experience
   - past experience working with older adults
   - how the applicant learned about the program
   - applicant's reasons for volunteering with Elder Helpers

In order to match them with an elder, applicants are also asked about their special skills and interests (e.g., gardening, collecting, cooking, music, etc.).

The Elder Helpers coordinator conducts a brief face-to-face interview with all applicants. She reviews their applications and talks to them about volunteer preferences.

2. **Background check.** As part of the application process, prospective volunteers sign an information release waiver. This form states that they understand that a background investigation will be conducted to qualify them for volunteering and they authorize the release of relevant information to Elder Helpers. An investigatory company, Avent Inc. (Tel: 800-367-5933) checks each applicant's driving record and criminal history. The check takes three to five days and costs the program about $25 per person. Elder Helpers receives a written report which is placed in the volunteer's file.

3. **References.** The application form asks for three work or personal references. The Elder Helpers coordinator sends out a letter and a questionnaire to two of these references. The letter explains that the individual will be volunteering to work one-on-one with a Jewish older adult and that the program seeks volunteers who are dependable, energetic, self-sufficient, patient, and have a love for people. The questionnaire asks:
   - how long and in what capacity they have known the applicant
   - how well the applicant takes supervision
   - how well the applicant relates to others
   - whether the applicant will enjoy an experience working as a volunteer with an older adult
   - whether the applicant will have trouble relating to an elderly person
   - whether the applicant will be dependable and will commit to a 15-week stay
   - whether the applicant will be able to work independently or need constant reinforcement

4. **TB Test.** Volunteers must submit a doctor's form verifying that they have had a tuberculin test with negative results within the past year. Those needing to have the test done are reimbursed for the cost.

5. **CPR Course.** All volunteers are required to take a four-hour CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) course, offered twice a year through Jewish Family & Children Services. This also is free of charge to Elder Helpers volunteers.

Client Contract

Elder Helpers takes great care to assure that the elders who receive volunteer services understand the program and are clear on the volunteers' liability

**Transportation Agreement.** Drivers are expected to have their own liability coverage. In addition, a transportation agreement form is signed by the elders or their authorized representatives. The form states that Jewish Family & Children Services, Elder Helpers, and its volunteers will not be held liable for any injury or damage resulting from transportation services provided by the volunteer.

**Confidentiality.** Each elder also receives a letter assuring them of confidentiality and explaining the few conditions under which information would be released.

Making the Match

Once a volunteer has been screened successfully and an appropriate match made with an elder, a confirmation letter is sent to the volunteer. Included with this letter is a volunteer assignment sheet which lists:

- name of client
- address and telephone number
- emergency contact's name and telephone number
- start date
- job responsibilities
- directions to the home

Volunteers are instructed to call their elder by telephone. They are to introduce
themselves, set a schedule with the elder, and then notify the Elder Helpers coordinator of the planned schedule.

At the same time, a letter is sent to the elders welcoming them to Elder Helpers, informing them of who their volunteer is, and confirming the kind of help they can expect.

**Making It Happen**

Elder Helpers is the product of a consortium of eight synagogues and five communal agencies that operates under the auspices of Jewish Family & Children Services. The eight synagogues represent all streams of Judaism. The agencies include JF&CS, the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Community Center, Meirion Medical Center, and Shalom Geriatric (nursing home, assisted and independent living for the elderly). The consortium envisioned the project, oversaw the background needs assessment research, and wrote the grant proposal for Elder Helpers.

The program has a full-time paid coordinator, who is a social worker housed at Jewish Family & Children Services. The program's operation is guided by an Advisory Board comprised of lay representatives of the congregations and agencies. The Advisory Board meets regularly with the Elder Helpers coordinator to discuss recruitment and retention of volunteers and elders and ways to assure the continued growth and excellence of the program.

The congregations' role is to provide both elders needing assistance and volunteers.

**Program Costs**

The cost of the program includes salary for a full-time coordinator, administrative costs (telephone, postage, printing, computer), marketing materials (posters, brochures, etc.), and training for volunteers. Other expenses include:

- database with information on referrals, elders receiving services, volunteers, congregations and others involved in the program
- liability coverage for volunteers
- mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers
- volunteer screening (background check, TB test, CPR course)
- recognition events and incentives for volunteers

In addition to budgeted items, the program puts out a "wish list" for donations from the community. This list contains items such as Polaroid film (for volunteer name badges), materials for home repairs, food gift certificates, prepaid phone cards, large-print books, and tokens for taxis and buses.

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**Getting the Word Out**

The Elder Helpers coordinator speaks about the program at the local Rabbinical Council, at synagogue worship services, and at the staff and board meetings of each of the congregations. Every synagogue displays posters and has Elder Helpers brochures in its lobby.

**Repetition Advice**

1. **Gather the support of the congregations' rabbis.** A coordinated program like Elder Helpers requires strong rabbinic leadership to motivate volunteerism in the congregations, to put the elderly on the agendas of the synagogues' agenda, and to open the way for congregations to become part of a community-wide approach to senior care.

2. **Explain the program carefully to older adults with written materials that are clear and simple.** Older adults are often protective of their independence. Some fear that accepting help might affect their social security or other benefits. Others are skeptical that services are free of charge. These obstacles must be overcome for them to benefit from the program.

3. **Take extra steps to reassure the older adults that the volunteers who come to their homes are honest, safe, and reliable.** It may be difficult for older people to let someone whom they do not know come into their homes. Photo-identification badges, business cards, and letters of introduction from the agency all serve to legitimate the volunteer to the elder.

4. **Develop an extensive list of volunteers with diverse talents and interests.** The richer the menu of short-term services, the more likely the specific needs of the elderly will be met. As you uncover volunteers' talents, enlarge your program's offerings. As clients indicate their needs, let the volunteer sector know what opportunities exist for those willing to help.

5. **Screen volunteers carefully.** Extra effort at the beginning pays off later on. About two-thirds of those who initially express an interest in volunteering with Elder Helpers cannot or will not in fact do the work. It is best to eliminate the other one-third early on.

6. **Monitor volunteers' activities.** Be certain they call and visit the elders when they say they will. If a volunteer has poor follow-through, find a replacement.

7. **In a collaborative model like Elder Helpers, synagogues and communal agencies must share information, human resources, and responsibility.** Creating such collaboration requires expert facilitation and constant effort to change the way congregations and agencies usually approach programming and service delivery. Funders increasingly are looking for ways to support communities rather than individual congregations. All involved must understand that collaboration is essential to success.
Across the American social landscape, educational programs for seniors and retirees are growing at a notable rate. Synagogues that offer educational opportunities for their older members easily fill their classes. Jewish seniors are often well educated and they appreciate the value of life-long learning. In retirement, they have time to delve into studies that they could not pursue when they were busy working and raising their families. Younger students may take courses for grades, degrees, and passports to better jobs, but older adults more often come to educational programs for mental stimulation, intellectual challenge, and the sheer pleasure of learning.
LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Successful educational programs for seniors take into account adult learning styles. They provide hands-on activities, visual stimulus material, and opportunities for students to ask questions and engage with the material. Teachers recognize that students come into the class with a wealth of life experience and they use this to good effect in their lessons. They understand that older adults may have fears of technology or doubts about their own ability to perform in a classroom and they support and coach their students appropriately.

2. Successful programs offer stimulating and challenging courses. Programmers report that their most popular classes are those that are intellectually or physically challenging. They find that most of the retirees they work with are "reading and growing and stretching themselves. Courses perceived as "baffling" tend to attract few participants.

3. Successful programs understand that older adults come to classes not only to learn but also to socialize. They provide opportunities for the students to get to know one another and to become a "community of older learners."

4. Successful programs make use of the community's abundant volunteer teaching talent. They staff their courses with retired university professors, volunteers from business and industry, and others who want to apply their teaching skills and share their knowledge with older learners.

5. Successful programs make it easy for older adults to take part in the program. They hold cost to a minimum and provide transportation to those who need it.

6. Successful programs solicit input from the older adults about which topics they want to study and which skills they want to learn. Seeking input helps the program choose content that is relevant and interesting and it empowers seniors to take charge of their own learning.

Chapter 5: Limud: Exercising the Mind

TORAH STUDY

Jewish tradition teaches that in old age one is to continue to learn and grow. A person who has studied Torah in his or her youth should not desist from learning (Yevamot 62b).

Torah study can be highly meaningful to older adults, who bring a lifetime of experience to the complex moral, ethical, and theological questions that emerge in the study of Jewish texts. Some who never had a connection to Biblical Judaism discover their attachment to the story of the Jewish people. Others thrill to the intellectual challenge of Torah study.

A number of congregations offer Jewish text study for their senior members. Although each chooses different texts for their work, these courses share several organizing principles:

- They are led by the rabbi, who chooses the text, teaches the material, and leads the discussion.
- They use text as a springboard for wide-ranging conversations.
- They enjoy a loose structure that encourages intellectual curiosity and high levels of participation.
- The text is read in class. No homework or other preparation is required.
- The classes meet regularly for one to two hours each session.
- Each class is a self-contained unit. People can come whenever they choose and newcomers can join the group without feeling intimidated or lost.
- The classes are promoted through announcements in the synagogue bulletin, fliers sent to participants, and word of mouth.
- The program serves as an effective outreach tool, bringing senior members into the synagogue building and attracting newcomers who are drawn to the intellectual climate created by serious text study.

Torah Study

Target Group: Torah study attracts intellectually active Jewish older adults. Although some programs are designated for members of the congregation, anyone who wants to study is accepted. Study groups are kept small enough for conversation, between 10 and 20 participants.

Program Description: Torah study groups meet regularly in the synagogue to study and discuss Jewish texts. The classes are led by the rabbi. Texts used include the Torah portion of the week, the Talmud, and Pirkei Avot.

Program Goals: Torah study educates older adults, challenges them intellectually, and helps them feel the connection between their own lives and the story of the Jewish people.
A Sampler of Torah Study Programs

Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)
Rabbi Richard Flavin at Temple Beth Sholom (Manchester, CT) leads a regular discussion group on Pirkei Avot. The class meets twice a month from 10:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. There are about ten participants, all members of the congregation. The oldest participant is 93 years old.

Pirkei Avot has much to offer a class of older adults: it is a rich starting point for discussion; it allows for multiple interpretations; and it encourages seniors to share their wisdom. Participants have ample opportunity to use their life experiences in examining Pirkei Avot. For example, stimulated by the text’s discussion about imparting wisdom to others, they discuss what life has taught them and what they would like to pass on to others.

Temple Beth Sholom
400 Middle Turnpike East
Manchester, CT 06040
Tel: 860-643-9503

Weekly Parasha
Rabbi Gerald Kane and Cantor Paul Silbersher alternate in leading a weekly Torah study for seniors at Temple B’nai Jehudah (Kansas City, MO). Each session lasts an hour and a half. Participants use the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh. The portion of the week is the starting point from which active, wide-ranging discussion ensues. The program attracts 20 to 30 participants each week.

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

Talmud
Rabbi Ariel Stone-Halpern of Congregation Beth Israël (Portland, OR) leads year-round Jewish text study based on the Talmud. Classes meet alternate Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Between 10 and 25 participants attend each class.

Class time is spent in in-depth text study with individuals taking turns reading aloud. To help students understand the text better, the rabbi presents the anthropological, sociological, and historical context in which the texts were written. Every few sessions the rabbi reviews introductory material on the organization of the Talmud and its various parts. In recent months the group has studied Sukkah (2a, 2b), Gittin (55b, 56a), Chaggigah (14b, 15a, 15b) and Bava Metzia (58b, 59a, 59b).

Congregation Beth Israel
1972 NW Flanders Street
Portland, OR 97209-2097
Tel: 503-222-1069

Tanakh (Bible)
Temple Emanuel (St. Louis, MO) has a membership of 1,400 people, more than half of whom are over 65 years old. The congregation offers a bi-weekly Bible class during the day for seniors. The program, held in the synagogue’s library, can accommodate 20 participants. Each session is one and a half hours long. All of the participants bring their own texts to the class.

The current class is studying the complete Tanakh, from Genesis through Chronicles II. Once their study of the Tanakh is complete, the class plans to read the New Testament and the Koran for a comparative study of religions.

The class is led by Rabbi Joseph R. Rosenthal, a professor at Washington University and the rabbi at Temple Emanuel. He presents contextual material on Jewish culture and history and information on how the Bible evolved. Participants examine similarities across stories in the Bible, discuss who wrote them, and grapple with the various ramifications of meaning in the text. The class also has occasional guest speakers.

Temple Emanuel
12166 Conway Road
St. Louis, MO 63141
Tel: 314-432-5877
Valley Beth Shalom Computer Program

Target Group: Valley Beth Shalom Senior Center Computer Program is open to seniors age 55 and older. It attracts active seniors and teaches them skills that will be especially precious to them when they become less active or homebound.

