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FEDERATION FOCUS

VOLUME 14 | SUMMER 2013

Your Jewish Community Connection

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Your Jewish Community Connection

Welcome to Federation Focus, the quarterly supplement about your Jewish Federation, its partner agencies and their impact on Jewish life. Federation Focus keeps you informed and connected with important issues in our community, ensuring that everyone knows where to find a helping hand and where to extend one.

Seinfeld's Jason Alexander to Speak at Campaign Opening

One of the great, enduring characteristics of the Jewish people through the ages is our approach to humour. So, it is only fitting that Jewish Federation is kicking off its Annual Campaign with a little fun and a lot of insight from a man best known as one of the quintessential neurotic New Yorkers—Jason Alexander, aka George Costanza from *Seinfeld*.

with OneVoice, a politically moderate group committed to a two-state solution. He has since travelled to Israel multiple times, meeting with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Alexander will be the keynote speaker at the Opening Event for the 2013 Federation Annual Campaign, Tuesday, September 10th at 8:00 p.m. He is the latest of

community—reflects a spectrum of Jewish experience and identity, and so evolves from year to year.

This year, attendees

can expect an evening that is both inspiring and entertaining, with a bit of audience participation. The event is one of the best-attended in our community, bringing together people from all walks of life and all parts of the Lower Mainland. It serves as an opportunity for our community to connect and reaffirm our commitment to the values of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*. As Harvey Dales, general chair of this year's Annual Campaign, puts it, "There are very few moments in community life when 1,500 of us are gathered in one place at one time with a single purpose: to support one another. We can draw strength from coming together as a community at our Campaign's Opening Event."

The Federation Annual Campaign supports 40 partner agencies that deliver programs and services to our local,

a series of high-profile Jewish figures to address our community at this flagship event, following Nobel Prize-winning author and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, last year. While Alexander, best known as a comic actor, might seem an unusual choice to follow Wiesel, event organizers felt that the Campaign Opening Event—like our

national and global Jewish community. Tickets for the Campaign Opening Event are on sale now, with early bird pricing in effect until July 1st. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit jewishvancouver.com.



"Jewish Federation is kicking off its Annual Campaign with a little fun and a lot of insight from a man best known as one of the quintessential neurotic New Yorkers—Jason Alexander, aka George Costanza from *Seinfeld*.**"**

Alexander, a Tony award winner with a lengthy resume in theatre, film and television, is—thanks to *Seinfeld*—an indelible part of North American pop culture history. But he connected with a part of his own cultural history several years ago on a trip to Israel. That experience prompted him to be actively involved

Axis Creates Connections for Jewish Young Adults

Jewish Federation has launched a new program—Axis—to help young adults build their own community connections. For Jewish 20- and 30-somethings, connecting to the Jewish community can be a challenge. Even if they were involved in Jewish life in university, many young people lose that connection after they leave school. Their desire for community—one that speaks to and reflects them—is at the heart of Axis. This innovative, Jewish Federation-sponsored program is a hub for local Jewish young adults, whatever their interests or affiliations. Axis is a central point for young adults to find Jewish

events and resources and to make personal and professional connections.

Jewish Federation's manager of young adult initiatives, Dana Troster, says Axis is "for us and by us." She adds that Jewish Federation wanted to reach out to local young adults in a "grassroots way—to build a community that is relevant to us and elevate existing opportunities to connect." Axis Steering Committee chairperson, Justine Levenberg, got involved because she wanted to "help strengthen the young adult Jewish community in Vancouver.... We are excited to create a new initiative to operate as a hub for young adult life, catering to opportunities

for travel, philanthropy, mentorship, and social events." Levenberg and her nine fellow committee members worked with Troster to utilize Jewish Federation as a catalyst to create something different that would appeal to a population with widely varying interests and tastes, but who want Jewish connections that resonate with them.

Troster says that local Jewish young adults often either don't know what is happening in the community or feel that it doesn't reflect their interests. She, Levenberg and Axis' other committee members say they are committed to building an exciting centre of activity specifically for young adults, within the larger Jewish community, and invite their peers to get involved and build Axis with them. And one of Axis' primary tenets is that it is welcoming and inclusive to Jewish young adults across the spectrum.

Not surprisingly, Axis has a strong social media component, including a presence on Facebook. Its website, axisvancouver.com, lists all the Jewish young adult events on the Lower Mainland, regardless of who has planned them. The online visuals have not only a modern, young and Jewish feel, but also reflect the idea of a hub and place to connect.

Whether young adults come to Axis to find Shabbat dinners, professional contacts, volunteer opportunities or simply a reconnection to community, Levenberg and her fellow organizers believe that the hub of activity will provide a one-stop-shop for local Jewish young adults. With just a mouse-click, no one needs ever to feel like the member of a lost tribe.

Axis is holding its official launch party June 27th at the CBC Studio in downtown Vancouver (700 Hamilton Street). Tickets are \$10 in advance at axisvancouver.com or visit facebook.com/AxisVancouver for more information. To get involved, contact Dana Troster at dtroster@jewishvancouver.com or 604.257.5128.

on issues faced by youth and how to address these issues without having to seek out professionals. And, they want more opportunities to have fun and meet other youth.

In response, the Jewish Federation Planning Council has recommended the creation of a peer-to-peer support program directed toward young people in our community. According to Jill Diamond, Planning Council chair, "One of the key messages that we learned from the survey is that youth

Youth Input Shapes Policy Recommendations

Jewish youth are no different from their peers in the broader community when it comes to the pressures they face and the stresses they experience. Several studies have shown that rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse are consistent between Jewish and non-Jewish youth. As these issues gained awareness, and in response to the suicides of two young people in our community, Jewish Federation's Planning Council determined the need to develop a comprehensive community youth strategy. The council turned to the youth themselves to identify the problems and pose some solutions.

Last summer, an on-line survey was developed and distributed to a wide circle of young people through personal contacts and social media. Survey questions focused on the challenges teens and university students face, the types of services they use, their comfort with seeking help in the Jewish community, and their ideas about how best to support peers in distress. Not surprisingly, respondents reported that they are very busy balancing school work, extracurricular activities and social interaction. They are worried about getting into the right universities, choosing careers and finding jobs. For some,

more innovative, youth-oriented services located in places where they feel comfortable. They want to see a whole array of programs offered ranging from homework clubs and cooking classes to counselling and peer support all offered in one youth-friendly place. These young voices are an integral part of the recommendations contained in the Planning Council's report. Most want to see peer-to-peer support programs and mentoring programs where they could seek advice and guidance from those who understand where they are coming from and can connect with them at their own level. They want more information

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Adults \$35 until July 1st

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Tuesday, September 10, 2013 at 8:00 p.m.
Queen Elizabeth Theatre | 650 Hamilton Street
Purchase tickets online at jewishvancouver.com

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