

Challenges and Opportunities

By MORTON L. MANDEL
(President National Jewish Welfare Board)

At the outset, on behalf of the officers, board members and staff of the National Jewish Welfare Board and the Jewish Community Center movement in America, let me wish you a year of health, happiness and well-being. Let us all hope that this year will herald a period of lasting peace and that our sons and daughters in the armed forces will be at home with us once again.

The spirit of the High Holy Days is one of the most constructive aspects of our tradition. At no other time are we as keenly aware of our responsibilities to others, and of the necessity to rise to the challenge of improving the quality of life.

In taking stock at the beginning of the Jewish New Year 5732, it is evident that in this age of alienation, instability of Jewish family life, increasing inter-marriage and loss of Jewish

identity, the challenges and opportunities before us are great. It is clear that Jewish communal institutions must reorder their priorities to meet the urgent needs of today and must work together to avoid duplication of effort.

On the collective Jewish agenda are these challenges, among others: We must reach out and involve Jewish teenagers and college youth in programs that are relevant to their lives; we must provide experiences that will strengthen family relationships and will relieve tensions that exist between parents and their sons and daughters; we must offer programs of Jewish education and Jewish culture that will give Jews a sense of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish identity.

Jewish Community Centers are key communal agencies particularly sensitive and responsive to human needs. Together, Centers must pledge themselves to become even more relevant and even more responsive. To achieve some real gains, in the year ahead, we need the enthusiastic support of all communities, the active participation of our leaders and volunteers, and the valued cooperation of Jewish Federations. This could be a formula for "a good year" for all.

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