Program Description: The program offers beginning, intermediate, and advanced computer classes in a computer lab set up in the synagogue. Classes, taught by volunteer instructors, meet two hours a week for ten weeks.

Program Goals: The goals of the program are to keep the seniors' minds active and to teach them useful skills that will help them maintain contact with family, the community, and the wider world.

Valley Beth Shalom
15739 Ventura Boulevard
Encino, CA 91366
Tel: 818-788-6000

Participants
The computer program is open to seniors who are 55 years of age or older. Those who are non-members of the synagogue pay a higher fee for the course.

Space
The computer lab is set up in the synagogue's audio-visual room.

Schedule
Classes are held one day a week for 10 weeks. There are no classes during the summer. Each class period is two hours. Most of the classes are offered in the daytime, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. There is one class held on Monday evenings, 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Equipment
The computer lab has 12 donated IBM-compatible computers, with Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 operating systems. They have Microsoft Office Suite with Word (a word processing program), Quicken (a personal finance program), games, and Internet Explore (a Web browser). The computers are on a 10 mbs Ethernet LAN (Local Area Network). The synagogue has a dedicated ISDN communication line and POP3 Email Unix server through which there is access to the Internet at no cost to Senior Center participants.

Outline of Classes
The program opened with the beginners' class. This class teaches hardware and software architecture, how to buy a computer, Windows commands, and hand-eye coordination using the mouse to play simple games. As interest grew, the program expanded. There are now several beginning classes as well as two levels of more advanced courses. Mid-level courses cover word processing, Quicken, and spreadsheets. There is an advanced course on the Internet and electronic mail (e-mail). Admission to the higher level courses requires completion of the introductory courses or permission of the instructor.

In addition to classes, students take a field trip to a large computer store where they can look at equipment and software for sale and receive advice on purchases.

Making It Happen
The program was initiated by the synagogue's Executive Director. There are four instructors/volunteers from the synagogue who have professional backgrounds in computers or computer education. The program is administered by a volunteer, who was one of the first seniors to take computer courses at the Valley Beth Shalom Senior Center. It receives some minimal support from the synagogue's office staff.
Program Costs
Computers for the Senior Center at Valley Beth Shalom were all donated. The program spends about $2,000 a year for computer upgrades and maintenance. Synagogue members pay $25 per class; non-members pay $75.

Getting the Word Out
The program is advertised through synagogue mailings and word of mouth. These have been sufficient to bring in large numbers of participants.

Replication Advice
1. Limit class size to two students per computer. Participants in the Valley Beth Shalom program desire more access to the computers and more assistants to help with hands-on assignments. Make certain you have enough computers, instructions, and assistants. Do not admit more students than can be comfortably accommodated in the course.

2. Seek donations of computers. Advertise the program’s need for donated computers through the synagogue’s bulletin and other mailings to the congregation. Make computer donations a project of the Men’s Club or the Sisterhood. Seek out members whose businesses are upgrading their computers and ask them to donate their old equipment to the synagogue. See what is available through your local Goodwill Industries computer reclamation center. Active solicitation of donated computers will result in the equipment the program needs to serve its older students well.

3. Consider the computer program as only one of many educational and creative opportunities for seniors in the congregation. The computer program at Beth Valley Shalom is envisioned as the first piece in a Senior Center that will offer a variety of classes and opportunities for older adults. The Senior Center has wide potential, "open to the imagination of the seniors."

A Sampler of Computer Books and Web Sites of Special Interest to Seniors

Computer Books

Web sites
www.50plus.org (50Plus)
50Plus, an association for encouraging fitness and more active lifestyles for those who are 50 years of age or older, provides information on fitness and aging.

www.aarp.org (American Association of Retired Persons)
This Web site contains extensive resources on finances, health care, employment, care giving, and other issues of concern to the American Association of Retired Persons.

www.ageofreason.com (Age of Reason)
Age of Reason offers more than 5,000 links to Web sites of interest to those over 50 years old.

www.elderhostel.org (Elderhostel)
Elderhostel’s Web site has information on educational adventures all over the world for people 55 years of age and older.

www.grandtimes.com/nagp/ (Grandtimes)
Grandtimes is a weekly online magazine with information on travel, products, and services geared to older adults. It also has an extensive listing of other Web sites of interest.

www.seniorlaw.com/index.htm (SeniorLaw)
SeniorLaw provides updated information on Medicare and Medicaid, estate planning, trusts, the rights of the elderly and disabled, and other laws pertaining to seniors.

www.seniornet.org (SeniorNet)
SeniorNet is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to build a community of computer-using seniors. SeniorNet provides adults 55 and older with information and instruction about computer technologies. The site also has message boards and chats for computer-using seniors.

www.ssa.gov/ (Social Security Administration Online)
The SSA site has the latest information about social security.

www.world.std.com/-yv/ (Yiddish Voice)
This site offers a Yiddish language radio show which Yiddish-speaking seniors can access if they have speakers and a sound card installed on their computers.
College Courses in the Synagogue

Westchester Community College (Valhalla, NY) has a senior adult program called “Mainstream.” The program offers free, non-credit college courses through any community organization that wants to bring educational opportunities to older adults. The only requirement is that the course be open to the community at large and not limited to the organization’s members. Approached by the director of the college (who is a member of the congregation), Congregation Sons of Israel decided to offer classes to seniors through the Mainstream Program.

The program is a partnership between the local college and the synagogue. The college provides the professors and the educational materials. The synagogue provides the publicity, provides the venue, and administers the program. Seniors who take part in the program are active learners. They do the assigned reading at home, engage in lively discussion in class, and ask a lot of questions.

College Courses in the Synagogue

Target Group: The program is open to any member of the community who is 55 years of age or older.

Program Description: Non-credit college courses, open to the entire community, are offered at the synagogue. The synagogue organizes the program. A professor from the local college prepares the materials and teaches the classes.

Program Goals: The program brings seniors into the synagogue, lets them know that they are an integral part of the congregation, and gives them an opportunity to stretch themselves intellectually. The program is also a way for the synagogue to provide a service to the community at large.

Congregation Sons of Israel
1666 Pleasantville Road
Bricklawn Manor, NY 10510
Tel: 914-762-2700

Westchester Community College
75 Grasslands Road
Valhalla, NY 10595
Tel: 914-785-6733

Participants
The program is open to all members of the community who are 55 years of age or older (although age limits are not strictly enforced). The program includes those who are congregation members and those who are not, Jews and non-Jews. Most of the participants are healthy, active seniors. Some 25 to 50 students come to each class. The program has unlimited capacity: When more people come, the class moves to a larger room.

Schedule
Classes meet six weeks in the fall and spring. Each class meets one day a week from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Course Content
In the first years of the program, the congregation has offered three classes:
- Pursuing Jewish Themes in Film and Short Stories
- Films on Jewish Identity (See Chapter 6.)
- Family Relationships in Yiddish and Jewish Literature

The next season’s offering will be a course on comparative religion.

Making the Program Accessible
Classes are held in the meeting area in the rear of the synagogue’s small chapel. The chapel is connected to the synagogue’s infra-red system which assists people who are hearing impaired.

The program helps arrange rides for those who need transportation.

Making It Happen
At first, courses were selected by the cantor, who chose topics from the college’s catalogue he thought would be of interest to older adults. Later students began to suggest the courses they want the synagogue to offer. A professor from the college assembles the materials for the course and teaches all of the sessions.

Program Costs
The program has minimal costs to the synagogue: advertisements in the newspaper and refreshments for participants.

The course is free of charge to students, except for the cost of textbooks.

Getting the Word Out
Organizations that offer courses through Westchester Community College are responsible for advertising course offerings to the community. Congregation Sons of Israel places advertisements in the synagogue bulletin and in the local Anglo-Jewish and community newspapers.
ADVENTURES IN LEARNING

Shepherd's Centers of America is a not-for-profit organization that coordinates nearly 100 local Shepherd's Centers throughout the United States. The local Shepherd's Centers are interfaith organizations that bring together Jewish synagogues and Catholic and Protestant churches to serve the total community. They offer older adults education, enrichment activities, assistance, and opportunities to help others.

The largest of the local centers is in Greensboro, North Carolina. It is comprised of two synagogues and 35 churches. In addition to the educational program described in this section, the center offers a wide range of volunteer services for older adults, including:

- a computer learning center
- life enrichment programs (trips, outings, exercise classes, special workshops)
- tax counseling provided by volunteers trained by the Internal Revenue Service
- transportation provided by volunteer drivers
- minor home repairs by skilled retirees
- a resource center to help volunteer and professional leaders strengthen services to older adults in their congregations.

These services are provided by retirees, all volunteers. Volunteers also manage the center's bookkeeping, planning, and administration.

Adventures in Learning

Target Group: Adventures in Learning is open to all adults in the community who are 60 years of age or older.

Program Description: Adventures in Learning is an ongoing educational program that offers physical education, handicraft, and academic courses. The program is administered and taught by volunteers. Several hundred people take part in Adventures in Learning each term, creating an exciting learning environment for older adults.

Program Goals: Adventures in Learning provides stimulating and challenging educational opportunities for all of the older adults within a geographic community. It creates opportunities for fellowship and it empowers seniors to assume leadership roles in organizing and running the program.

Shepherd's Center of America
1 West Armour, Suite 201
Kansas City, MO 64111
Tel: 816-960-2022

Shepherd's Center
302 West Market Street
Greensboro, NC 27401
Tel: 336-378-0765

Beth David Synagogue
804 Winnway Drive
Greensboro, NC 27410
Tel: 336-294-0007

Temple Emanuel
713 North Greene Street
Greensboro, NC 27401
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Chapter 5: Limud: Exercising the Mind

Participants
Adventures in Learning offers enrichment and socializing opportunities for all seniors in the community who are 60 years of age or older. Participants are generally active retirees who live independently or in retirement communities. They need not be affiliated with one of the sponsoring congregations. Approximately 450 people enroll each term.

Space
Because Adventures in Learning attracts large numbers of participants, the First Baptist Church in Greensboro is the only congregation with adequate space for the program. Space is donated to the program free of charge. In order to accommodate increased numbers, some communities, like Richmond, Virginia, have divided their Adventures in Learning program into two separate locations in the community.

Schedule
Adventures in Learning has three terms a year—fall, winter, and spring. Each term runs one day a week for six weeks. The program offers a full day of classes and lectures plus lunch. Most participants attend the full day of classes although some come for only one class. The program encourages participation, even if someone has to miss one or more weeks due to other commitments.

Registering for Courses
A simple registration form, included with the program's brochure, asks for name, address, telephone number, name of church/synagogue, course selections, and registration fee.

Program Outline
The day is organized as follows:

Morning
9:30-10:30  Class #1: (from five course offerings).
10:30-10:45  Break
10:45-11:45  Class #2: (from five course offerings).
11:45-12:00  Break

Afternoon
12:00-12:05  Midday activity: A quiet period of inspiration and meditation led by a member of the clergy or by volunteers.
12:05-1:00  Lunch
1:00-1:30  Forum on a general interest topic
1:30-1:40  Break
1:40-2:40  Class #3: (from five course offerings).

Course Offerings
The program offers diverse classes, generally of four types: academic, practical, physical exercise, and handicrafts. For example, the most recent term included the following course offerings:

Academic Courses
• Spanish
• The Legacy of Jane Austen
• Great Decisions (discussion of U.S. foreign policy)
• Poetry Anthology (based on the 20 most popular poems in the English language)
• Issues Facing Greensboro (presented by community leaders)
• Music Appreciation (both live and taped performances)
• Sanctuary Tour (visits to six churches and synagogues to learn about their faiths, histories, and the distinctive aspects of their sanctuaries)

Practical
• Financial Planning & Investments
• Physical, Emotional & Financial Well Being (Simple, inexpensive home modifications, comforting ways to face losses in life, living and irrevocable trusts, powers of attorney, wills, medical directives, document storage, etc.)
• The Gift of Grandparenting

Physical Exercise
• Hatha Yoga
• Tai Chi

Handicrafts
• Beginning Woodcarving
• Attracting Birds to Your Backyard
• Needlepoint Sampler
In addition to these classes, a half-hour forum after lunch features a member of the community presenting on a topic of general interest. Recent series have included:
• a chiropractor speaking about back pain
• an attorney speaking on legal issues facing seniors

Making the Program Accessible
The registration form has a check box for those able to help with transportation to Adventures in Learning. Matches are made and a volunteer driver is sent to pick up participants who indicate that they need transportation.

Making It Happen
Adventures in Learning is overseen by a steering committee of 10 to 15 volunteers who have shown an interest in the program through the years. This group brainstorms which classes to offer, contacts the volunteer teachers, and arranges the program.
The Greensboro Shepherd's Center has two half-time paid staff persons who make certain that the volunteers follow through on their plans and that the pieces are in place for each term.
All of the teachers in the program are volunteers. Many are retired teachers or faculty members from local colleges and universities.

