



OVERNIGHT CAMPS AND THE TORONTO MARKET

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and Foundation for Jewish Camp Unveil Research Findings

June 17, 2009 (New York, NY) – With the start of summer upon us, the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto announce the publication of a new research study examining parents' behaviors and attitudes towards Jewish summer camp. The study yielded some interesting and surprising findings about the role of Jewish summer camp in this active Jewish community. While many parents have misconceptions about these camps and do not know about the demonstrated lasting, long-term positive influences they have upon adult Jewish identities, others view camps as a portal of entry to the Jewish community, independent from more traditional and formal Jewish institutions. The results were presented to the leadership of UJA Federation and of the Jewish camping community of Toronto last month.

This consumer-type research is unique in that it's usually only seen in the private sector. It is also only the second study done of this kind - the first conducted by FJC as well. The aim of the research is distinctive – it is to help nonprofit Jewish overnight camps that serve the Greater Toronto Area better understand their market with the ultimate goal being to aid in the development of effective marketing strategies and expansion of the camps' clientele.

The research reveals a detailed portrait of Toronto families who enroll their children in Jewish overnight camps, non-sectarian camps, both, and neither. Notably, approximately 30% of those children who ever attended Jewish summer camp are not synagogue members. This data points to an interesting distinction from what may be the case in the US: the issue is not to convince parents that they should want to raise their youngsters as committed Jews; rather, the key issue is to convince parents that camps are an excellent vehicle for doing so.

“When we speak about Jewish continuity,” says Ted Sokolsky, President and CEO of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, “we know that there's no silver bullet. But as this study indicates, many families in our community already see Jewish summer camps as an opportunity to instill Jewish identity in their children. Our goal is to increase that number.”

Another significant finding in this research was the degree to which perceptions or in some cases misconceptions about a camp's facilities and program influences parental decisions.

The study, conducted by Steven M. Cohen and Judith Veinstein, is part of a groundbreaking initiative of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto to raise awareness of the power and importance of Jewish summer camp. In addition to the more than \$600K provided annually in needs-based camper subsidies, UJA introduced its Jewish Camp Incentive Program, called TopBunk, which has already provided more than 500 children with their first taste of Jewish overnight camp.

The study engaged more than 1,800 parents in the Toronto area through qualitative consumer interviews and an online survey. Parents described and answered questions regarding the decision-making process that contributes to their choice of summer plans for their children.

“FJC serves the nonprofit Jewish overnight camp community in many ways, including gathering and disseminating pertinent information about camps, campers and prospective campers in order to create the best camping experience to as many youngsters as possible,” explains Jerry Silverman, President FJC. “We hope that this study in particular will enable camps to thrive.”