CHAVER CONNECTION

Name of congregation: Temple Emanu-El
Address: 8500 Hillcrest Road
          Dallas, Texas 75225
Phone Number: (214) 706-0000
Number of Members: 2,748
UAHC region: Southwest Council
Rabbi: Mark Kaiserman
Program Director: Renee Karp
Outreach Chairpersons: Faylinda Lindner, Chair and Philip Einsohn, Co-Chair

Brief Description: Members of our Temple community are trained to help those in the process of choosing Judaism to make connections within the congregation. We call these congregants “Chaverim,” and they will continue their support after conversion has taken place and through approximately the first year of transition. At different points throughout the year they contact their people to see how they are doing, to encourage them to become involved in the congregation and to offer companionship for worship, study and mitzvah projects. Chaverim are a resource for temple culture.

Program Goal: To welcome people who are new to Judaism and Temple Emanu-El and to assist them in finding a place in our community.

Target Population: Students from our Choosing Judaism (Conversion) classes and recent Jews-by-choice.

Number of Participants: 30 students matched with 30 Temple members.

Staffing Required: Rabbi and Program Director

Number and Length of Sessions: Two orientation/training sessions of 1 ½ hours each and a year’s commitment.

Total Cost of Program: Less than $100.00 for postage and printing

Source of Funding: Temple Emanu-El

Fee for Attendees: None

Logistics: We chose to provide orientation and training in private homes with volunteers providing the refreshments. The only materials needed were printed information.

Instructions to Facilitator: Appropriately matching Chaverim or mentors with students is of the utmost importance. Be sure to involve strong congregants who you know will be sensitive and willing to commit.
Evaluation of Program: Overall, the program was well received and will become a part of our conversion program. (See Evaluation Forms and letter from Sarah Albert.) We are already seeing benefits in the improved comfort level of new Jews at services and Temple programs.

Follow-up: We hope these relationships will continue with Chaverim on some level.
FOR OUR NEW CHAVERS

Those of you choosing to be a Chaver will be giving our newest Jewish members a wonderful gift – Yourselves.

Being chosen does not presuppose a vast body of knowledge. You have been chosen because individually you have demonstrated your commitment to Judaism, Temple Emanu-El and the Jewish people. You are warm, caring, nurturing and understanding. Most of you in this room have been involved in many activities and know your way around the congregation (not just physical, which is indeed a feat, but people and resources) and you know how to ask questions to get answers.

In Lydia Kukoff’s book “Choosing Judaism” she quotes several people who have made this journey of becoming Jewish. Someone named Patrice said: “I would really like to become involved in what I do. I really want to be doing things. I don’t just want to be a bystander. So when I join a Temple, I hope that I won’t feel too strange. Because I really want to fit in.” You are going to facilitate the fitting in.

You will be the warm welcoming link to people choosing Judaism and affiliation with Temple Emanu-El. You are a connector in ascertaining their skills, talents and interests and making those Temple connections.

You are a companion accompanying to worship/study/mitzvah projects.

You are a resource for Temple culture. The hows and whys.

You are a sharer – the gift of yourself.

YOUR FIRST CONTACT

Introduce yourself, they are expecting your call. They have been told in Choosing Judaism about this program.

Tell them a little about the program. Your goal is to be available to them – not intrusive.

Explain you will be calling them from time to time.

We are planning to attend ______________ would you care to join us?