

'Kayruv-Van' takes it on the road

By IRIS M. SAMSON, *Assistant Editor*

Hebrew Institute is taking it on the road. With their new "Kayruv-Van" program, they are providing mobile outreach to Jewish communities outside the Pittsburgh area.

According to Dr. JoAnn Spiegel, Hebrew Institute administrative consultant and coordinator of the project, the Institute has leased a van and is taking books, equipment and "Hebrew and Jewish studies experts to outlying areas with few Jewish resources.

"We're bringing in Jewish kinds of activities," she explains.

The program grew out of a proposal submitted to the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. The Hebrew Institute originally requested a bookmobile and a "travelling melamed," a Jewish studies teacher; both would conduct outreach to small Jewish communities.

The Federation combined the two ideas into one -- the "Kayruv-Van" -- literally, Hebrew for 'outreach.'

Outfitted in the van are books, audio-visual equipment, music and films. The van has already had its first successful outing, to the small Jewish enclave in Monessen. There five students attend the religious school, staffed by lay people and a rabbi that comes to visit every other week.

Hebrew Institute librarian Michaella Segall -- and Kayruv-Van staffer -- went out "with books, filmstrips, a projector, and worked with the kids," explains Spiegel. "She went back the following Sunday as a follow-up visit."

In addition to the Hebrew Institute's librarian, several people are on hand to staff the "Kayruv-Van." They include teachers from the Hebrew Institute, Beth

El, and a media specialist. Spiegel hopes to get a musical specialist and people skilled in Israeli dancing active in the program as well. At the present time, the staff numbers between five and six people who are available to travel with the van on "Sundays, evenings," notes Spiegel. "But we're also flexible."

The effort by the Institute -- and Federation -- to continue outreach to smaller Jewish communities was based also, in part, to the feeling among the communities that they were isolated and removed from the mainstream of Jewish life. The Kayruv-Van hopes to provide basic services that will help the communities maintain their Jewish identity.

The program is being funded by seed money provided by the UJF, but eventually organizers hope that some of the costs

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KAYRUV-VAN coordinator Dr. JoAnn Spiegel and Hebrew Institute Director Dr. Ronald Brauner display the new van.

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will be absorbed by the clients and contributions. Coordinated by the Hebrew Institute -- in cooperation with the UJF -- the project is in need of local help, notes Spiegel. "I urge people to volunteer for this program," she emphasizes. "We should help these smaller communities, who are entitled to enhance their Jewish culture and traditions."

For more information, contact the Hebrew Institute at 521-1100.