

A Publication for the Families and Friends of  
Solomon Schechter Day School of Metropolitan Chicago



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# Kol Schechter

## קול שכטר

### Taking Sports to a Higher Level

What does Solomon Schechter Day School want its students to learn in the gym? Beginning in the 2006-2007 academic year, physical education is going far beyond the actual rules and skills of various sports. Schechter is proud to be a pilot site for the Team Spirit Value Series, a program that uses sports as a medium to teach values based in Jewish tradition. TSVS is the creation of SSDS Class of 1971 alumnus Rabbi James Gordon, author of *Pray Ball! The Spiritual Insights of a Jewish Sports Fan*.

While professional and even college sports are plagued by incidents of violence, drugs, and many poor role models, student athletes at Schechter are learning about sportsmanship/*derech erez* and teamwork/*achdut*.

Teamwork certainly was needed in order to implement the TSVS program. Rabbi Gordon worked with Head of School Marci Dickman, Athletic Director Alicia

Honan, Rav Bet Sefer Rabbi Teller, members of the coaching staff, and other Schechter faculty members.

The Great Lakes Schechter Showdown, a basketball tournament for which 8th-grade students came to our campus from Schechter schools in Toronto, Cleveland, and Detroit, was the culmination of TSVS's inaugural year at Schechter. The hosts and visitors spent Shabbat together, including a TSVS session by Rabbi Gordon



Boys' Team / Girls' Team



on Shabbat afternoon, before playing across from each other on the courts.

The winners? Everyone. (Well, technically our Schechter won the boys' division and Cleveland won the girls' division.)

"The initial project with our basketball teams, their parents, and their coaches was very well received," Marci Dickman reported. "The importance of bringing Jewish val-

ues into the lives of our students, especially in the areas they value such as sports, assists us to achieve our School's Mission. Our coaches then referred to and reinforced the values taught, and the students synthe-

sized aspects of their Jewish selves with their athletic interests."

Schechter now hopes to teach three units of TSVS in each grade of Middle School, plus one unit in 5th grade. Rabbi Gordon tailors the program to the School's needs, just as he has addressed the needs of Jewish day schools, centers, youth groups, day camps, overnight camps, and synagogue religious schools across North America.

"It is a special thrill to pilot a day school program at my alma mater," he said. "Although Schechter has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 40+ years, I still feel the special warmth that it had at its beginnings with so few students.

"Schechter is regarded in the day school community as a model for its high standards in Jewish and secular education. I am confident that day schools from all movements will readily see how TSVS can be a valuable resource to enhance its physical education and Judaic studies programs."