Role of the Synagogues as Sponsors of the Shepherd's Center
• The synagogues support the Shepherd's Center by paying annual dues and lending their name to the center's publications.
• The synagogues make space in their buildings available to center programs.
• The rabbis regularly teach in Adventures for Learning. Their course, "Ideas in Judaism," is a highly popular one that attracts many non-Jewish students.
• The congregation provides lists of its retired members to the Shepherd's Center.
• Two representatives from each synagogue sit on the Sponsors Council, a representative body of the 37 sponsoring congregations. Representatives meet each quarter to receive updates on the work of the Shepherd's Center, to talk about what they are doing for seniors within their own congregations, and to exchange ideas and share resources.

Program Costs
Adventures in Learning charges a $10 registration fee. The prepared lunch is an additional $4. Extra fees are also charged for some classes to cover the cost of a textbook or craft materials.
The cost to the Shepherd's Center is small. The program is organized by volunteers, all of the teachers are volunteers, and the space is donated. The major costs to the center are postage, printing, and staff salaries.

The overall operation of the Shepherd's Center is supported financially by the 37 congregations who each make an annual contribution of $200. The center also receives funding from local civic groups, foundations, and individual donors.

Getting the Word Out
Adventures in Learning is advertised through press releases to the local paper, notices in the bulletins of the sponsoring congregations, and a four-page brochure included in the quarterly Shepherd's Center newsletter. The first page of the brochure contains general information about the program and the list of forum presenters. The inside two pages contain the class offerings and a registration form. The back page is a Who's Who of faculty.

The newsletter with the brochure is sent to 9,000 individuals. The mailing list was originally developed from lists provided by the sponsoring congregations and a door-to-door campaign which identified retired individuals living in each neighborhood. For a fee, the post office has provided the names and addresses of retirement-aged people in three zip codes not previously surveyed by the center. These names will be added to the center’s mailing list, which is continually being developed.

Replication Advice
1. Encourage groups of older adults within the synagogue to attend Adventures in Learning. There is comfort in numbers. Some older members of the synagogue may be hesitant to take part in activities outside of the Jewish community. Once a critical number of Jewish seniors attends Adventures in Learning, more in the congregation are likely to join them.

2. To derive the most benefit from the synagogue’s sponsorship of the Shepherd’s Center, encourage your members to participate. The program begins as an institutional link between the synagogue and the Shepherd's Center. It does not necessarily trickle down to the membership unless it is actively promoted by the rabbis and other leaders in the congregation. Encourage attendance at Adventures in Learning from the bimah, announce it in the synagogue bulletin, and leave brochures in the synagogue lobby. Make an effort to get representatives onto the Sponsors Council who are enthusiastic about the Shepherd's Center and able to maintain an active connection between the program and the congregation.

Many synagogues offer social programs for their older members. These include lunch-and-learn programs, book clubs, film series, and intergenerational programs. Such programs serve several purposes:

- They keep retirees and mobile elderly connected to the synagogue.
- They form a sense of community among program participants.
- They provide entertainment and can be bright points on the older adult's calendar.

Social programs in the synagogue are a valuable antidote to the isolation of some elders. Despite their apparent simplicity, these programs can be very important to participants. Some of the elderly women get their hair done the day before and many attendees arrive a half hour or an hour early for events. This may be behavior characteristic of the age, but it also shows the important place given to these events in the seniors' daily lives.
LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Successful programs have quality leadership—people with good ideas and strong group skills. The programs generally depend on volunteer power, most often provided by younger seniors. After all their years of "doing for the temple," many of the elders enjoy "being waited on."

2. Successful programs have the active support of the rabbi and cantor. Clergy help promote the program within the congregation. Their appearance at program events communicates to the older adults that they remain valued members of the synagogue.

3. Successful programs are accessible to participants. They hold costs to a minimum and provide transportation to those who need it.

SENIORS KEEP IN TOUCH

For decades, Jewish congregations have sponsored lunch-and-learn programs for their senior members. Once referred to as Golden Age Clubs, they are more likely today to carry names like "Nosar and Drosh," "L'Vere Wires," or "Honorable Members." These programs are pearls on a necklace—a series of one-time, stand-alone events laced together across the programming year. Programmers have learned that older adults generally will not commit to multiple weeks. Many like the flexibility of coming when they can; at the same time, they like the predictability of knowing that the program meets on a regular basis.

Congregation B'nai Jeshrun is a large, historic Reform synagogue with 1,000 family units. Their luncheon program for older adults, Seniors Keep in Touch, has been in existence for over two decades. It is one of the ways that B'nai Jeshrun cares for and includes its elderly members in the life of the congregation.

Seniors Keep in Touch

Target Group: Seniors Keep in Touch, a social program for independent-living elderly, makes special efforts to assure that frail members can avail themselves of the program. The program generally attracts the congregation's older members, who are in their 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Program Description: Seniors Keep in Touch meets in the synagogue once a month. The program includes lunch followed by a speaker or a performance. The programming year begins with a theater and lunch program and ends with a special senior Shabbat dinner and worship service.

Program Goals: The major aims of the program are to help the elderly maintain their ties to the congregation and to demonstrate the synagogue's continued concern for them.

Congregation B'nai Jeshrun
1025 South Orange Avenue
Short Hills, N.J. 07078
Tel: 973-379-2258
Participants
Seniors Keep in Touch is publicized for those who are at least 60 years old, but in actuality it serves people in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. The program is intended for congregants, although guests are welcomed. Some 30 to 40 participants come to each event. For many it is their one monthly trip to the synagogue.

Schedule
Seniors Keep in Touch meets once a month, seven times a year. The program is usually held on the third Thursday of each month. In order not to confuse the elderly participants, every effort is made to keep to a regular schedule. Brav Jeshurun gives special consideration to the weather when programming for its elder members. Programs are not held in January or February—some members are South for the winter, others are afraid of the cold weather. The December program is one that can be cancelled easily if the weather turns bad. The programming year ends in June.

Program Outline
Meetings start promptly at 12:15 p.m. and end by 2:00 p.m. The format is consistent, offering participants the comfort of predictability:
- opening remarks
- announcements and sharing personal news
- welcome from the clergy
- blessing over the bread, led by a member of the group, and lunch (hot soup, sandwiches, and dessert brought in from a neighborhood deli)
- presentation (lecture, slide show, performance, etc.)
The presentation is no more than 30 to 45 minutes. Guest speakers are asked to be sensitive to the audience and to conclude their presentation early if the group seems to have reached its fill.

Programming Criteria
Seniors Keep in Touch fills the calendar year with presentations that are easy to organize yet interesting and relevant to the elderly. Selections are based on these criteria:
- The content is age-appropriate.
- The programs are varied month to month—a lecture by a curator from the museum, a doctor speaking on a health issue, a member of the clergy leading the group in Jewish study, a musical program, and so on.
- The cost is as low as possible.

Organizers take advantage of talent in the synagogue, drawing on members of the congregation and the clergy for their programs. When the opportunity arises, older people from the community are invited to present. Seniors respond well to guest speakers or performers who are close to their own age.

Special Events
The programming year begins and ends with a special event. The first event of the year is a theatre party. The program offers lunch at a restaurant on the grounds of a local playhouse, a matinee performance, and transportation. This program dares in a number of participants who are not seen at the regular programs during the year. This program costs $50 to $60 per person. Half is covered by fees; half is underwritten by the synagogue. The low cost makes this an attractive program to many.

The programming year ends with Senior Shabbat in June, which includes a special Friday night dinner at the synagogue followed by services. Members of the group are invited to take on special roles during the Kabbalat Shabbat service: d’vi’i Torah, candle lighting, readings, and so on. The rabbi chooses a discussion topic for that evening that has particular relevance for seniors.

Making The Program Accessible
Seniors Keep in Touch meets during the day since most of the elderly participants prefer not to come out at night.

Transportation is provided for everyone who needs assistance getting to the synagogue. Arrangements are made with taxicabs (each transporting three people). To accommodate participants with hearing impairment, a microphone is provided and guest speakers are encouraged to use it.

Making It Happen
Seniors Keep in Touch is organized and run by volunteers with some support from synagogue staff.

The program has three co-chairs. One is a younger member of the congregation with a special affinity for this population. She plans the programs, invites the speakers, and oversees the events.

The program has a five-person board made up of seniors. Tasks are divided up so that no one person has inordinate responsibility (e.g., one person makes phone calls, one takes reservations, and one orders the food).

Synagogue staff set up the tables, serve the lunch, and clean up. Years ago the group did this work, but now that members have become more elderly, they appreciate the service.
Program Costs
Each meeting costs approximately $600. Food is $350 to $400 per luncheon; taxis $150 per meeting; and honoraria $100 to $150. When a member of the congregation presents to the group, the program gives a small gift from the synagogue gift shop or makes a contribution in his/her honor in lieu of an honorarium.

Participants pay $3 for transportation, lunch, and program. Some monies come from endowments and contributions designated for senior services. The balance is covered by the synagogue.

Getting The Word Out
Announcements and publicity for Seniors Keep in Touch includes:
- a flier sent out three to four weeks in advance of the program. (The flier, designed by staff in the synagogue office, includes a tear-off response form with a return envelope. Responses are requested a week in advance of the program. Organizers always plan for an additional number of attendees who show up at the door without reservations.)
- announcement in the synagogue newsletter
- outreach letters sent out during the year inviting new participants
- outreach telephone calls made by a volunteer
- summary of the past year's activities in the B'nai Jeshurun annual guide
Announcements are generally made one month at a time. Providing a full-year calendar in advance has had no effect on participation.

Replication Advice
1. Stay on the lookout for good programs. The organizers of Seniors Keep in Touch constantly keep their "antennea" out for speakers, performers, and other programming resources.
2. Don't let transportation be a problem. Some elderly members may argue that they cannot get to the synagogue. Reassure them that the transportation will work and that they can do it.
3. Encourage socializing and mingling at the meetings. Avoid cliques. The fliers for Seniors Keep in Touch always say "bring a friend or come alone--a warm welcome awaits you." The chairperson asks regular attendees to sit with newcomers. She makes certain that everyone has a luncheon partner. She encourages more active seniors to attend as well in order to stimulate conversation and participation.

4. Involve the rabbis and cantor. At Congregation B'nai Jeshurun at least one member of the clergy comes to each luncheon to greet the group. The clergy's visible presence means a great deal to the elders.
5. Continually recruit new participants to the program. Encouraging new participants is the most difficult and frustrating part of running the program. Indeed, most such programs are reaching only a fraction of the eligible people in the congregation.
6. Do not measure success by numbers. In the words of a B'nai Jeshurun leader, "As long as we have an elderly population, we will offer this program. It doesn't matter if one month only 25 show up. If they had a pleasant afternoon, it's a success."

Chapter 6: Kehillah: Building Community
A Sampler of 101 Ideas for Single-Event Social Programs

Thirty-four Jewish congregations that offer social programs for seniors were asked to nominate successful events or activities worthy of replication. Their responses—the 101 ideas below—fall into ten programming categories:

- Jewish Calendar
- Life Passage
- Jewish Education
- Education on Issues of Concern to the Elderly
- General Education
- Yiddish
- Cultural Arts
- Exercise
- Recreation
- Trips

In designing the program year, organizers generally include events from more than one category. They find that different types of programs can attract different people and enlarge the pool of participants. At the same time, regular attendees appreciate the variety and look forward to the “special” events. Most important, perhaps, is the potential of a holistic approach—one that touches mind, body, and soul—to build a strong community, a kehillah for seniors.

The 101 ideas which follow are intended to stimulate your own creativity in developing a year of diverse, attractive social programs for older adults.

Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar provides an obvious yet meaningful framework for organizing programming for older adults. These programs give seniors the opportunity to enjoy Shabbat and the festivals and it assures that they will not be alone on these special days in the Jewish year.

1. Shabbat dinner
2. Havdalah dinner with intergenerational sharing (Members bring mementos of their lives to share with other participants.)
3. Tu B’Shevat seder
4. Purim pizza dinner with pizzas in the shape of hamantaschen
5. model Pesach seder with full lunch
6. labeling and packaging yahrzeit candles to be distributed to members of the congregation to light on Yom Hashoah
7. dairy lunch on Sukkoth
8. Chanukah zimregah (songfest)—often with children from the religious school
9. Chanukah celebration with stories, reminiscences, discussion of historical and religious significance, songs, and refreshments

Life Passages

In helping elder members celebrate their life passages, achievements, and simchas, a congregation becomes more like a family.

