



JEWISH  
OUTREACH  
INSTITUTE

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## BUILDING THE PROFESSION AND EXPANDING THE FIELD OF JEWISH OUTREACH

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**  
HEALING AND  
OUTREACH:  
ALTERNATIVE FORMS  
OF COMMUNITY

# THE INCLUSIVE PROFESSIONAL

## THE OUTREACH POTENTIAL OF HEALING CENTERS

*A New JOI Report Sees Opportunities To Bring Unaffiliated and Intermarried Jews Into The Community Through Their Participation In Healing Centers*

**W**hat does the Jewish healing center movement have in common with Jewish outreach? That question is the basis for a new report from the Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI) entitled, “The Outreach Potential of Jewish Healing Centers.” The report indicates that Jewish healing centers serve a large number of un- and under-affiliated Jews, and that these centers are well positioned to help their clientele find other meaningful venues and activities within the Jewish community. This is important news for both the healing center professionals and the outreach professionals who are trying to attract otherwise unaffiliated and intermarried Jews to their programs.

Gail Quets, a formally trained sociologist and JOI’s director of research, writes in the report, “Although the healing centers’ intent is not to ‘feed’ the Jews it has

assisted back into the Jewish community...this *may* be an unanticipated consequence of healing center activities.” This is important because the number of unaffiliated Jews whose only contact with their heritage is through healing centers may be significant; of fifteen centers willing to estimate the number of unaffiliated they serve, fourteen reported that “many” or “most” of their clients are unaffiliated. One

While there are substantial differences between the reasons people attend Jewish healing centers and the reasons they participate in Jewish outreach programs, this report identifies some striking similarities between the two movements [see sidebar on page P4].

Observations in this report are based on information collected on twenty-four healing centers across North America, in cities such as Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles,

CA; Wilmington, DE; Jacksonville, FL; Baltimore, MD; Framingham, MA; St. Paul, MN; St. Louis, MO; Pittsburgh, PA; Dallas, TX; Washington, DC; and Toronto, ON, Canada.



healing center in New Jersey reported an unaffiliated rate as high as 90%. The JOI report includes steps that Jewish healing centers can take to become more effective outreach vehicles, and is being distributed to Jewish healing centers nationally.

Hannah Greenstein, a program officer at JOI who often works with Jewish professionals on identifying and improving outreach methodology, gathered much of the data. She writes in the report, “The goal of

*(continued on page P4)*

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# HEALING AND OUTREACH: ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF COMMUNITY

*Excerpted from "The Outreach Potential of Jewish Healing Centers," July 2002, as prepared by JOI Director of Research Gail Quets and JOI Program Officer Hannah Greenstein, and funded by the Jewish Connection Partnership, a project of the Jewish Outreach Institute.*

Some synagogue leaders and members blame intermarried and unaffiliated individuals and families for threatening Jewish continuity. Attitudes like these are less frequently observed at family and children's services or community centers, because they serve a more diverse population than synagogues do, and expression of these attitudes is therefore more obviously inappropriate. Participants in outreach programs housed at synagogues may also be shielded from negative attitudes, until they venture out into the larger synagogue community.

When confronted with negativity or lack of acceptance, those who may have participated enthusiastically in outreach program and healing center activities may avoid integration into the life of the larger Jewish community. Sometimes, they can postpone or reject synagogue affiliation by maintaining involvement in the programs and institutions that initially welcomed them into the Jewish world. Those who frequent healing centers are probably more likely than those who attend outreach programs to find that all or most of their Jewish needs

