

Lil'mod U'LLamed: Learning & Teaching at MCJC By Ayelet

MCHENRY COUNTY JEWISH CONGREGATION LAUNCHES ROSH HODESH: *IT'S A GIRL THING!*,

A PROGRAM OF MOVING TRADITIONS INNOVATIVE PROGRAM FOR ADOLESCENT JEWISH GIRLS

MCJC joins hundreds of Jewish organizations across the country in offering girls one of the most innovative and effective projects in the Jewish community. *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*, a program of Moving Traditions, (www.roshhodesh.org) is a contemporary monthly celebration of the ancient New Moon holiday for girls in grades 6-12 that builds self-esteem, leadership skills, and Jewish identity. The program works on an intimate model, bringing together small groups of girls for monthly Rosh Hodesh (new moon) celebrations. The girls and their group leader use Jewish teachings to help pre-teen and teenage girls make healthy life choices.

I am pleased to announce that I will be the group leader. This is for girls who are entering 6th and 7th grade this fall. I attended an intensive two-day *It's a Girl Thing!* training session this summer and will use the nationally-tested, curriculum. I am very excited to lead a program like this.

Each *It's a Girl Thing!* meeting will focus on specific "life lessons" that draw on core Jewish values and practices to explore such issues as body image, friendship, family, assertiveness, and social action. The girls' monthly activities will include arts and crafts, creative writing, role-playing and small group discussion. A particular favorite is making scrolls for Purim in the month of Adar. As part of their exploration of Jewish teachings on beauty, girls make two scrolls of photographs cut from girls' magazines – one of positive images of women and girls, and one of negative images. Then the girls undertake a "girlcotting" (vs. boycotting) campaign of letter-writing to admonish companies that use problematic female images in their advertisements.

It's a Girl Thing! proactively addresses two well-documented and disturbing trends: girls' **self-esteem plummets** during adolescence and **Jewish girls drop out** of organized Jewish experiences after bat-mitzvah. The informal setting, small group size, and carefully designed activities together create an enjoyable and meaningful experience, which, when repeated monthly throughout girls' teen years, strengthen their Jewish identity and sense of self. *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* has served 2,500 girls since it was launched nationally in 2002 with 40 groups. Today, synagogues and day schools of all denominations, JCCs, and other Jewish institutions operate nearly 200 groups.