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The Buffalo Jewish community was blessed to be visited by Alan Morinis at the end of March for a three-day scholar in residence program. Alan is the Dean of the Mussar Institute. Some of you might be familiar with the age old Jewish practice of Mussar. For those of us who are not, I'll quote Alan's brief description from his book, *Everyday Holiness*:

"Mussar is a path of spiritual self-development. It means working on yourself, but not for the sake of your self. By refining and elevating your inner life and nourishing the soul, you clarify your inner light and thus become a lamp shedding light into the world."

Among the Strategic Priorities, Federation adopted in 2014, some might say at the top of the list, is the "obsession" with developing human capital to give the Jewish community a continuous pipeline of talented leadership. It was with this goal in mind that we invited Alan

Morinis to Buffalo, to teach and train in the art of self-reflection and improvement to develop traits found in our most effective leaders. Alan held sessions with Federation's staff, Executive Committee and Past Presidents, the professional leadership of our community's Jewish organizations and synagogues, the Bureau of Jewish Education's Educators' Council, and many others.

Connected with our concentration on developing human capital and under Rob Goldberg's leadership as Federation's new CEO, we have put together a Leadership Think Tank, and organized a leadership study course in the Mussar tradition called Lead with Jewish Values. The Leadership Think Tank is comprised of a dynamic and diverse group of individuals that is meeting regularly. The Think Tank will soon be reporting out to Federation's Board of Governors, our agencies and synagogues and the community at large the strategies and tactics recommended for continuous leadership development. The members of the Think Tank had a valuable session with Alan Morinis, which will imbue their work with the Jewish values we seek in our leaders.

As our scholar in residence, Alan kicked off our Lead with

Jewish Values course. We invited each Jewish organization and synagogue to nominate two of its volunteer board members to participate in this program. Twenty of us are enrolled, meeting as a group on a bi-weekly basis through August studying and practicing Mussar and developing and refining our individual traits of humility, honor, generosity, trust, patience and gratitude, among others. The course is being administered by Evie Weinstein, Federation's Coordinator of Talent and Leadership Development, and facilitated by Susan Goldberg Schwartz, TBZ's Director of Lifelong Learning. Evie and Susan were trained by Alan a number of years ago as Mussar facilitators. I am privileged to be among the Lead with Jewish Values class participants. From my experience thus far, I am confident that our boards of directors will see direct and significant benefits as their members grow in Jewish values and Mussar practices.

The highlight and culmination of Alan's scholar in residence visit was a program called "What if Everyone Read the Same Book," with program oversight from a committee chaired by Cantor Mark Horowitz.

Well over 100 people signed up and participated. Each of us was asked to buy and read in advance *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, Alan's autobiographical life story which led him to learn of, study and finally teach Mussar. The lecture and workshop that evening was incredibly well attended and received. I believe that program, and Alan's entire scholar in residence visit, will have strong positive and lasting impacts on our community.

We are grateful to Alan Morinis for

spending his valuable time with, and imparting his tremendous knowledge of Mussar to, all of us here in Buffalo. Although remote in distance, Alan's presence continues with the twenty of us in the Lead with Jewish Values class. We share his curriculum missives each week as we study, practice and learn a new trait of personal well-being.

As we begin to count the Omer during the seven weeks from Passover to Shavuot and the celebration of our receipt of Torah at Mount Sinai from the Almighty, let's look forward to some of the events we will share in May. On Sunday May 1 at 1 pm, we'll gather as a community for Yom Hashoah at Temple Beth Zion on Delaware Avenue to commemorate and honor the victims of the Nazi Holocaust and to reassert that never again will we allow such genocide to occur. Yom Hazikaron falls on May 10. Temple Beth Tzedek will host our community at 7:30 that evening as we honor those who sacrificed so much for the founding and preservation of the State of Israel. As always, Yom Hazikaron gives way to the celebration of Israel Independence Day, Yom Ha'atzmaut. Come with your family to the JCC Benderson Building on Sunday afternoon, May 15 from 11:30 to 2:30 to experience Israel right here in Buffalo. That evening we'll hold an Israel Bonds festival and adult party at the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens in South Buffalo, where we'll showcase Buffalo businesses doing business in and with Israel and Israeli companies. Tickets are only \$18, so sign up right away, as tickets are going fast. As always, check Federations calendar page at jfedbflo.com for all of the latest happenings.

SAVE THE DATE

2017 Campaign Kick-Off Dinner

Monday, Sept. 26, 2016

Featuring special guest Marlee Matlin

**For more information or sponsorship opportunities,
contact Randi Morkisz at 204-2245 rmorkisz@jfedbflo.com**

