

## JEWISH COMMUNITY ACTION'S INREACH MOVES FORWARD

Jewish Community Action (JCA) has begun conducting training forums to implement the inreach in several synagogues and with secular (unaffiliated) Jews. One-to-one conversations have already begun and we expect hundreds of conversations among synagogue members and Jews not affiliated with congregations to take place during the next six months. The purpose of these conversations is to build stronger relationships among Jews in the community and to learn about the current interests within our community, particularly concerning social and economic justice priorities.

Training sessions have been held at Adath Jeshurun (they held two sessions), Temple Israel (also convened two sessions), Mount Zion, Shir Tikvah, Temple of Aaron and Bet Shalom. Well over 100 people were trained in these synagogue sessions with expectations that more than 500 conversations will be conducted. In each congregation, there are efforts to visit with congregants who are less connected to the congregation, such as new members, retired members and empty nesters among others. JCA is designing the training programs to fit the specific goals and objectives of each congregation. We are expecting to conduct the inreach at several other congregations, including Beth Jacob, Mayim Rabim, Or Emet, Bnai Emet, and Knesset Israel, convening training programs and launching conversations after January 1<sup>st</sup>.

JCA also launched its inreach with secular (unaffiliated Jews) on November 14<sup>th</sup>. More than 20 were in attendance as part of the effort to visit with Jewish people not connected with any Jewish institution or organization. This group also includes many people in their 20's and early 30's, a high priority for JCA to organize around social justice. Said Art Serotoff, JCA board member and chair of the committee working with secular Jews, "JCA helped me discover my connection as a Jew to social justice more than six years ago in the first inreach, and I'm excited to help others discover this important historic connection."

Once the full inreach is completed, we expect nearly 1,000 conversations to take place in synagogues and the broader Jewish community. Additional conversations will take place through gatherings in people's homes to discuss specific themes emerging from the one-to-one conversations. After the conversations are completed in each congregation, or within the broader community, an evaluation session will be convened to determine the key themes and priorities uncovered during the conversations.

More than 400 one-to-one conversations were held during the first inreach within eight congregations and the broader Jewish community. The first inreach culminated in a large gathering at Beth El Congregation in spring 1998, when JCA selected its priority social justice issue areas. Nearly seven years later, JCA's new inreach is based on the idea of *shemittah*, a sabbatical involving rest and release from regular work and obligation. The inreach consists of one-to-one conversations, which are the building block for developing relationships around common values, interests, and a commitment to social change.

The hundreds of conversations planned for this inreach will be conducted in collaboration with congregations throughout the Twin Cities. As with the previous inreach, one expected outcome will be a stronger sense of community in the congregations, the identification of new leaders, and increased capacity in synagogues. While new leaders will emerge to work on social justice, synagogues may also find new interest among members in other aspects of congregational life, including adult education, boards of directors, fundraising, and other committees.

The inreach will culminate Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at which time participants will reflect on what they have learned and what this means for the Jewish community. This will also provide an exciting opportunity for Jews to gather, converse, and plan action on social and economic justice issues through congregations and through Jewish Community Action.

For more information about Jewish Community Action and how you can become involved in the inreach or other JCA activities, call 651-632-2184.