10. 90th birthday parties—including toasting and reminiscing by family members
11. birthday celebrations on the 9s and 5s (60, 65, 70...)
12. Simcha Shabbat—a quarterly luncheon at which members celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and other simchas in the community

Jewish Education

It is the unique mission of the synagogue to provide lifelong Jewish learning. Educational programs for seniors generally rely on outside experts or professionals from the synagogue: professors from local colleges or universities, visiting rabbis or Jewish scholars, representatives from the Israeli embassy or consulate, scholars-in-residence, professionals from the local Jewish community, or the congregation’s rabbi. A few programs are based on the experience and knowledge of congregation members (e.g., the stories of Holocaust survivors). One congregation holds a special event at which the rabbi, cantor, and ritual director work together to conduct a discussion with seniors on a chosen topic.

The most successful topics are:

13. Seeds of Peace (an Israeli-Palestinian youth dialogue)
14. psychological wake-up of Arab leaders and heads-of-state
15. the current situation in Israel (e.g., political and social realities, the peace process, Israel-Diaspora relations)
16. American Jewish history (e.g., Eastern European immigration to America and settlement on the lower East side)
17. current events from a Jewish perspective (e.g., comparing the war in Bosnia with the Holocaust)
18. growing up Jewish in Germany
19. the Jews of India (lecture and slide show)
20. Ethiopian Jewry prior to Operation Moses (slide show)
21. the Holocaust from the perspective of its survivors (presentation and sharing)
22. cantors of the past (video)
23. changes in Judaism over the past decades
24. lying and Jewish ethics (discussion)
25. Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot) and human relationships (text study)
Education on Issues of Concern to the Elderly

The synagogue shows its concern for its older members when it helps them access information that can sustain their quality of life and their independence. Resources for these presentations include staff from local hospitals or medical centers, local Councils on the Aging, professionals from Jewish agencies that work with the elderly, university and college faculty with expertise in gerontology, lawyers and accountants who specialize in assisting the elderly. The most successful topics are:

26. the aging process
27. Medicare
28. residence options for seniors (including a bus trip to the Jewish Home for the Aged and other residences)
29. Jewish nursing homes and services for the elderly
30. sleep deprivation
31. nutrition (presented, with samples, by a professional nutritionist from the local health food store)
32. senior safety (presented by a member of the local police force)
33. techniques to stimulate and enhance memory
34. circulatory problems, diabetes, and other common medical problems of older people
35. medicine check (led by a local pharmacist who checks the participants’ medications for interaction problems)
36. stress management; how to use humor to reduce stress
37. how to avoid telephone scams aimed at seniors (presentation made by a con artist on parole)
38. how to protect your money
39. financial planning, ethical wills, tax and estate planning
40. legal issues pertinent to seniors (presented by a lawyer who discusses advance medical directives, wills, durable power of attorney, etc.)
41. how to organize your belongings (including how to handle 50 years’ accumulation of photographs)
42. Elderhostel opportunities

General Education

Many healthy seniors have agile minds and great intellectual curiosity. They like to be up-to-date, well informed, and connected to the world around them. Educational programs provide intellectual stimulation. They get people out of their homes and into the synagogue. And they give participants a chance to interact not only with their peers but also with acknowledged experts and famous speakers.

43. presentation by representatives of the synagogue (e.g., Sisterhood, library, Caring Committee) on volunteer needs and an opportunity to sign up to help
44. presentation by local agencies on the work they do in the community and the services they perform
45. Historical Society talks and film on local history
46. discussion of politics or election-year issues
47. meetings with prominent local politicians on their campaigns and their views of current issues
48. presentation by a television news personality on news sources and the production of news shows
49. talks by local business owners and professionals on their work
50. foreign travel slide shows and presentations (e.g., a local agency director spoke to a seniors group about her trip to the former Soviet Union and Poland. This talk was particularly meaningful to the many members of the group who were originally from Eastern Europe.)
51. meeting with a financial advisor who discusses good investments, which stocks to watch, how current politics are likely to affect the economy, and investment strategies
52. talk on racial issues, justice, and lies by a legal analyst of the O.J. Simpson trial
53. stories of inspiration from a summer camp for children with cancer, told by Dr. Ruth Westheimer

Yiddish

Some congregations have a number of immigrant elders with ties to Yiddish language and culture. These elders feel at home in Yiddish programs and savor the nostalgia they evoke.

54. Yiddish cheva: gathering of Yiddish-speaking participants to reminisce and talk about changes in the world
55. klezmer band performance
56. Yiddish singers from a klezmer band
57. Benson-Belt performer who does Yiddish humor and classic songs from the 1940s and 1950s

Cultural Arts

Cultural performances appeal to the intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities of older adults across the spectrum, from the vigorous to the frail.

58. performance by local musicians (One group sponsors performances by an ensemble of elderly musicians from the community-seniors performing for seniors.)
59. guitarist performing Israeli and popular folk music
60. performance by a local dance troupe
61. high school choral group
62. songfest with the cantor
63. participatory musical session with all of the attendees playing maracas, tambourines, rhythm sticks and other percussion instruments
64. movies (Yiddish films, movies on Jewish topics, films that portray Jewish characters)
65. open rehearsals at the theatre or symphony
66. lecture and discussion on Jews in film
67. lecture on Jewish theatre around the world
68. presentation on Broadway musicals past and present

Social Action
Social action projects give elder members an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of others.
69. seniors make sandwiches for a local soup kitchen
70. elders make get-well cards for the rabbi to deliver on hospital visits

Exercise
Physical exercise is a healthful activity as well as another opportunity to build social connections among seniors.
71. Tai Chi and relaxation
72. yoga
73. miniature golf tournament
74. walking club
75. line dancing
76. “danceercise”
77. self-massage and relaxation techniques

Recreation
Purely recreational programs provide balance to the programming year. Some of these ideas are “do-it-yourself” activities; others (like the magic show or handwriting analysis) rely on outside experts and entertainers.
78. a humorist on aging—the pitfalls of getting old
79. theme dinners (One group held a 1940s theme dinner with period music, dress, and memorabilia.)
80. Jewish bingo, with prizes for winners
81. Jewish trivia
82. bridge lessons
83. game night
84. annual picnic
85. magic show
86. handwriting analysis
87. flower arranging

Trips
Trips to local sites and events help seniors partake of the rich offerings in their cities. Organizers arrange for transportation, tickets, and often a meal. Many participants appreciate having someone manage the details and having a group with which to share the experience.
88. lunch at a restaurant followed by a matinee performance at the theatre
89. monthly dinner out at a restaurant
90. local museum (e.g., to view special exhibits with a connection to Jewish history or Jewish life)
91. art gallery specializing in Israeli art
92. outlet shopping mall
93. zoo, park, and botanical garden (with kosher box lunch)
94. the Big Apple Circus
95. local historical sites
96. governor’s mansion
97. walking tour of local Jewish sites
98. baseball game, preceded by a kosher deli tailgate party
99. casino
100. local movie house to see a Yiddish film
101. fall foliage excursion
CONTRIBUTING CONGREGATIONS
(ALPHABETICAL BY STATE)

The 101 ideas for single-event social events come from the following congregations:

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Davis, CA 95616
Tel: 916-738-0842

Congregation Emanu El
3512 North "E" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92405
Tel: 909-883-9168

Valley Beth Shalom
15739 Ventura Boulevard
Encino, CA 91366
Tel: 818-788-6000

Temple Shalom
1523 E. Monument
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
Tel: 719-634-5311

Temple Beth Shalom
400 Middle Turnpike East
Manchester, CT 06040
Tel: 860-643-9563

B'nai Aviv
1410 Indian Trace
Weston, FL 33326
Tel: 954-384-8265

Temple Kol Ami
8200 Peters Road
Plantation, FL 33324
Tel: 954-792-8636

Temple Sinai of N. Dade
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North Miami Beach, FL 33180
Tel: 305-932-9010

Congregation B'nai Tefuah
1358 Wilton Road
Deerfield, IL 60015-2029
Tel: 847-945-0470

North Brook Congregation
Ezra-Habonim
2093 Landwehr Road
Northbrook, IL 60062
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Temple Beth El
979 Dickinson Street
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Beth El
8215 Old Georgetown Road
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Congregation B'nai Tzedek
10621 S. Glen Road
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Mount Zion Temple
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St. Paul, MN 55105
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Brith Shalom Kesheeth Israel
1107 Litzien
St. Louis, MO 63117
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Congregation Temple Israel
2500 Wilmette Avenue
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Beth Israel Temple
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Tel: 773-238-0500

Beth Israel Temple
1901 W. Fullerton Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614
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Beth Israel Temple
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Omaha, NE 68132
Tel: 402-356-6536

Beth El
500 N. Jerome Avenue
Margate, NJ 08402
Tel: 609-822-7658

Beth El Synagogue
50 Maple Street
East Windsor, NJ 08561
Tel: 609-443-4454

Congregation B'nai Jeshurun
1025 South Orange Avenue
Short Hills, NJ 07078
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Temple Beth Shalom
108 Freehold Road
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Temple Emanuel-El of Long Beach
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Temple Israel
600 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
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Congregation Nevah Shalom
2900 SW Peaceful Lane
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Beth Israel
411 South 8th Street
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Beth Israel Temple
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Hazleton, PA 18201
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Temple Israel
Monroe Ave. & Gibson Street
Scranton, PA 18510
Tel: 717-342-0350

Temple Emanu-El
99 Taft Avenue
Providence, RI 02906
Tel: 401-331-1616

Congregation Beth Israel
3901 Shoal Creek Boulevard
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Temple Emanuel
8500 Hillcrest
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188 N. Prospect
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Temple Emanuel
1163 Persinger Road SW
Roanoke, VA 24015
Tel: 540-342-3378
**Book Club**

Reading is a favorite pastime of many older adults. Seniors at Beth Israel Temple desired a more intellectual approach to their reading. They wanted to talk about the books, to delve into them more deeply, and to gain new perspectives on them. The synagogue's Book Club was started to fulfill this interest. The program has grown over the last six years. Today it is not unusual for 100 older adults to arrive at the synagogue for the monthly meeting of the Book Club, ready for lively discussion.

**Beth Israel Temple Book Club**

**Target Group:** The Book Club attracts intellectually active seniors. Most are 70 to 75 years of age.

**Program Description:** The program, led by the rabbi, is based on discussions of bestsellers. There are eight sessions in the series.

**Program Goals:** The Book Club is designed to be provocative and intellectually challenging. It is an opportunity for the older adults in the community to come together, to argue and discuss, and to stretch intellectually.

Beth Israel Temple
98 North Church Street
Hazelton, PA 18201
Tel: 717-455-3971

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**Chapter 6: Kehillah: Building Community**

**Participants**

The Book Club is open to the entire community. Participants are generally members of the congregation, and their friends and colleagues. Most of the participants are in their 70s. A core group of at least 60 people comes to the entire series. There can be as many as 100 participants at a given session.

**Schedule**

The Book Club meets on the second Tuesday of each month from September to May. Meetings are from 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. No sessions are held during the winter months (December through February) when attendance has historically been poor.

**Program Outline**

During the summer, the rabbi selects eight books from bestseller lists. Suggestions for books also come from the well-read, knowledgeable volunteers who serve on the Book Club committee. Participants prefer fiction that tells a good story, explores important issues, and teaches lessons about life. Books read during the current season include:

- *Stones from the River* by Ursula Hegi
- *Fragments* by Benjamin Willmoritski
- *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks
- *Snow in August* by Pete Hamill
- *Worlds to Conquer: Nelson Rockefeller by Cary Reich
- *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier

The books are put on reserve at the public library and at the synagogue. Many of the participants buy their own copies of the books.

Discussions at the Book Club are open-ended and wide-ranging. The rabbi facilitates; he does not lecture. Participants bring a bag lunch to the program. The synagogue serves beverages.

**Making It Happen**

The program is run by the rabbi in consultation with the Book Club committee. They choose the books, make certain the books are available, and handle the publicity.

**Program Costs**

The Book Club is a Sisterhood fundraiser. Participants pay $9 for the full series (eight sessions) or $3.50 for single sessions.
Getting The Word Out
The Book Club sends out a mailing about the series, posts public notices, and announces it in the synagogue bulletin. The local newspaper prints articles about the Book Club which also help publicize it to the community.

Replication Advice
1. **Build a strong committee to oversee the Book Club.** The committee should consist of older adults, representatives from the congregation's Board, and the rabbi and/or cantor.

2. **Select a broad range of books that are likely to appeal to a diverse audience and to challenge the group intellectually.** Pursuing a single theme for the year is too constraining. The program works best when a broad range of topics, styles, and themes is explored.

3. **Schedule the program at a time when the maximum number of people can attend.** Winter weather, which causes attendance to decline, is Beth Israel's main obstacle to programming. Communities in different geographic locations may find certain months more conducive to programming than others.

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**FILM SERIES**

Film series bring older adults into the synagogue—to socialize, to be entertained, and to stretch their imaginations and their intellects. Depending on the target group, the series can be offered at noontime (with lunch) or in the evening (with supper).

