

## Starting a Next Generation Group in Your Section

The following are key strategies that worked in the development and ongoing success of Next Generation (NG). These are some lessons learned by our Section that we would like to share with other Sections seeking to start young women's groups.

1. Personal contact with potential members. Within NG's chair structure, the membership chair and, since July 2003, the vice chair, call every prospective member whose name is forwarded to them. We have been told that this personal contact has solidified decisions to join NCJW versus other Jewish women's organizations that appeared to be less personal. After every Taste of NCJW event, the membership chair or co-chair calls each prospective member to gauge interest in the organization and to see how she wants to get involved in NG.
2. Taste of NCJW events where an overview of the organization is given and women have a chance to socialize. Getting to know other women is a key reason women join NCJW.
3. Monthly meetings: these are important for intellectual stimulation as well as socializing away from spouses and children. These meetings typically include a speaker and a short business meeting where Steering Committee chairs give updates and request volunteers for upcoming projects. These meetings give consistency to NG, where women come to make friends and learn more about the organization. The topics are timely and interesting. Examples of topics include: taming the gimmes (raising a mensch in this overindulgent society), general parenting, how to talk with kids about these troubling times, anti-Semitism, Israel, domestic violence. In addition, some monthly meetings are purely fun and have included: Pesach and Thanksgiving cooking demonstrations, Havdalah at the beach, and bowling.
4. NG offers a variety of programming as discussed in the Sections above, so women have the opportunity to attend events alone or with spouses and children. Women are encouraged to become involved in whatever way is enticing: as participant or planner.
5. Mentor young women so they become active in the NG Steering Committee and/or Section Board. In the 2004 – 2005 fiscal year, there are six NG members on the Section Board — five of these as Vice Presidents — thirteen women on the NG Steering Committee, at least 10 women on planning committees for NG projects, and 20 NG members on board committees (some women perform multiple functions). Steering Committee members were invited to attend the Section Board's training last summer, and the Steering Committee has an annual training meeting each year. Ten young women attended all or part of the National Leadership convention in Chicago in 2003, and found this to be educational and very inspiring.

6. Provide opportunities for inter-generational contact. Many NG members are involved in Section-wide projects and appreciate the opportunity to gain wisdom, insight, skills, and knowledge from veteran NCJW members. Since 2002, when events were somewhat separate, to today where young women are in attendance at every Section event.
7. Facilitate the use of the professional skills members possess. As mentioned above, every NG member currently or formerly held positions of responsibility and are eager to use their professional skills, or gain new skills if they desire to change professions to better fit with parenting young children.
8. Recruit for Next Generation within Section. As Section members have become aware of NG and have worked closely with NG members on various projects, many have encouraged their daughters to join and/or bought their daughters life memberships; their daughters are now involved with NG programming (separate from or with their mothers).
9. Schedule programming in the evening: NG members are most likely to attend evening meetings and programs.
10. Invest in a paid staff person to help get a new group started. Young women's lives are very busy with work, children, caring for aging parents, other volunteer roles, owning a home, synagogue, etc. The overall coordination and the "taskmaster" role should be a paid position. As of July 2004, there is no longer a paid staff person, but the Section agrees that having Donna Fishman as staff for 2 years was instrumental in getting NG up and running.
11. Put a structure in place quickly to define the relationship between the young women's group and the Section board. Encourage the Section board to create a vice president for young women. This sends a strong message that young women's voices and concerns are of importance to the Section.
12. Create a steering committee that sets policy and programming direction for the young women's group. Our steering committee meets quarterly to set the calendar, resolve issues, plan events, and provide a scheduled opportunity for each chair to give updates and receive input and direction.
13. Keep communication open between Section and Next Generation through formal and informal means (board meetings, e-mails, phone calls).
14. Offer membership incentives, such as discounts on events when joining the organization. Within a month or two of a Taste of NCJW event, offer a large social event so that women can meet many other people quickly and get a feel for the organization. Give a discount on the event fee if a woman joins when paying for the event.

15. Teach young women the history, philosophy, and current events of Section so that they are interested in attending Section events, not only NG events, and so that they get the full flavor of the pillars of NCJW and feel a part of the energy and mission of the organization.
16. Offer programming monthly to develop group cohesiveness and friendships.
17. Make use of technology. Ninety-nine percent of our members participate in our listserv. This reduces costs, gets information to women fast, and offers a quick method of communication when planning events and getting input from large numbers of women. It is easy and efficient. Our Section now has three listservs — general information, action alert, and Section Stepping Out participants.

***For more information about starting a Next Generation group in your section, contact Donna Fishman at [djfish@theramp.net](mailto:djfish@theramp.net) or at 847-714-1068.***