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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yachad: A Collaborative Initiative in Jewish Education for Teens Launches its First Year of Programming

Minneapolis, MN, September 4, 2014 – Yachad is proud to announce the launch of a new community-wide, collaborative, Jewish supplemental education program for teens in 9th-12th grades in Minneapolis. The program, under the visionary leadership of Rabbi Alexander Davis (Beth El Synagogue), Rabbi David Locketz (Bet Shalom Congregation), and Jed Stillman (Interim President), is the result of more than five years of strategic visioning and planning.

Yachad will bring Jewish learning to life! Through innovative educational programming, Yachad will enable teens to strengthen their Jewish identity, develop critical thinking skills, participate in leadership opportunities, and be challenged intellectually - all rooted in Jewish values. Teens will socialize and learn together in Yachad's pluralistic community program.

Yachad is a collaborative partnership between Minneapolis synagogues, educational institutions, and community organizations including: Adath Jeshurun Congregation, the Amos & Celia Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School, Bet Shalom Congregation, Beth El Synagogue, Darchei Noam Congregation, Minneapolis Jewish Federation, Sabes Jewish Community Center, Sharei Chesed Congregation, Shir Tikvah Congregation, Talmud Torah of Minneapolis, & Temple Israel. The Minneapolis Jewish Federation has been instrumental in supporting and encouraging the grassroots efforts of these organizations.

Through Yachad, the Minneapolis Jewish community plans to strengthen its educational experiences for teens by,

- Enabling teens to embrace Judaism and Jewish life together as they continue their Jewish learning.
- Providing extensive opportunities through the collaborative that no single institution could offer alone.



- Blending Jewish and secular learning within a supportive Jewish environment and promoting educational excellence.
- Bringing together high school-age students from many different backgrounds, regardless of synagogue affiliation – both embracing and celebrating diversity of Jewish practice and belief.
- Encouraging teens to be part of a larger Jewish community by planting deeper roots with friends from many synagogues.
- Fostering mentor partnerships to further help teens learn and grow.

The Yachad program for 2014-2015 will include six Wednesday evening programs from 6:15-8:30 PM starting in November. The sessions will model Yachad's learning goals: innovation, collaboration, and critical thinking including Jewish inquiry and thought. To enroll in Yachad, please visit the Yachad website at www.yachadmn.org and talk with the Education Director at your synagogue.

In February, Dana Kanter Prottas was hired as Yachad's first director. Prottas is a highly regarded educator locally and nationally. She has over twenty years of experience working within schools, congregations, and organizations across the country. As Director of Yachad, Prottas aims to create innovative learning opportunities for teens. She was the Director of the Lower School and Hebrew School at Mount Zion Temple, and she was previously Program Director and teacher at the Talmud Torah Day School of St. Paul.

Prottas has a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Administration from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. She also received the certification of Reform Jewish Educator (R.J.E.) from the National Association of Temple Educators (NATE). Prottas has worked within a variety of Jewish and secular settings as a certified Responsive Classroom coach, in addition to consulting for institutions nationally writing curriculum and providing educational insight. Recently she received the Yad B'Yad Curriculum Award from the National Association of Temple Educators (NATE) for an innovative Israel curriculum.

Prottas also holds a Master of Education from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Arts in Art History from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in conjunction with Columbia University. She is married to Jeffrey Prottas and is the mother to Ayelet and Addie.



Yachad is developing both short-and-long-term funding plans. Yachad has received initial funding from our partner organizations, the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, the Trestman Special Needs and Collaborative Education Fund, and a limited number of donors. If you are interested in learning more about Yachad funding initiatives, please be in touch with Dana Prottas, Director of Yachad at dprottas@yachadmn.org or 952-491-0720.

For additional information about Yachad or upcoming programming, please visit the Yachad website at www.yachadmn.org and contact Dana Kanter Prottas at dprottas@yachadmn.org or 952-491-0720.

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