**Temple Beth El Film Series**

**Target Group:** Temple Beth El's film series is organized for the older members of the congregation.

**Program Description:** Three films, all addressing a single theme, are shown on a large-screen television. An introduction and follow-up discussion are led by the cantor.

**Program Goals:** The film series gives seniors an opportunity to meet with each other and to engage in meaningful discussions.

**Temple Beth El**
979 Dickinson Street
Springfield, MA 01108
Tel: 413-733-4149
Participants
Some 60 to 70 older adults in the congregation attend the film series.

Schedule
The series consists of three films, shown at two- to three-week intervals.

Program Outline
The program begins with a light dinner at 6:15 p.m. followed by evening prayers. Then the cantor speaks about the film: when it was made, its historical context, and other information to help "set the stage" for the viewers. After the group watches the film, an open discussion is held. During the current season, the three films centered on the theme of coming to America. The film series, arranged specifically for seniors, followed other educational programs in the synagogue and in the Sunday school on the same theme. The selected films were: Tevye, The Forward: From Immigrants to Americans, and The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.

Making the Program Accessible
Films are shown on videotape. The synagogue rents a large-screen television for easy viewing. The volume is raised to make it easier for the audience to hear.

Making It Happen
The program is organized and run by the cantor.

Program Costs
Participants pay $6.00 for the dinner. The synagogue absorbs the cost of renting the television and the videotapes.

Replication Advice
1. Make certain there is adequate funding to rent a large-screen television, or a video or movie projector and large screen. Movies shown on a regular television set are more difficult to understand and less exciting to watch.
2. Choose films that the older adult audience will find interesting and will be able to follow. For example, Yiddish films are most appreciated by Yiddish-speaking groups. Foreign films with subtitles can be difficult for some seniors to grasp. Modern comedies may amuse some older adults but offend others. Input from the seniors can help you choose appropriate films.

The following movies have been shown by Jewish congregations that have used film in their programming for older adults.

Films Related to Yiddishkeit and Coming to America
Tevye (1939)
The adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's novel about Tevye's daughter, Khove, who falls in love with and marries a Ukrainian intellectual, testing Tevye's faith, loyalty to tradition, and love for his daughter. 96 minutes, B&W; Yiddish with English subtitles. Available from The National Center for Jewish Film (Walsham, MA).

The Forward: From Immigrants to Americans (1988)
Documentary story of America's most successful and well-known Yiddish daily newspaper. 98 minutes. Available on video from the Jewish Education Resource Center (Longmeadow, MA).

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1974)
Dramatic comedy about an ambitious young man in Montreal's Jewish community who is determined to get ahead no matter what. 121 minutes. Available on video.

Films Exploring Jewish Identity
Fiddler on the Roof (1971, video 1988)
A musical about Jewish life in the Ukraine and the main character's relationship with his family, his daughters, and his neighbors. 180 minutes. Available on video.

The Chosen (1981)
A look at two teenagers and their families in 1940s Brooklyn, based on a novel by Chaim Potok. 108 minutes. Available on video.

The Fixer (1968)
Based on Bernard Malamud's novel which tells the story of a Jewish handyman jailed in 1911 in Tsarist Russia after being accused of murdering a non-Jewish boy. 132 minutes. Available on video.

Congregation Sons of Israel
Briar Cliff Manor
1666 Pleasantville Road
Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510
Tel: 914-762-2700
A Sampler of Films of Interest to Jewish Seniors

Films with Jewish Content

Blazing Saddles (1974)
A bawdy slapstick comedy about the American West. 93 minutes. Available on video.

Frisco Kid (1979)
A comedic film about a Polish rabbi who makes his way to San Francisco with the help of a warmhearted outlaw cowboy. 119 minutes. Available on video.

Hester Street (1974)
The dramatic story of a turn-of-the-century Jewish immigrant couple and the impact of living in America and assimilation. 88 minutes, English and Yiddish with English subtitles. Available on video.

The Jazz Singer (1980)
The story of an aspiring performer whose assimilation to American life pains his traditional cantor father. 115 minutes. Available on video.

Cast a Giant Shadow (1966)
The story of a Jewish American's involvement in the fight for Israel's independence. 141 minutes. Available on video.

Amerikaner Shadkhen (American Matchmaker) (1940)
A musical comedy about second-generation Jews in New York City and their search for love. 87 minutes, B&W, Yiddish with English subtitles. Available from the National Center for Jewish Film and on video.

Congregation Beth Sholom
1301 Clement Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
Tel: 415-221-8736

Other Recommended Films

Avalon (1990)

Crossing Delancey (1989)
Film about the dating exploits of a 34-year-old single, upwardly mobile New York Jewish woman in New York City. 97 minutes. Available on video.

Based on a story by I.B. Singer about a Jew living in New York who can't decide between his lover and his newly arrived wife, whom he thought had perished in the Holocaust. 119 minutes. Available on video.

Exodus (1960)
The epic story of the Jewish refugees' struggle to get to Palestine. 218 minutes. Available on video.

Great Cantors in Cinema (1993)
Features five films: (1) Dream of My People (1933 film about Josef "Yossele" Rosenblatt); (2) We Who Remain (1946 film about Moshe Kossovetzky); (3) The Voice of Israel (1931 film about Mordechai Hershman); (4) Overture to Glory (1943 film about a poor cantor who abandons his congregation and family for a stage career); and (5) A Cantor on Trial (1931 lighthearted spoof on a synagogue committee in search of a cantor for the High Holy Days). 80 minutes, B&W, English, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Available from The National Center for Jewish Film.

The Jazz Singer (1927)
First film to use synchronous sound. The story of a cantor's son who goes into show business against his father's objections. 89 minutes, B&W. Available on video.

Yentl (1984)
Turn-of-the-century tale of a scholar's daughter who decides to a man to pursue studies in Eastern Europe and her subsequent romantic problems. Based on a story by I.B. Singer. 134 minutes. Available on video.

Yiddle with His Fiddle (Yidd Mitz Fidd) (1936)
The most commercially successful musical in the history of Yiddish cinema. Folk comedy about a man and daughter who travel as musicians, with the daughter disguised as a boy. 92 minutes, B&W, Yiddish with English subtitles. Available from The National Center for Jewish Film.

Jewish Film Web Site
www.members.aol.com/jewfilm/index.html
Listing of hundreds of films with Jewish content.

6 The National Center for Jewish Film has an extensive archive of Jewish films for rent. National Center for Jewish Film, MS 093, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 02454. Tel: 781-736-8600. Fax: 781-736-2070.

7 The Jewish Resource Center has materials for loan to Center members and nonmembers. Jewish Resource Centres, 594 Corvett Street, Longmeadow, MA 01106. Tel: 413-567-7386.
Circle of Friends: An Intergenerational Program

Synagogues with members of all ages have a unique opportunity to build community through intergenerational programming. Such programs have many benefits for participants:

- Contact with older adults can break down the young participants' stereotypes, reduce their fears, and increase their comfort with the elderly.
- Young participants can learn from their elders and benefit from the lifetime of experience and wisdom they bring to the relationship.
- Seniors can bring young participants a special connection to the Jewish past and Jewish life.
- Contact with young people and their families can reduce the isolation that the elderly may feel in our age-segregated society.
- Elder participants feel valued and needed in these relationships. They enjoy sharing their time, their memories, and their affection.
- Both young and old enjoy the caring and nurturing they receive from their surrogate grandparents or families.

To maximize these benefits, intergenerational programs must be planned and implemented thoughtfully and with sensitivity to participants, both young and old.8

Circle of Friends
Target Group: Circle of Friends is an intergenerational program open to women of all ages in the congregation.

Program Description: The group meets bimonthly for prayer, study, and discussion.

Program Goals: Circle of Friends connects women across the generations by giving them an opportunity to share with one another and to experience their commonalities as Jewish women.

Beth Israel-The West Temple
14308 Triskett Road
Cleveland, OH 44111
Tel: 216-941-8882

Chapter 6: Kehillah: Building Community

Participants
Circle of Friends participants are women who belong to the congregation. The group includes those in their 20s to those in their 80s. Twenty to thirty women attend each session.

Space
The program is held at the homes of members. The atmosphere of a private home is friendlier and more comfortable than the synagogue, more conducive to intimate conversation.

Schedule
Circle of Friends meets one evening every other month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Program Outline
Circle of Friends grew out of a healing service conducted with a group of women whose parents had cancer. The program today is an intergenerational group that meets regularly for Rosh Chodesh, healing services, and discussion. The meetings are billed as "an evening of friendship, prayer, song, and conversation." The healing service uses materials culled from healing services in other congregations-psalms, poems, songs, prayers (Sh'ma, Mi She'arim), silent readings, and meditations. Each month, specific readings for the season are added.

Following the service there is study, discussion, or an outside presenter. The group has studied texts related to t'khuvah (during the month of Elul); they have discussed life journeys based on the first chapters of Deuteronomy; and they have talked about the circumstances of the "sandwich generation" (adult women who take care of young children and aging parents). They read an article from Reform Judaism on the consequences of dismissing children's theological questions and they talked about their own unanswered religious questions.

Discussion generally takes place in small groups and follows a set of guiding questions.

Recent presentations by outside experts have included "Music as Medicine" (led by a music therapist) and "Coping-with Laughter: Making Sense out of Life with a Sense of Humor."
Making the Program Accessible
The group makes an effort to ensure that women of all ages can participate equally in the program. The younger participants call the older women to offer rides. The healing service and texts used for study are copied into larger print. The leader positions herself in the room so that she can be heard by all of the participants, particularly those who may have hearing difficulties.

Making It Happen
The program is organized and facilitated by the Director of Congregational and Family Education at Beth Israel–The West Temple.

Getting The Word Out
The program is promoted through announcements in the synagogue bulletin and fliers sent to all of the women in the congregation. Participants often bring their friends. As with many programs of this sort, word of mouth is the best advertisement.

A SAMPLER OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

"Grandparents" in the Synagogue's Nursery School
The director of the Early Childhood Center at Tikvat Israel Congregation (Rockville, MD) identified seniors in the congregation who would volunteer in the synagogue's preschool, working with children two to five years old. Each of the classes in the school adopted a "grandparent." The grandparents come to class one day a week for an hour. They play with the children, do special activities with them (reading, cooking, etc.), or just talk with them. The children look forward to these visits. They call their elder volunteer "sava" (grandmother) and "saba" (grandfather).

Tikvat Israel Congregation
2200 Baltimore Road
Rockville, MD 20851
Tel: 301-762-7338

"Grandparents" for Synagogue Families
Congregation B'nai Israel (Toms River, NJ) is part of a Caregivers program in which members work with 20 local churches to provide volunteer services to older adults in their region. The overall program has some 400 volunteers providing service to 600 older adults. Seniors who are members of the synagogue are generally matched with a volunteer from the synagogue.

Twice a year, at Thanksgiving and Passover, the synagogue's nursery school holds a party for the elders in their Caregivers program. Families with young children meet seniors whom they may adopt as surrogate grandparents. Once a match is made, the parents with their small children visit the older people and share holidays with them. These relationships positively affect the lives both of the young family and of the older adult who becomes a part of the family.

Congregation B'nai Israel
1488 Freehold Road
Toms River, NJ 08753
Tel: 732-349-1244

A Sharing Day for Seniors and Teens
The Women's League for Conservative Judaism suggests a program to bring together the congregation's seniors with the members of USY (United Synagogue Youth). One-on-one or in small groups, the older adults teach their skills to the USY teens. These may include bread making, knitting, crocheting, needlepoint, calligraphy, Yiddish language, and so on. Later on, the teens become the instructors and the elders the learners. The teens share their expertise in computers, the Internet, dance, and other areas. A day of sharing can build mutual appreciation between older adult and teenager.

Women's League for Conservative Judaism
48 East 74th Street
New York, NY 10021
Tel: 212-628-1600 or 800-628-5083
Midlife and old age present spiritual challenges as well as opportunities for continued personal growth. Older adults must learn to live with the limits imposed by aging. They must adapt to loss—loss of their physical health, memory, social role, and relationships. They need to evaluate the meaning of aging and of the latter years and to arrive at an acceptance of their lives. And they must deal with impending dependency and death. Judaism offers a framework for engaging these emotional and spiritual tasks.

Jewish tradition associates old age with wisdom. "With age comes wisdom, and length of days brings understanding" (Job 12:12). Older adults have a trove of life experiences that allow them to engage Judaism in a mature way they could not have imagined in younger years.

