

# New congregation debuts in Fox Chapel area

By DAVID KAUFMAN, *Special Staff*

The Pittsburgh area has a brand new Conservative congregation.

On Friday afternoon, Aug 18, members of the Fox Chapel Jewish Center, representing B'nai Israel, Beth Jacob and affiliated Fox Chapel Jews officially acquired the Harmarville Outreach Building, home of the new congregation.

It will be called "Adat Shalom, B'nai Israel Beth Jacob." The name was agreed upon at the most recent board meeting of the Fox Chapel Jewish Center.

Adat Shalom, "Congregation of Peace," is located at 341 Guys Run Rd. - in an area commonly regarded as Fox Chapel though officially located within the limits of Cheswick, according to B'nai Israel president, Linda Levine.

The new congregation's first service will be held September 16, at which time the Mezzuza will be officially affixed. Rabbis Richard Marcovitz and Y. Irving Dick, of B'nai Israel and Beth Jacob, respectively, will conduct the Selichot service together. Members have agreed upon a new president for the congregation, Cindy Kichler, whose husband is currently president of the Beth Jacob synagogue.

The rabbis will share the rabbinic duties during Adat Shalom's first year while the congregation searches for a full time rabbi for the following year.

High Holiday services will be held in the new synagogue and in both old synagogues. B'nai Israel on Negley Ave. shall remain open for one year. "We plan to function business as usual until June '96," said Levine, "even though our schools will be in the new building." Beth Jacob is "planning on closing some time around November."

Pre-school opens in the new building on September 12. Building renovations will be complete in the pre-school's section of the congregation before class begins, but will continue in other parts of the building some time afterward. Levine called the renovations "minor."

Religious school begins the same week as pre-school but will remain in its old location until November.

Speaking about "our brand new space," Levine said, "We are very excited...excited about having a new congregation created out of two longstanding congregations."

The move to the Fox Chapel area was precipitated by declining membership in both congregations - a decline that resulted from changing demographics in the area.

Initially, both B'nai Israel, situated in the East End, and Beth Jacob of New Kensington, were looking for ways to

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better serve their members located outside of the city.

Levine told the Chronicle last year, "We were conducting a long range planning survey, beginning in 1989. Results indicated that membership felt we should be doing satellite programming. Demographics also showed us that the Fox Chapel area had the most" growth potential.

B'nai Israel began a pre-school in Aspinwall and soon formed an alliance with Beth Jacob – creating the Beth Jacob-B'nai Israel Learning Center. As the school was a instant success, and as members of both congregations got to know one another, the "next logical step was a Conservative synagogue presence," Levine had said.

"We found a large community out there that joined us in forming a new congregation." Adat Shalom has already attracted 100 new members who did not previously belong to either Beth Jacob or B'nai Israel.

When the Harmarville Outreach Building became available over a year ago, Levine was quoted as saying, "It coalesced everything, and suddenly all of this became a possibility."

Now, it's a reality. The 45,000 square foot building, beyond housing the pre-school and religious school, has enough space to accomodate future expansion as it becomes feasible. The original sanctuary will seat 200, but there is room on the 18-acre site for a proposed great sanctuary that could seat over 1500 people.