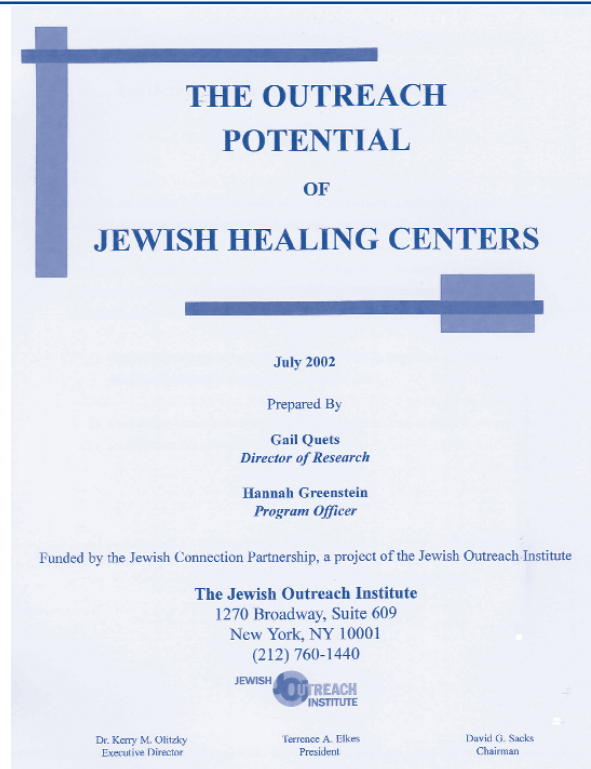
can be met via regular participation in these activities. Participants in healing center activities may simply not *want* to move on, even after the healing they initially sought has taken place. "Graduation" from outreach programs, no matter what participants' preferences, seems much more inevitable, given that the didactic and experiential components of outreach

programs are usually introductory in nature.

When graduates of outreach and healing center programs have exhausted what their outreach program, healing center, JFCS, or community center has to offer, and feel a strong need to join a spiritual community, yet still feel uncomfortable at local synagogues, they can also form their own *chavurot* [small study groups] or other kinds

of alternative Jewish communities. Are participants in healing center activities as likely, or more likely, than participants in outreach programs to decide against synagogue affiliation in favor of membership in spiritual communities they establish themselves? And what does this imply about the centers' effectiveness as outreach vehicles? Are "new" Jews who are introduced, or re-introduced, to Judaism through the healing movement less likely to bring new energy to the larger Jewish world than participants in outreach programs?

Not necessarily. Jews who are motivated enough to keep their own groups afloat may be turned-on enough to maintain more than one connection to the Jewish community: they may also belong to a Jewish Community Center, work at a Jewish agency, or have their children enrolled in a Jewish day school. Also, any groups they create may grow into stable, unconventional congregations that successfully carve out an established space for themselves within the larger Jewish community. Eventually, these congregations may become destinations of choice for other "new" Jews.



# OPeN To Help You



**JOI** is pleased to announce its new season of the **NY Outreach Professionals Network (OPeN)**, a support network and educational workshop for professionals involved in Jewish outreach. The NY OPeN meets once every two months here at JOI's national headquarters, in lovely Herald Square, Manhattan. (Attendees typically come from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, but sometimes from such far away, exotic places as Philadelphia!) We welcome all who can attend.

This year, OPeN will have a particular focus on supporting families, and each session will highlight a different issue challenging Jewish family life for the intermarried and unaffiliated. JOI has invited professional affiliates to facilitate the workshops, allowing all of us to benefit from their hands-on knowledge and expertise. The topics will include:

- **Life Cycle Events, from birth to bar/bat mitzvah, marriage to death, dying, and mourning**
- **Using the Passover Seder as entry point into Judaism for interfaith families**
- **Multiracial Families, a growing part of our target population**
- **Interfaith in My Own Family, the Jewish professional's challenge**

The first of these meetings will be held on **Wednesday, September 18th, from 9:30am - 12pm**. Future dates will be announced. As always, we will have bagels, muffins, and coffee for you to enjoy. We look forward to seeing you then!

To RSVP, call JOI Program Officer Hannah Greenstein at (212) 760-1440, or e-mail her at [Hgreenstein@JOI.org](mailto:Hgreenstein@JOI.org).

## JOI: WILL WORK FOR OUTREACH!

If you would like to explore the outreach potential of your own agency's programs and services, JOI's professional staff is available on a consultative basis. We can:

- Perform community scans and demographic analyses to identify outreach needs or program feasibility;
- Assist with program development and/or implementation;
- Design program evaluation methodology and/or conduct program evaluation;
- Train Jewish communal professionals in outreach methodology and/or provide basic outreach education for lay leadership;
- And offer many other valuable services.

Please contact JOI Executive Director Kerry Olitzky at (212) 760-1440 to learn more.