Seniors who continue to be "growing Jews" serve as role models to the younger generations. "Growing old will be the lot of virtually all of us (except for those who will die young) and there is perhaps no greater gift that we, the pioneers into the land of the elderly, can give those who will come after us than setting an example of how to grow old thoughtfully, usefully, and gratifyingly. Let us show others how to do it right and let them, for our sakes and for theirs, honor us for it." 9

Judaism can help the elderly live out their days in dignity, with meaning and satisfaction. A number of synagogues are seeking ways to encourage personal and spiritual growth throughout the life span. They are creating reconfirmation classes, retreats, and Jewish ceremonies to mark the passages of older adulthood. These programs are a source of inspiration for the elders, their families, and the rest of the community.

9Rabbi Harold Kushner (1997) in the Foreward to A Heart of Wisdom
Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.
Av/Em Eitza: Marking the Passage to Older Adulthood

The Av/Em Eitza program marks the life passage to older adulthood. It uses Jewish text and introspection to guide people to a deeper understanding of the meaning of their lives. In introducing the writings from one of his groups, Rabbi Paul J. Citrin, whose program is described in this section, wrote the following:

"The Fathers and Mothers of Counsel who have participated in our Av/Em Eitza program have renewed themselves. They have expanded their thinking as they examined their core values, family and social influences, the relevance of Judaism to their lives. They bless us with their intellectual stretching and spiritual discovery by sharing their wisdom... They inspire the members of the synagogue community to keep searching and growing."

Av/Em Eitza

Target Group: The Av/Em Eitza program is for members of the congregation who have reached their 50th birthday.

Program Description: A small group of participants engage in Jewish study and an examination of their lives. They keep journals and prepare written "testaments" about what they have learned. At a concluding Shabbat service, the testaments are shared with the congregation and the participants are awarded a certificate of Av/Em Eitza, Father/Mother of Counsel.

Program Goals: The program allows individuals in older adulthood to take stock of the course of their lives and to share their insights and values with others in the congregation.

Congregation Albert
3800 Louisiana Boulevard, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110-1476
Tel: 505-883-1818

Temple Chai
4645 E. Marilyn
Phoenix, AZ 85032
Tel: 602-971-1234

Participants

Members of the congregation who have reached the age of 50 are eligible to study to become an Av/Em Eitza. Students in the program range from those turning 50 to those in their early 80s.

Given its intensity and intimacy, the study group is kept small, no more than 12 participants. The program can be run with as few as four participants.

Program Philosophy

The Av/Em Eitza program is derived from Pirkei Avot: "Ben chamisham le-eitza"—"at 50 for counsel," meaning that a person who has accumulated a half century of wisdom is eligible to give advice to others. To mark this passage to senior adulthood, participants embark on a program of study with the rabbi that prepares them to write a Testament of Counsel. This testament includes the important lessons the individual has learned in his or her lifetime—insights on relationships, coping with hardships, and finding fulfillment.

Schedule

The Av/Em Eitza program is offered once each year. The class meets on eight Tuesday evenings from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. It is possible to extend the program over a greater number of weeks or to make it into a two-year program. It is also possible to include an off-site retreat as part of the preparation.

The program culminates in the fall when participants present their Testaments of Council to the congregation at Shabbat services during Sukkot. Symbolically Sukkot is chosen for this simcha because it is the Festival of Ingathering, the harvest of life.

Program Outline

The program of study includes an in-depth reading of Ecclesiastes, an examination of classical and modern ethical wills, discussion of participants' own lives—their accomplishments, failures, hopes, and feelings about mortality. Participants keep a journal and they engage in writing exercises and discussion during class sessions.

Sentence strings are used to help participants begin writing their testaments:

I want to tell you about what I consider to be really important:

The most valuable lesson I inherited from my family is...

My own life has taught me...

For me true (spiritual) fulfillment comes from...

Judaism is precious because...

For me being part of the Jewish people is...
Emanu Elders Retreat

Congregation Emanu-El, a Reform synagogue in Houston, Texas, has had an active seniors program for over two decades. The program, Emanu Elders, provides social, educational, and cultural activities for older adults in the community. Over 150 people are served by the program each month.

A highlight of Emanu Elder's programming is its annual retreat. Several years ago, the chairperson of the UAHC Green Family Camp for Living Judaism conceived the idea that the camp could be used for programming for older adults. Why not bring a group of seniors to the camp and run an adaptation of the teens' confirmation class retreat? They could have a campfire (sitting on chairs rather than sitting on the ground) and they could make s'mores (in an oven rather than over an open fire). The essence would be the same—studying, singing, socializing, and having fun.

From this conception the retreat has grown into an ongoing, successful program that makes a positive difference in the lives of participants. The program brings people together, gives them new experiences, and deepens their attachment to the synagogue and to Judaism.

Emanu Elders Retreat
Target Group: The retreat is open to all older adults but primarily attracts active Jewish seniors who are members of the congregation.

Program Description: Participants spend three days and two nights at a UAHC camp where they engage in physical exercise, prayer, study, arts and crafts projects, and a variety of educational, cultural, and spiritual experiences.

Program Goals: The Emanu Elders Retreat is designed to provide a substantive Jewish experience for older adults and to renew their spirit and their connection to Judaism.

Temple Emanu-El
1500 Sunset Boulevard
Houston, TX 77005
Tel: 713-929-5771

Or contact Rabbi Paul Citrin at Main Line Reform Temple Beth Elohim, 410 Montgomery Avenue, Wynnewood, PA 19096-1399, Tel: 610-649-7800.
Registering for the Retreat
The registration form asks for:
- name, address, and telephone number
- dietary restrictions, allergies, or other medical concerns
- emergency contact
- deposit amount (to secure a place)
Participants are given a checklist of what to bring and are encouraged to pack lightly.

Program Outline
The retreat is comprised of three components: educational workshops, participatory worship services, and social programs. The program for the Emanu Elders Retreat is varied each year since a number of participants return. As the retreat has evolved, topics have been added. Sometimes these are organized as tracks or electives so that different participants may attend different sessions at the retreat.
The day starts with physical exercise and then morning services in the outdoor chapel. Sessions which follow make use of experiential techniques (crafts, photography, drama, prayer writing, etc.).
Themes and topics have included, among others:
- current issues in Judaism
- evolution of the concept of God in Reform Judaism
- issues for the Jewish family (adoption, intermarriage, infertility, etc.)
- grandparenting
- Jewish roots
- reading Torah
- prayer (introduction to prayer, phrase-by-phrase interpretation, discussion, and commentary on the V'Ahavta prayer; writing original prayers)
- personal Jewish journeys
- modern Jewish literature
- current events
Materials
Participants receive a notebook with materials for the retreat:

- schedule
- study materials
- religious service (photocopied and enlarged)
- list of readings and texts

Making the Program Accessible
The synagogue charters an air-conditioned bus with a restroom on board. The camp is accessible to those with disabilities. The program cannot provide people with helpers but do allow a caretaker or adult child to accompany an elderly person who needs assistance at the camp.

Making It Happen
The program is run by a volunteer coordinator and two volunteer staff members. Study classes and certain electives are led by the congregation rabbis. Volunteer staff and the rabbis all contribute to the design of the retreat.

Staff conduct the workshops and assist the elders who come to the retreat (e.g., carry bags and escort participants when necessary).

Regular camp staff are there to maintain the facility. Housekeeping provides linens and makes the beds; kitchen staff handle all meals (including special foods for those with dietary restrictions).

Program Costs
The Emunah Elders Retreat has kept its price low. Participants pay $90 for the full program. Of this amount, $78 goes to the camp for room and board; the remainder is used for tee shirts and other incidentals. Bus transportation (approximately $1,000) is paid for by the Emunah-El Sisterhood. Speakers and special guests will often come to the retreat gratis. Other times the program may pay a fee to bring in a pianist, a klezmer band, or other entertainment.

Funds are available, through the rabbi's discretionary fund and private sources, for senior members who want to attend but cannot afford the cost of the retreat. All scholarships are handled in confidence.

Getting the Word Out
The retreat is announced in the Emunah Elders monthly bulletin. This bulletin, printed in large print type, goes to the older members of the congregation and to others in the community who are of retirement age. Publicity for the April retreat begins in January.

Replication Advice
1. Hold the retreat with another congregation from elsewhere in the region. When groups from different congregations come together in a retreat setting, the participants extend themselves to meet new people and they form friendships with older adults from other areas.

2. Focus the retreat on life, not on aging and dying. The older adults who come to the retreat want to study, socialize, delve into their Jewish roots, and have fun. They do not want to talk about old age or end-of-life issues. The attraction and power of the retreat is its focus on living.

3. Promote the retreat by emphasizing what makes it unique and exciting. Let the seniors know about the spiritual, educational, and social aspects of the program, as well as the natural setting and the expertise of staff. You may need to deal with resistance: anxiety about the retreat, or concerns about the long bus ride or the rustic accommodations. The effort to deal with these concerns is well repaid. Virtually everyone who attends the retreat gives it high ratings, feels renewed by it, and returns a second year.
HAGIGAH: CELEBRATING OUR ELDERS

The senior members of the congregation are often the people who built the synagogue. Some grew up in the synagogue, married, and raised their own families there. Their lives embody the history of the congregation. There are valuable benefits to celebrating the synagogue's senior members:

- It acknowledges the older members, recognizes their contributions to the synagogue and the community, and validates their worth.
- It strengthens intergenerational ties in the congregation, helping the younger members to understand and appreciate the lives of their elders.
- It gives the congregation a deeper sense of its past—of the people who built the synagogue, of the epochs in the congregation's history, and of the changes which have taken place in Jewish life during this century.

Judaism has a strong oral tradition and we are directed to tell and retell the Jewish story. The stories of the synagogue's senior members are also ones that need to be told and retold. They are part of the oral tradition of the congregation.
LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Successful programs speak to the elder members now, while they are alive and still able to share their lives and their experiences. Congregations that delay will soon find that their oral history has lost a whole generation.

2. Successful programs respect the information and the materials that the elders share with them. They understand that these pieces have great personal worth. They make certain that nothing is lost or damaged, that confidences are respected, and that appreciation is shown for all that the elders offer.

3. Successful programs invite the public. They use the celebration of the elders to educate and inspire the congregation and the community.

TEMPLE ISRAEL 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Temple Israel, a Conservative congregation in Scranton (PA), has developed the concept of "exhibiting." Two exhibitions—one on Passover, the other on Chanukah—have been mounted in the synagogue. Members were asked to lend items relating to the holidays. For each exhibition, approximately 100 artifacts were gathered, catalogued, and put on display. The exhibits were open to the congregation and to the general community. They served as educational events and as opportunities for the seniors to share their Jewish lives with others.

The exhibiting concept was also used in celebrating the congregation's 75th anniversary. The synagogue was transformed into a museum with pictures and memorabilia from its history. This section describes how the exhibition was organized along with a weekend anniversary celebration. Every aspect of the exhibition and the event celebrated the congregation, its elder members, and its alumni.

Temple Israel 75th Anniversary Celebration

Target Group: Temple Israel's celebration of its 75th anniversary was a reunion for the alumni of the synagogue's Hebrew School and Junior Congregation. Hundreds of alumni, from the local community and from out of town, gathered for the weekend event. Participants ranged in age from early 50s through early 80s.

Program Description: The synagogue celebrated its 75th anniversary with a Shabbaton, from Friday evening through Sunday morning. Events included worship services led by alumni, reminiscences, study sessions, a dance, and the placement of a time capsule. An exhibition throughout the synagogue building presented photographs, newspaper articles, synagogue bulletins, and other memorabilia from the congregation's history.

Program Goals: The event brought together members of the congregation from earlier generations. It provided an opportunity for them to share their memories and to reconnect to the synagogue. It educated younger members and the general community about the history of the congregation. It celebrated the congregation's past and the accomplishments of its members.

Temple Israel
Monroe Avenue and Gibson Street
Scranton, PA 18510
Tel: 717-342-0330
Participants
Participants in the 75th anniversary celebration were primarily elderly adults who had grown up in the congregation. Over 250 local people registered for the weekend along with 180 out-of-town alumni. Participants ranged in age from early 50s to early 80s. The children of the congregation were involved in the celebration in two ways. They decorated squares of fabric that were sewn together into a large quilt, which they presented to the congregation at the anniversary Shabbat service. They also wrote personal messages for the time capsule, which they helped bury on Sunday morning.

Space
All of the anniversary events were held in the synagogue, a magnificent domed structure built in 1927. Every available space was used for exhibits:
- On display in the main foyer were valuable artifacts from synagogue members as well as congratulatory letters from the President of the United States, the Governor of Pennsylvania, and the Mayor of Scranton. The University of Scranton lent 14 locked display cases for this exhibit.
- The walkway to the main sanctuary held a portrait of a rabbi who had served the congregation for many years as well as letters, sermons, and other memorabilia of his years at Temple Israel.
- Pictures from the religious school in the 1930s and 1940s were hung on the walls of the library. On tables were artifacts drawn from the synagogue’s archives or on loan from individuals: a book of contributors from the 1940s, pictures of early boy scout troops at the synagogue, a Sisterhood cookbook from the 1950s, program books for plays, special dinners, auctions, and bazaars, and so on.
- The school displayed memorabilia from the Hebrew School and Junior Congregation, the childhood experiences that drew alumni back to the synagogue for the anniversary celebration.

