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» **Israel Unmasked** Fulfilling moments mark Temple Israel's adult mission. **See page 38.**

» **Danny Says** A documentary on the life and times of Danny Fields, who helped shape the future of rock 'n' roll. **See page 58.**



Photo by Stacy Gordon

Tom Norris and Susan Bodley of Novi – along the Mediterranean Sea in Tel Aviv

metro » cover story

Meet At The Well

New community outreach program aims to enhance Jewish living.

Barbara Lewis | Contributing Writer

In ancient days, the community well was a gathering place where news and opinions were shared and something valuable and life-sustaining was taken.



Rabbi Dan Horwitz will direct The Well.

And so The Well seems a fitting name for an exciting new Jewish community outreach program headed by Rabbi Daniel Horwitz. Its mission, he said, is “to dramatically increase the number of Jews actively participating in liberal community-

centric Jewish living in Metro Detroit by means of relationship-building, network weaving and participant-driven programming.”

Several years ago, Horwitz, then the rabbi and director of immersive learning for the

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Brett Mountain

Got Art?

Kids create mosaic murals for new hospital to make other kids feel better.

Suzanne Chessler | Contributing Writer

Two eighth-graders at Baker Middle School in Troy know the waiting rooms and lengthy hallways at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit intimately.

Regardless of the separate reasons they had to be there, both could find distractions in looking at other young faces, noticing the layout of the building and observing colorful artworks.

One of those students easily recalls seeing a Tree of Life mosaic installation. It was made and signed by patients encouraged to step away from illness by experimenting with the creative possibilities of artistry.

The young observer hadn't mentioned the installation to classmates or visual arts teacher Linda Gealy until he joined a much larger mosaic project to enhance a facility under construction: Children's Hospital of Michigan-Troy, David K. Page Building.

Eighth-graders at Baker Middle School in Troy work on a mosaic panel that will be installed with others by students at Children's Hospital of Michigan-Troy, now under construction.

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Meet At The Well

New community outreach program aims to enhance Jewish living.

Barbara Lewis | Contributing Writer

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Moishe House network, wrote to Temple Israel offering to start a free-standing Jewish educational program that would appeal to unaffiliated young adults. There was no way to fund it and the idea died.

Horwitz, 31, returned to the Detroit area to serve as associate rabbi of Congregation Shir Tikvah in Troy and senior Jewish educator of the Michigan State University Hillel.

Meanwhile, the 2013 Pew Research Center report started setting off alarms throughout the Jewish community. The report showed that while American Jews are proud of their heritage, more than one-fifth say they have “no religion.” Among millennials — those born between the early 1980s and about 2000 — 32 percent say they feel Jewish by ancestry, ethnicity or culture but have no

religion.

After the Pew report, Temple Israel convened a future-planning committee to address the issue of millennials’ detachment from Jewish life.

“We envisioned a ‘network weaver’ who would tie together groups that already existed and reach beyond institutional walls,” said Temple Israel’s Rabbi Paul Yedwab. “It was a lot like the program Dan had proposed.”



Rabbi Paul Yedwab

Yedwab also started talking with philanthropist Lori Talsky Zekelman, who is not a member of Temple Israel. She also was concerned the Jewish community was not meeting people’s needs and liked the idea of a non-congregational outreach program.

Zekelman, said Yedwab, is “unbelievably creative.”

“She knows how to push and pull and ask the right questions. She was absolutely



Rebecca and Eliezer by Bartolome Esteban Murillo, 17th century

focused on creating something that will make the world a better place.”

Working with a small committee, Yedwab and Zekelman created a framework for the new program, and Zekelman agreed to fund a four-year trial. The committee started an extensive national search for a director.

Because the program would not be affiliated with any congregation or denomination, the position was listed with Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist organizations for rabbis and cantors and with groups of Jewish social workers and educators.

The job posting asked for a spiritual entrepreneur with a dynamic and charismatic personality, an inspiring worship leader,

a knowledgeable and effective teacher, a willing fundraiser and grant writer, and a self-starting team player competent in social media, Yedwab said.

“As it turns out, we found that person right here in Metropolitan Detroit,” he said.

