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Continued from previous Page late to. The center has a website, a Facebook page with about 800 members, a database of about 1600, and will be "jumping on the twitter bandwagon later this week," said Schwartz.

"The Facebook community has been a great way to connect the Chai to universities," said Anthony David Stamp, 37, a member of the Chai's Development Board who created "Got Mayshe?" shirts as a surprise to sell at the club.

But, said Schwartz, "Word of mouth is by far the best form of advertising and thank G-d people are telling their friends." This explains why about 150 people at Club Rumor were new faces, and how most events are evenly split between first-timers and veterans of the Center.

Joshua Levitt, 33, a member of the Chai organization, volunteers his time because he agrees with Schwartz's work. "I really believe that in the U.S. you have to be really active to keep people involved," he said, followed by a challenge.

Levitt challenges people to get involved with Judaism for the sake of their future Jewish family. "I challenge a lot of people my age to get involved and keep our traditions alive and keep it relevant so when we have families, the traditions and values remain," Levitt said.

And the community is taking up the challenge. The Chai Center holds Shabbat dinners the first Friday of every month and although the room only holds 95 people, about 120 have been known to show up. "We had to send people away because there physically wasn't room," Mayshe said.

But that's nothing compared to last year's Hanukkah party. The Center rented out an entire floor of Jillian's with more than 550 attendees, which is 100 over the maximum occupancy.

Although the Center is independent from other organizations, and must "really hustle to find the funding," said Schwartz, the group is currently expanding by remodeling the basement of the Center to hold more attendees for their other programs.

"The Chai could never be limited," said Stamp, because it "expands to reach into the community and it's happening."

The morning after the party, Schwartz said he had yet to get Facebook messages asking for other single's numbers, but "no doubt we'll get a few."

Although Schwartz's goal is just to connect YJP and build a community, he wouldn't be a true Jewish parent if he didn't push for a little something more.

As the Purim festivities drew to a close, he took the microphone, with his large Mardi Gras beads hanging down to his navel, and proclaimed, "Marry Jewish, we need Jewish babies. I'll officiate your wedding pro bono!"

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I'll Marry You For Free!

The world of Chai Center dating

By Carolyn Maurer
Special to the Advocate

Beyonce's 'Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)' blared on the speakers at Club Rumor Saturday night, as about 325 young Jewish professionals celebrated Purim with a Mardi Gras masquerade and scoped out other singles.

For the third consecutive year, Brookline's Chabad Chai Center sponsored the gathering to mold Judaism into a modern culture that young Jews can relate to, with drinks and hamentashen for anyone in their 20s and 30s. But the broader goal is for young, unmarried Jews to get a chance to meet in a festive setting that pays homage to their heritage.

The evening began with a reading of the Megillah, the story of Purim, with an accompanying slideshow featuring star appearances by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Haman, and Cinderella as Esther. After the laughter died down, guests were left to mingle and dance to a DJ and a live band called Remix Trio. From the sidelines, Mayshe Schwartz, the rabbi who founded the Center about five years ago with help from his wife, Shifra, looked on with pride.

"Ninety-five percent of the people there wouldn't go to a synagogue to hear a Megillah," said Schwartz. "And if people aren't going to come to synagogue to hear the Megillah, we'll bring the Megillah to them and we'll take over Club Rumor and provide it there."

The Chai Center is "completely liberal" and "caters to anyone not connected to synagogues," Schwartz explained. "The young adult range is the longest range, about 18 years...anyone who is single between [college and marriage] aren't becoming an affiliate to any temple unless they are pretty devout."

As the son of a father known in Los Angeles as "the king of young adult singles," Schwartz made it his mission to bring Boston-area Jewish singles together. With his full beard and a hat with "Chai" written in Hebrew, he said that the 20-30-year-old age group is particularly important to reach out to.

"Most young adults don't live with their parents and don't have a family necessarily to be a part of and the Chai becomes their home away from home," he said in a sincere tone. "We provide the same loving atmosphere and food that they would get close to home."

But the ultimate goal? Marriage.

"That's always the greatest goal, to start a family," said Schwartz. "We don't consider ourselves a dat-



PHOTO BY BEN TIMMINS

Purim revelers at Club Rumor in Boston.

ing service," but he admitted that, "I get emails and Facebook messages the next day [after events] asking 'Who was that girl?' or 'Who was that guy?' and I'm happy to connect them."

He said the Purim party was only one such event. "There are parties to meet people, and if you want to go deeper, we provide that too," said Schwartz.

Software consultant Aaron Kemp, 28, agreed that the Chai Center and other Jewish organizations like GesherCity fill a void for young Jews around Boston. "Once you get out of college, it's really hard to meet other Jewish young people," said Kemp, who has come to other Chai-sponsored events.

Kemp said that dating someone of his own faith does matter to him. "I'm not particularly religious, but the cultural aspects are important to me," he said.

Like Kemp, the crowd at the Purim Mardi Gras party varied in their level of religiosity. About half the men wore yarmulkes, while the other half wore baseball hats or Mardi Gras masques. Girls turned out in stylish dresses and low-cut tops, while they danced with guys in groups or individually on the dance floor.

The Chai Center uses a variety of means to connect with young adults who might not normally get involved in temple events, in a medium they can re-

Continued on next Page