Schedule
The anniversary celebration took almost one year to organize. Planning began in the fall. Invitations were sent out in February for the June event. Organizing entailed three major tasks:

Locating alumni of the Hebrew School and Junior Congregation.
Two years before the anniversary celebration, the congregation began collecting names and addresses of alumni. They contacted individuals in the community who knew former members. They sent lists to people in other areas where there are a number of alumni, and asked them to provide updated addresses. They placed letters in Anglo-Jewish newspapers announcing the reunion and inviting interested alumni to contact the synagogue. Eventually they developed a mailing list of 750 names.

Collecting memorabilia for the exhibits. Alumni were asked to lend the synagogue old photographs of themselves and their families, and memorabilia of synagogue activities.

Creating an anniversary tribute book. A committee solicited ads for a tribute book that was published and distributed at the weekend celebration. Full page ads were sold for $5,000, $2,500 and $1,000. Many contributors placed family pictures in their ads. The tribute book also included a chronology of the congregation and illustrations of memorabilia from the exhibits.

Program Outline
Friday night: A special guest speaker, a nationally prominent native son, spoke at Friday night services.
Saturday morning: Services were conducted by former members of the Junior Congregation. Each participant and aliyah was acknowledged by the year they had been active in Junior Congregation. The scholar-in-residence for the weekend, a vice-chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, spoke on the history and future of the Conservative movement. Close to 700 people attended the service.
Saturday afternoon: A buffet luncheon followed services. Participants helped themselves to food and then circulated around the building to look at the exhibits. After lunch, participants shared memories and talked about their current lives.
At 5:00 p.m., the scholar-in-residence taught a Talmudic text and the current rabbi led a session based on three sermons—one from the 1930s, the 1970s, and the 1990s. Following the study sessions, there was sukkah shivah, open discussion with the scholar-in-residence, Maf'ariv and Hordalah.
Saturday evening: A dance was held in the social hall with music from the 1940s and 1950s. The celebration continued until 2:00 a.m.
Sunday morning: After Sunday minyan, every member—children included—was invited to write an entry for the time capsule. The time capsule, to be uncovered in 25 years by the next generation, was filled with these writings, copies of the 75th anniversary booklet, and the program from the weekend celebration. The elders, 80 years of age or older, participated in burying the time capsule next to the entrance to the synagogue.

Making It Happen
Two of the synagogue’s vice-presidents chaired the anniversary celebration. One organized the event, the other oversaw the tribute book. Each worked with a committee. All told, about 35 volunteers actively worked on the celebration and many more solicited ads for the tribute book.
Program Costs
The congregation allotted between $5,000 and $10,000 for the weekend event. The weekend was a major fundraiser and well repaid the investment. The tribute book raised over $160,000.

Getting the Word Out
Advertisements for the 75th anniversary celebration were carried in the local newspapers. In addition, a series of free announcements were placed in the local Anglo-Jewish paper. These were based on old synagogue bulletins. Each one contained events from a different year in the congregation's history, beginning with the founding of the synagogue and concluding with events from the current year. These were also published as a booklet that was given to participants at the celebration.

Replication Advice
1. Encourage seniors to lend materials for the exhibit. Let them know what you are looking for and give them specific examples. They will often uncover interesting material to share.

2. Plan something special to attract people to the program. Temple Israel drew 300 people on Friday night with their special guest speaker, an Academy Award-winning filmmaker. They also used their building to good effect. For some participants who had not been in the building for decades, the synagogue itself was a major attraction.

3. Follow up with alumni after the reunion. Alumni are a resource for the synagogue and an ongoing link to the congregation's past. After their 75th anniversary celebration, Temple Israel sent the synagogue bulletin to all of the alumni now on their mailing list. They ordered mezuzah boxes modeled after the synagogue building to offer for sale to the alumni, as a memento for them and a fundraiser for the congregation.

Perhaps more importantly, the anniversary celebration can be a first step toward strengthening the older adults' connection to the synagogue and enhancing their participation. Once alumni are located and engaged, study programs, social activities, and opportunities to volunteer within the synagogue can readily follow.

Women Whose Lives Span the Century
"From the ordinary to the grand, Jewish women have stories to tell which add immeasurably to understanding women's experience and Jewish experience in the twentieth century. In less than four generations, Jewish women have expanded, in unprecedented ways, their participation and influence in all aspects of cultural, intellectual, political, religious and communal life. Yet the women who witnessed and brought about these changes are mostly invisible in the narratives of the institutions they founded, the synagogues and Jewish organizations they supported, and the communities they sustained. Women Whose Lives Span the Century is a collaboration among three institutions to record, preserve and interpret women's stories." (From the brochure for Women Whose Lives Span the Century)

Women Whose Lives Span the Century
Target Group: Women Whose Lives Span the Century is an oral history project based on interviews with women in the congregation who are in their 80s and 90s.

Program Description: Women members of the congregation, age 80 or older, were interviewed by trained volunteers. These interviews became the basis for an exhibition in the temple museum which used the women's words, photographs, family heirlooms and mementos to present a collective portrait of their lives. In addition, contemporary artists were commissioned to create original works of art inspired by these interviews. Their creations were exhibited at the art gallery in the Jewish Community Center.

Program Goals: The project's purpose is to create an historical archive for the congregation, give older women an opportunity to tell their stories, educate younger generations about the lives and contributions of these women, and acknowledge the gifts that they brought to their families, the synagogue, and the community.

Temple Israel
Longwood and Plymouth Street
Boston, MA 02215
Tel: 617-366-3960

Starr Gallery at the Leventhal-Sidman JCC
333 Nahantion Street
Newton, MA 02459
Tel: 617-358-6484

Jewish Women's Archive
68 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02446
Tel: 617-232-2238
Participants
Temple Israel, an historic Reform congregation in Boston, has a significant population of women in their 80s and 90s. Every woman in this age group was sent a letter, with a return postcard, inviting her to be interviewed for the project. About 50 women responded. The initial project, as described below, was based on interviews with 33 of these women.

Schedule
The project required two years, from the initial planning meeting to the opening of the museum exhibition.

Oral History Questionnaire
The women were sent a brief questionnaire to complete prior to their interviews. The questionnaire asked:
- name, address and telephone number
- date and place of birth
- background information on family members
- family's origins and arrival in the United States and in Boston
- education
- paid employment
- volunteer activities
- Jewish affiliations

The form also asked the women to list three significant happenings they would like to discuss in an interview—events that reflect various aspects of their lives, including their personal and family lives, community activities, and paid and/or volunteer work.

Ideally every older woman in the congregation should be interviewed. When time or resources are limited, however, the questionnaires can be used to select a cross-section of women who represent diverse backgrounds and different life experiences.

Training Volunteer Interviewers
Each of 18 volunteer interviewers attended a half-day training session. The training was conducted by four volunteers from the synagogue who had a background in history or social research.

Interviewers were taught how to make initial telephone contact, arrange the interview appointment, conduct the interview, follow up, and index the tape. They learned how to let her tell her own story without imposing their own biases or assumptions.

Building the Relationship
Volunteer interviewers from the congregation were matched with the elderly women. Interviewers were given a copy of the questionnaire so that they would know in advance what the elder thought was significant in her life. Contact with the elder proceeded with respect and sensitivity:

1. The interviewer contacted the elder by telephone. She introduced herself, discussed the interview process, and set up an appointment for a time within the week.

2. Two days before the appointment, the interviewer called to check in. She asked the woman what she would like to focus on in the interview and also mentioned particular areas from the questionnaire that struck her as interesting.

3. The interviewer called again the morning of the interview to be certain the woman felt well enough for the appointment.

4. After the interview, the elder woman was asked to sign a release form that details the ways in which the interview can be used.

5. The interviewer telephoned the elder the day following the interview to express appreciation and to ask if the woman had any further issues she wished to discuss in another session.

6. Within a week of the meeting, the interviewer sent a handwritten thank-you note to the elder. The Jewish Women's Archive also sent a formal thank-you letter with a copy of the taped interview.

In many instances, friendships developed between interviewers and elders, relationships that extended well beyond the taped sessions.

Conducting the Interviews
Five tape recorders were purchased for the project. Before going to an interview appointment, interviewers picked up one of the tape recorders, a microphone, extension cord, and two tapes from the synagogue office.

Interviews, held at the women's homes, were scheduled for two hours. Interviewers took care not to create time pressures. Elders were assured that they could stop or take a break at any point they wished and that, if needed, they could arrange another time to complete the interview.

Interviewers began by stating identifying information for the taped record: date, name of interviewer and elder, location, and the project title. When it was necessary to go to a second tape, the interviewer indicated that this was a second tape and she repeated key identifying information. Identifying information was also written on the tape label.

The interview followed the narration of the elder. Although interviewers had a set of interview questions, they were instructed to follow the person and not the script. Interviewers familiarized themselves with the questions so they could use them should they need to stimulate the conversation or move to a new topic.
The oral project was headed by an historian and a museum professional who worked with a committee of volunteers from the congregation. The committee was comprised of individuals with substantial expertise in history, oral history, and museum exhibition. It was later expanded to include an elderly representative and others interested in the project. Administrative assistance was provided by staff from the synagogue and the Jewish Women's Archive.

**Program Costs**
The project was supported by the synagogue, local foundations that support community projects and the arts, and in-kind donations. The five tape recorders and accessories cost approximately $500. The exhibition was produced by a professional museum design company at a cost between $15,000 and $20,000.

**Getting the Word Out**
- Elders were located through a letter of invitation sent to all women in the congregation who were 80 years of age or older and through announcements in the synagogue's newsletter. A presentation of the project to the congregation's Sisterhood led to more interviewers and more elders interested in participating.
- The project was regularly discussed in the congregation. A session at the synagogue's annual kallah was dedicated to the oral history project.
- The final exhibition was widely advertised through brochures, newspaper articles, and local cable television.

**Replication Advice**
1. Include the elder women in planning the project. Their ideas and perspective should be woven into the fabric of the project.
2. Seek out volunteers in the congregation who have the skills and talents needed for an oral history project. Women Whose Lives Span the Century was fortunate to have a cadre of volunteers with talents well-suited to the project.
3. Provide professional training for interviewers. If a congregation is interested only in collecting memories from the elderly women in the synagogue, professional training for interviewers may not be necessary. Careful training is essential, however, if the congregation wishes to document its history and create a record of value to historians, researchers, and synagogue archivists.

**Temple Museum Historical Exhibition**
The exhibition, mounted in Temple Israel's Wyner Museum, included text from the recorded interviews, photographs, family heirlooms, and mementos that told the collective story of the women's lives. The exhibition followed general themes: family, education, marriage and children, paid work, volunteer work, and spiritual, creative, and intellectual pursuits.

**Making It Happen**
Women Whose Lives Span the Century was a collaborative project of the Jewish Women's Archive, Temple Israel, and the Starr Gallery at the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center. The mission of the Jewish Women's Archive is to ensure that future generations have access to the social and historical legacy of the Jewish women who preceded them. The Archive plans to work collaboratively with communal institutions across the country to record the stories of Jewish women. The Archive is developing a state-of-the-art online archive to facilitate access to oral histories and to other records that document the lives and experiences of Jewish women.
4. Engage a part-time staff person or intern to administer the project. An oral history project involves a myriad of details: handling the tape recorders, overseeing the indexing, setting up meetings, gathering artifacts, setting up the exhibition, and so on. It is difficult to hand these over to a volunteer or to fit them into the existing responsibilities of current synagogue staff.

5. Use simple equipment. Fancy tape recorders can be problematic and intimidate interviewers. For this project, eschew sophisticated equipment for the more straightforward.

6. Be aware that an oral history project is highly time consuming. Volunteers not only need to come to meetings, attend training sessions, and spend time interviewing, but they must also spend hours indexing their tapes. Volunteers need to be made aware of the time requirement at the outset and to make a commitment to carry out their piece of the project.

7. Think creatively and expansively about the project—it can open many opportunities. Oral histories can become an on-going project—a valuable way of caring for, learning from, and celebrating the elderly in the community. For example, the synagogue can establish a program that gathers the oral history of each woman of the congregation when she turns 80. The program can be designed similarly to a bat mitzvah program with a time of preparation and a time of celebration.

Chapter 8: Hagigah: Celebrating Our Elders

ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF WOMEN WHOSE LIVES SPAN THE CENTURY

Women Whose Lives Span the Century spawned a number of artistic creations, exhibitions, and community events. The Starr Gallery at the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center matched artists with the elder women who had been interviewed for the oral history project. The artists were commissioned to create works of art inspired by the women's life stories. The pieces they created were exhibited at the gallery in a companion show to the historical exhibition at the synagogue.

