

February 2018

Dear 7th Graders and Parents,

I would like to welcome you to the “teenage years”, an exciting and joyful time for parents and their kids. In Sonoma County for the past 23 years we, as a small, but strong Jewish community have been a consistent part of the support system for students and their parents. Over 600 Sonoma County Jewish teens since 1993 have chosen to mark their B’nai Mitzvah as a new starting point in Jewish education instead of the end of their education. Our retention rate of 80-95% of B’nai Mitzvah students is not easy to find anywhere in this country.

We invite your teen to continue their Jewish education in a unique program called Chaverim, sponsored by the JCC of Sonoma County; led by long-time director and educator Rick Concoff. This program was built collaboratively with Congregations Shomrei Torah, Beth Ami, Ner Shalom, B’nai Israel and Shir Shalom to bring all our teens together in a joint Jewish education program. In addition, we strive to bring previously unaffiliated teens into our community of students. In the past years Chaverim parents and students have reached out and recruited 20 unaffiliated teens to join the various grade groups. This adds more diversity of experience as well as new social connections for the students.

Looking towards next fall, as an 8th grader participating in Chaverim, you will have an opportunity to share in discussions, learning, social activity, leadership, and of course, FUN! Chaverim meets once or twice each month during the school year, for a dinner, discussion and social connection. The evenings, which are scheduled for alternating Thursdays in the fall of 2018, feature a shared meal with the group and a discussion related to teen life through a Jewish lens. Students love the topics and there’s lots of participation in the discussions. The students are excited to see a whole new dimension and side of Judaism and the social/educational component of the dinner discussions provide a great place to relax and forget about day-to-day issues. Our Rabbis join us periodically for class discussions.

Chaverim students also have opportunities to meet for social events, social action opportunities, as well as Jewish celebrations. Our year begins in September and we conclude events and final dinner discussions in late April or early May. The JCC’s Teen Program also supports and endorses both USY and NFTY (SHORTY) and all of their events, and offers additional leadership opportunities for interested students. Any Jewish teen in 8th-12th grade in Sonoma County is welcome to join. It is not necessary to have had a B’nai Mitzvah to participate. Invite your Jewish friends.

Join us! The incoming 7th graders will be hosted at an “Chaverim Burrito Party, spring date to be announced.

That’s a lot of information to encourage your involvement! Mazel Tov on the B’nai Mitzvah and all other joyful moments for your family.

Shalom,
Rick Concoff
Teen Program Director