Homegrown Leadership

Horwitz grew up at Conservative Congregation B’nai Israel and graduated from Hillel Day School and West Bloomfield High. He now lives in Huntington Woods with his wife, Miriam, and their son, Jonah, born last December. He is the son of Gina and Arthur Horwitz, publisher/executive edi-

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tor of the *JN*.

His academic credentials include a bachelor's degree in politics from Brandeis, a law degree from the University of Michigan, master's degrees from U-M (sport management), Gratz College (Jewish studies) and Hebrew College (Jewish education), and ordination from the Mesifita Adas Wolkowisk Rabbinical Academy in Woodmere, N.Y.

He is a member of OHALAH: the Association of Rabbis for Jewish Renewal and the Michigan Board of Rabbis.

He will formally start his new job June 1, though he's been working on contract since February, planning and piloting activities.

He has workspace at Temple Israel, which is donating administrative services for the program, but he doesn't consider it an office because he doesn't plan to be there often.

Horwitz says the founders struggled to find a name for the program.

"We went through hundreds of suggestions, and then I did what all good Jewish husbands should do: I asked my wife," he said. "Miriam came up with 'The Well' — understandable, he says, given the association of the biblical Miriam with the well that accompanied the Jewish people in the desert.

"Our ancestors were a desert people and thus their lives centered around the com-

munity well," Yedwab said. "For them, the well was a meeting place, a business center, a singles' bar, a lifeline, a coffee klatch, the office water cooler and a place to just hang out and shmooze."

The Well will perform a similar function, he said, as a place for people get together, make new friends, contribute to the community and find that Judaism can be a central meeting place in their lives.

"Raising The Tide"

Horwitz has piloted a "CSI" — coffee, study, interpret — Jewish learning evening in partnership with Moishe House and Federation's NextGEN Detroit, and staged a pop-up Shabbat service and potluck dinner at JARC headquarters in Southfield for 30 young adults, including some JARC clients.

He foresees a monthly music jam, Jewish yoga or other meditative practices, cooking demos, retreats, camping trips, soup deliveries to ill people or those getting used to new babies, and group volunteer efforts.

"But those are my ideas," he said. "I'm so much more interested in others coming to the table with their ideas."

Horwitz and Yedwab note that The Well's activities will not be limited to millennials, and they are clear its purpose is not to boost

membership at Temple Israel.

"I'm dedicated to welcoming all and to linking individuals with like-minded folks," Horwitz said. "I plan to ask people: 'What do you want to do and how can I help you build the Jewish community you want?'"

Yedwab said, "John F. Kennedy said a rising tide raises all ships. We're trying to raise the tide. If we raise Jewish involvement in Detroit, then Temple Israel, other congregations, the JCC, the Federation — all will benefit."

Benefactor Lori Talsky Zekelman and her husband, Alan Zekelman, of Bloomfield Hills, have made an impact on several Jewish institutions in Detroit, including the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus in Farmington Hills and the Harry and Wanda Zekelman Campus of the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Oak Park.

She says she supports The Well because it can address the disconnect between young Jewish adults and the organized Jewish community that the Pew report identified.

The Well will provide "opportunities and tools for meaningful spiritual growth, character development and community involvement rooted in, or consistent with, Jewish values, wisdom, practices and traditions, but with an engaging, inclusive, contemporary approach," she said.

Similar programs exist — the Riverway Project in Boston and Makom in Dallas — but they have important differences from The Well. Those programs are affiliated with congregations with a goal to boost membership, and the rabbis directing them also have congregational responsibilities.

Detroit Orthodox organizations, including Chabad, Partners and AISH, have been reaching out to unaffiliated young adults by sponsoring bar nights, retreats, trips and seminars. Like them, The Well will have no membership dues and will rely heavily on social media for publicity.

Horwitz sees his program as unique because he will work fulltime for The Well, which is not affiliated with any congregation or organization. He hopes participants will look at him and see it's possible to live an engaged Jewish life in a non-Orthodox environment.

"I'm trying to model what it is to simultaneously live a life that is authentically both Jewish and American, and to do it in a way that is community-centric and filled with joy!" he said. □

For more information about The Well and upcoming events, visit www.meetyouatthewell.org.

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