## JOI COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU?

Stop by and say "hi" to JOI staffers at these upcoming events:

### **MONTREAL, CANADA NOVEMBER 7 THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FEDERATION BIENNIAL CONVENTION**

JOI Director of Research Gail Quets will conduct a workshop on, "What Do We Know About Outreach, Interfaith Marriage, and Continuity?"

### **PHILADELPHIA, PA NOVEMBER 19-24 THE UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITIES GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)**

JOI will have a booth on the exhibition floor and may lead sessions, to be announced. Please check the program guide at the convention; we hope to see you there!



points out, “Most healing centers are located *inside* the Jewish world, not outside it, and this may make it easier for those who

outreach is to push people a little further along the continuum of Jewish knowledge, understanding, and observance, but not to push them past their comfort level or to make negative judgments about how they choose to utilize their outreach experience.” Applying this to healing centers, she suggests, “If the healing center has given them what they need, and what they have received is distinctively Jewish, participants in healing center activities seem to be very good candidates for continued movement along the continuum of Jewish involvement. Of course, they may be disappointed if they do not find as much spiritual fulfillment in the other Jewish activities they undertake.”

Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky, executive director of JOI and author of “Jewish Paths to Healing and Wholeness” (Jewish Lights Publishing),

use healing centers to ‘build a bridge’ for themselves back into the larger Jewish community. We believe healing centers can become effective vehicles of outreach to un- and under-affiliated Jews, and hope they can use the findings of this study to solicit support for a technical assistance initiative that targets the nation’s most successful healing centers, to help them learn how they can make their services more readily available to all Jews and, in so doing, strengthen the Jewish community as a whole.”



*JOI Director of Research Gail Quets and Program Officer Hannah Greenstein prepared the healing center study*

The full JOI report “Outreach Potential of Jewish Healing Centers” can be found on our website at [www.JOI.org/joplin/rr/research/healing.shtml](http://www.JOI.org/joplin/rr/research/healing.shtml) or can be ordered in printed format by calling JOI at (212) 760-1440.

## SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE OUTREACH MOVEMENT AND THE HEALING CENTER MOVEMENT:

- Both **came of age in the 1990s** to serve a population that could not find, or did not have access to, what they needed in the synagogue or other parts of the conventional Jewish world. (The first Jewish healing center opened in 1991, and many Jewish outreach programs began after the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey identified surprisingly high rates of intermarriage and disaffiliation.)
- Healing programs and services have now become an important part of what many synagogues, community centers, and family and children’s services have to offer—as have programs of outreach. Even among programs associated with larger institutions, both healing and outreach often **create an “alternative forms of community”** for their participants [see “Healing and Outreach: Alternative Forms of Community” in this newsletter].
- Both the outreach movement and the healing movement attract some Jews who are truly “beginners”—Jews who have no Jewish education or background, Jews who have no rabbi to whom they can turn for counsel. They also **attract Jews whose prior experiences with Judaism have proven unsatisfactory**—Jews who found little of value in the Judaism their parents practiced; Jews who approached their rabbi at a time of crisis but found little comfort there.
- Both the outreach movement and the healing movement also **attract individuals who are not Jewish at all**. The outreach movement, insofar as it targets the intermarried, does this intentionally. Healing centers assume that their clientele will be mostly Jewish, but in the interest of not turning away anyone in need, they also serve non-Jews. (Healing centers that accept public funds are obligated to serve both Jews and non-Jews.)
- The Jewish outreach and the Jewish healing movements both seek to **create welcoming and inclusive environments**. In order for would-be participants to perceive this welcome as genuine and immediate, “barriers to entry” are identified and removed. Therefore, marketing and venue choices by both try to reach people wherever they happen to be and attract involvement by responding to participants’ needs.
- In an effort to attract Jews and non-Jews who know little about Judaism, or who were unmoved or turned off by any Judaism they experienced earlier in life, some outreach programs make **creative use of new (or, in some cases, long-forgotten) Jewish texts and practices**. Many healing centers have also adopted somewhat unconventional methods of creating Jewish experience. Some healing centers draw on practices so ancient that they appear unusual today (e.g. chanting wordless melodies called *niggunim*, studying Kabbalah); others, on methods new enough to be part of the New Age repertoire (e.g. hatha yoga, visualization techniques); many draw on both.