"The Starr Gallery, recognizing that there are many ways to interpret history, curated a companion exhibition, Contemporary Artistic Interpretations. These works were inspired by the Temple Israel interviews and five additional oral histories of women in the JCC community. Ranging from small, intimate pieces to expansive, multi-faceted installations, the works transform the women's words into a variety of visual media... Each piece represents a re-telling, a translation from the intangible medium of the spoken word to the corporeal and highly symbolic media of the visual arts." (From the exhibition brochure)

Schedule

Artists were first contacted in June. They were matched with their elders in the fall. The gallery exhibition opened the following March, giving artists about six months to create an original work of art inspired by the life of a Jewish woman.

Creating the Art Exhibition

1. Three curators drew up a list of local and national Jewish artists and sent them letters of invitation along with a description of the project, specifications on the art, an approximate timetable, profiles on the three participating institutions, and a listing of advisory board members for the exhibition. Thirty-three artists agreed to participate, one for each elder. In addition, one artist was invited to do a composite piece representing all the women.

2. Once selected, each artist received the name of an elder, a copy of her taped interview, and the index of the tape.

3. The following week about 80 people came to a tea held at the synagogue for all of the elders, the interviewers, and the artists.

4. Artists were invited to call or meet their elder. Some of the artists preferred to work only through the tapes. Others had direct contact with the women and many established close relationships.

5. After six weeks, artists presented preliminary proposals which included a general description of their work, approximate dimensions, and particulars about installation. The curators did not impose set dimensions but gave the artists as much free range as possible.
6. Halfway through the creative process, the curators facilitated an artist's open forum where the artists shared with each other their feelings about the initial stages of their work and discussed issues evoked by the project (e.g., how to protect the privacy of the elder, how to create a piece about someone else's life without sacrificing the artist's own integrity, how to handle the dark sides of a woman's life).

7. Before the exhibition, artists wrote a one-page statement about their work and they came to a second artists' open forum where they previewed the exhibition. A videographer filmed the artists standing beside their piece and talking about its meaning, their feelings in creating it, and their relationship to the elder. The video was later played at the synagogue museum and the art gallery at the JCC.

8. On a Sunday afternoon and evening, consecutive openings were held for the art exhibition at the JCC gallery and the historical exhibition at the synagogue museum. Between 400 and 500 people attended each. The artists were there along with the elders, their families, members and friends of the local art community, and the community at large.

The opening at the JCC gallery featured a panel of two of the older women, two interviewers, and one artist. Panelists spoke about what they had learned from their participation in the project and the feelings it evoked. The director of the Jewish Women's Archive spoke about the importance of the project and the significance of recording women's life stories. This event was videotaped, creating yet another piece for distribution and public exhibition.

Making It Happen

The interpretative art project was led by three professional curators, who worked with an advisory board comprised of gallery owners, the curator of the American Jewish Historical Society, and others connected to the art world. The primary role of this board was to identify and contact artists who might contribute to the project.

Program Costs

The project received financial support from foundations and private donors. Major costs, shared equally by the three participating institutions, were the brochure ($4,000 for 8,000 brochures) and invitation to the exhibition ($3,000 for 9,000 invitations). The greatest in-kind expense was the curators' time. The project is highly time-consuming and was undertaken by the curators in addition to their full exhibition schedule.

All of the pieces created for the exhibition were available for sale. The artists received 60% of the proceeds. The balance was divided equally among the three participating institutions to help defray production costs.

Getting the Word Out

Publicity for the exhibition included the brochure and invitation, articles and announcements in the synagogue and JCC bulletins, and press kits sent to newspapers and to national magazines. The exhibition was covered by the Boston newspapers and New England Cable Television.

Replication Advice

1. Appoint people well connected to the art world to the project's advisory board. The quality of the exhibition largely depends on the talent of the artists engaged.

2. Bring together the artists, elders, and their families. The art produced by this project is deeply personal, emerging from a relationship between artist and subject. The meetings organized by Women Who Live Span the Century were instrumental in the success of the project.

3. Maintain the intimate atmosphere of the exhibition. Arrange a number of group visits and special tours of the show for people involved in the project and for various groups and organizations in the community.

4. Allow adequate time to complete the project. The Starr Gallery had only six months from commission to exhibition. The project and its publicity would have benefited from one or two additional months.

5. Be prepared to make difficult curatorial decisions. For example, the curators considered having a photograph of each woman next to the work of art inspired by her life story. Some of the women, however, did not want to be photographed. The curators of the historical exhibition at the synagogue, concerned about privacy, did not want the elders' names on pieces. The artists and curators of the art exhibition at the JCC felt that the women's names had to be included for the integrity of the project. Such issues require careful consideration and good judgment.

6. Seek collaborative partners. The collaboration between Temple Israel, the Jewish Women's Archive, and the Starr Gallery at the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center contributed immeasurably to the success of the project. The sharing of resources and expertise allowed each party to create a much fuller project than it could have done on its own.

7. Explore the project's potential to generate creative products and events. The possibilities abound—artists' forums, panel discussions, videotapes, catalogues, traveling exhibitions, and so on.
APPENDIX A

SYNAGOGUE HOPE GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Grotta Foundation for Senior Care is a New Jersey-based foundation whose mission is to enhance the quality of life of the elderly and their family caregivers. The Foundation recognizes the unique potential of synagogues to foster care for the Jewish elderly and to provide opportunities for growth and leadership among their community's older adults. A Foundation special initiative, Synagogues HOPE, helps Jewish congregations develop their capacity to provide care and meaningful programs for older adults. Grantees receive two years of funding and technical assistance.

Five synagogues were selected from among those submitting grant proposals to the Foundation. These grantees represent diverse streams of Judaism and varied approaches to programming for Jewish seniors.

Needs Assessment
Congregation Agudath Israel is a Conservative congregation of 800 families. About one-fourth of its members are older adults.

The congregation created a survey to reach out to early retirees and senior adults in the community and to assess their needs. The synagogue is using the results of the survey to expand existing programs and services and to create new ones to address expressed needs.

Congregation Agudath Israel of West Essex
23 Academy Road
Caldwell, NJ 07006
Tel: 973-226-3600

Preparing Caregivers: Volunteer Services and Education
Temple Emanu-El is a large Reform congregation with over 100 older adults in its membership.

The Temple developed an intergenerational, volunteer service program for elders. The program recruits and trains a volunteer corps that provides transportation and other services to the elderly. It has established a permanent resource center and offers lecture series on topics relevant to older adults.

Temple Emanu-El
756 East Broad Street
Westfield, NJ 07090
Tel: 908-232-6770

Assisting With Daily Life: Survival Skills Training And English As A Second Language
Bris Avrohom Synagogue is affiliated with the Chabad arm of the Orthodox Movement. The synagogue has no membership structure and is open to all members of the community. Approximately 250 elderly, most from the former
Soviet Union, frequent the synagogue to take advantage of the myriad of services it offers.

The synagogue offers a Survival Skills and ESL Training Program for older adults who are refugees and emigres. The program teaches how to negotiate American bureaucracies and how to manage everyday needs such as shopping and medical appointments. The program also offers transportation services for older adults and a synagogue connection for the homebound elderly.

*Congregation Bris Avrohom*
910 Salem Avenue
Hillside, NJ 07205
Tel: 908-289-0770

**Exercising The Mind: Jewish Lecture Series**

White Meadow Lake Temple is a Conservative congregation with some 325 families. Approximately 25 percent of the members are older adults.

The temple seeks to strengthen the existing community of senior adults through a daytime Jewish lecture series. The program is designed to provide intellectual and social stimulation to older adults within a Jewish milieu. A strong emphasis is placed on reaching the unaffiliated to connect them to the Jewish senior community.

*White Meadow Lake Temple*
153 White Meadow Road
Rockaway, NJ 07866
Tel: 973-627-4500

**Building Community: Adult Forum**

Congregation B'nai Israel is a growing Conservative congregation with some 500 family units. Approximately 30 percent of its members are older adults.

B'nai Israel initiated an Adult Forum—biweekly educational experiences and monthly cultural events for older adults within the community. The program is coordinated and run by a committee of senior volunteers. The goal of the program is to create a viable community of older adults who seek out the synagogue as a comfortable place to meet and socialize. Eventually, the program will expand to include services for the homebound elderly.

*Congregation B'nai Israel*
160 Millburn Avenue
Millburn, NJ 07041
Tel: 973-377-3811

**APPENDIX B**

A Sampler of Resources on Older Adults and Aging

**DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES ON AGING**


The *Directory of Aging Resources* is an easy-to-use guidebook to the aging network in the United States. It lists all major federal programs, congressional committees, national organizations and U.S.-based international groups, state and local organizations, and research programs at major colleges and universities. Each listing contains a contact name, mission or purpose of the organization, its key activities and services in the aging field and, where applicable, funding sources and publications. The book also contains a user-friendly listing under each state for all kinds of assistance programs—energy, housing, meals, Medicaid, Social Security, transportation, and so on.

**WEB SITES**

Most federal government agencies and national organizations have Web sites, from the Alzheimer's Association to the Veterans Administration.

**ADMINISTRATION ON AGING FACT SHEETS**

The Administration on Aging fact sheets are designed for professionals in the field of aging, service providers and policy makers, as well as for use by older Americans and their families. Each fact sheet includes an overview of topics related to older Americans and details related to Administration on Aging initiatives. Also included are various resource listings of federal agencies and national organizations as well as suggested readings.

*Administration on Aging*

**National Aging Information Center**
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201
Tel: 202-619-0724
www.aao.dhhs.gov/factsheets/default.htm
NATIONAL AGING SERVICES NETWORK
Department of Health and Human Services

Administration on Aging (AoA)

AoA, the advocate agency for older people, works to heighten awareness among the public, organizations, and other federal agencies about the contributions and needs of older adults. The AoA educates older people and their caregivers about the services and benefits available to them. It ensures that programs and services are coordinated with the network on aging.

AoA Regional Offices

Nine regional offices provide technical assistance to the state and area agencies, and coordinate among state agencies.

State Units on Aging

State units oversee the delivery of programs, services, and benefits directed to the elderly. They plan, implement, and monitor programs on behalf of the seniors living in their state. State units on aging can be located through government listings in the Yellow Pages or in the Directory of Aging Resources.

Area Agencies on Aging

Area agencies plan, coordinate, and develop systems of services that meet the needs of the elderly and caregivers in their local area. There are some 660 area agencies on aging, which can be located through the state agency offices or through the Yellow Pages under city or county government listings. There is also a toll-free hotline which provides information about assistance for older adults anywhere in the United States (Tel: 800-677-1116).

Educational and Research Institutions

Educational institutions. With AoA funding, develop curricula and training programs for professionals and para-professionals in the field of aging.

Research institutions. With AoA funding, conduct research, demonstration projects, and training programs.

27,000 Local Service Providers

Access services. Information and referral, outreach, case management, escort and transportation services.

Community-based services. Senior centers, congregate meals, day care, nursing homes, elder abuse prevention, health promotion, and fitness programs.

Multipurpose senior centers. Day centers with meals and activities.

In-home services. Chores, homemakers, personal care, home delivered meals, and home repair and rehabilitation.

Nutrition services. Hot meals, opportunities to meet with peers.

Legal Assistance. Legal testimony on pending legislation, legal opinions to legislators.

Institutional services. Services for the elderly provided by hospitals, businesses, and other institutions.

Voluntary organizations. Programs and services offered by synagogues, churches, and other nonprofit volunteer organizations that assist the elderly.

Information from www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/pages/aoaact.html

Publications

General

Generations [Quarterly journal of the Western Gerontological Society and the American Society on Aging. Each issue examines a single high-priority topic. See, for example, Fall 1990 and Winter 1991, which deal with the topic of aging and religion.]


Jewish Sources


Journal of Aging and Judaism. New York: Human Sciences Press. [A journal dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of issues facing the Jewish community in its delivery of services to the aged. Volumes from Fall 1986 to Summer 1991.]

Order Form

Help, Opportunities, and Programs for Jewish Elders: An Action Guide for Synagogues is a publication of Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

Publication price ($18.00) includes domestic 4th class postage. International postage not included. Quantity discounts available.

Please make checks payable to Brandeis University.

To order additional copies or to request information about other publications contact:

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
Brandeis University
MS 014
Waltham, MA 02454-9110
Tel: 781-736-2066
Fax: 781-736-2070

Publications


Publications of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) 1

Planning for the Tomorrows [A guide, based on Jewish values, that helps families choose among residence options for aging loved ones.]

Preparing for the Graying of a Congregation [A workbook to help synagogues create programs for older adults.]

The Synagogue as a Caring Community [Selected UAHC synagogue programs that support older adults and their families and enhance their quality of life.]
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