

A GENERATION OF GIVERS

Youth foundation seeks teenagers to allocate funds

Nominations are due Oct. 10 for eighth- to 10th-grade post-b'nai mitzvah students interested in participating in a tzedakah pilot program of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation.

About 25 to 28 students will have the opportunity to experience firsthand the challenges, pressures and rewards of sitting on a board of a nonprofit foundation. They will learn to evaluate charities and allocate funds to local Jewish and general community organizations.

The idea for an Oregon Jewish Community Youth Foundation began last fall, when 13-year-old Julia Weiss contacted the OJCF about a similar program in San Diego, and suggested that doing something similar in Portland would make Jewish kids feel like a powerful part of their community.

Weiss did extensive research about creating a youth foundation, including getting a copy of the operations manual created by the San Diego Jewish Community Youth Foundation, before asking OJCF to create a similar program here. Moss said Weiss's research resulted in the OJCF board's quick consideration and adoption of the idea.

The OJCYF is looking for mature, articulate, post-b'nai mitzvah students who have a knowledge of and appreciation for tzedakah, demonstrated by active involvement in synagogue, youth group or community-wide social action projects. For this pilot program, students will attend three meetings, one per month, beginning in November, as well as on-site visits of local prospective grantee organizations (to take place during winter break). Each participant will be required to raise a minimum of \$36 (from friends, family and other sources).

Adult donors have already pledged up to \$5,000 in matching grants to augment funds raised by the students, said OJCF Executive Director John Moss.

"The matching grants are from donors who view this as a way to perpetuate the idea of tzedakah they want to see left

behind," said Moss. "We are actually going to empower them with real dollars to make powerful choices."

"It's our challenge and responsibility to perpetuate a culture of giving," said Moss. "If we are able to educate our youth, it can become their joy."

Students will make site visits, present their findings, and then, as a group, decide which organizations they find most worthy of a grant. Participants are expected to vote on grant recipients in January.

"Our kids don't really know what a dollar does at a charity," said Moss. "Our kids will learn this stuff doesn't happen by magic—but they can make magic."

Weiss wanted to start the program in Portland because, she said, "I think this would make kids feel like a powerful part of their community."

Moss said he believes that students who apply for the pilot program will feel empowered by being part of a real board and allocating real money.

"It's a very adult thing for a kid to do," he said. "It's meaningful and it's not trivial."

In addition to students learning about community needs and the role of tzedakah in meeting those needs, Moss said he hopes participants will carry some lessons to their parents and other adults.

"Kids can teach us things we just don't know or that we've long forgotten as adults," said Moss.

Under Moss' supervision, Julie Kaye and Marcia Weiss will serve as coordinators of the OJCYF, and Julia Weiss will be the student liaison.

Portland-area synagogues and day schools are each being asked to nominate three or four students to participate in this pilot program. Interested students should contact their congregation's rabbi or educator. In addition, parents of interested students may contact John Moss at 503-248-9328 or via e-mail at action@ojcf.org for more information or an application. Applications must be received by Oct. 10.

Kids raise money for others



DEBORAH SELDNER/Jewish Review



FREEDOM CAR WASH—Isaac Sprints displays a sign to attract drivers to bring their cars in for a wash to benefit a local fire station. The Sept. 11 car wash at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center raised \$115.09 for vehicle and equipment maintenance at Portland Fire Station No. 5 in Hillsdale. The fund-raiser was organized and cars were washed by youths, including Diana Norris, left, in the MJCC's after-school program, KidsCorner. The car wash was part of the second annual United Day of Service, created by Champions of Hope to pay tribute to the fire, police and rescue personnel who recently reminded many Americans that the true meaning of heroism is to serve others. KidsCorner Director Jennifer Merrill said KidsCorner will invite firefighters to visit the program in October to receive the check. Last year, Merrill said, the firefighters brought a fire truck and equipment. "The kids love it," said Merrill.

Youth to help repair world at November conference

Temple Beth Shalom in Salem is hosting the first-ever Pacific Northwest Tikkun Olam Youth Conference Nov. 7-9, 2003.

Tikkun Olam, which means "repairing the world," is a fundamental principle in Judaism. The conference, for Jewish youth ages 10-15, will help young people develop a stronger appreciation for Jewish traditions of social justice and learn how to translate these ideas into actions that benefit their communities.

The conference's practical experiences focus on the issues of hunger and homelessness, which are pressing problems in the Pacific Northwest today. During the weekend, participants will work with a variety of local organizations such as HOST Youth Shelter, HOME Youth and Resource Center, Marion-Polk Food Share, and the Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network. In each of these settings, par-

ticipants will learn practical skills that they can take home with them, making tikkun olam a part of their lives.

Local and national social justice leaders will also lead seminars, providing young people with an outstanding opportunity to learn from those who have dedicated their lives to the notion of tikkun olam.

The conference is hosted by the Tikkun Olam committee of Temple Beth Shalom and is made possible by a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Portland.

The Pacific Northwest Tikkun Olam Youth Conference will be Nov. 7-9 at Temple Beth Shalom in Salem. There is no cost for attendance. Home hospitality will be provided.

For more information, call Charlean Clemons, Tikkun Olam Committee Chair, at 503-362-5004, or e-mail her at tbsshalom@aol.com.