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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Jews Come Together Down South at the First Annual Nehirim Southeast Retreat on November 19-21 in Rutledge, Georgia
“Being queer and Jewish is a blessing,” says group’s founder.

(New York), (NY), (October 12, 2010) -- Nehirim, the leading national provider of community programming for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) Jews, partners, and allies, will host its first public retreat in the Southeastern United States November 19-21, 2010.

In the wake of the horrifying suicides last week of six gay teenagers across the country, Nehirim’s retreat offers a powerful alternative: a religious community that embraces GLBT people. “Being queer and Jewish is a blessing, not a predicament,” says Nehirim’s founder Jay Michaelson, recently included on the ‘Forward 50’ list of the fifty most innovative Jewish thinkers in America. “These retreats are a time to celebrate that.”

The retreat is a partnership between Nehirim and local organizations in Atlanta. It will be co-directed by Dr. Zvi Bellin, who was raised an Orthodox Jew and now works with at-risk GLBT people in religious communities, and Rabbi Joshua Lesser, spiritual director of Congregation Bet Haverim in Atlanta and founder of The Rainbow Center, a Jewish response and resource center for supporting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their families.

Lesser says, “Nehirim is finally coming down South and I couldn't be more excited for folks to experience Queer Jewish culture and spirituality with some down home hospitality. Atlanta has such a vibrant and diverse Jewish community to which Nehirim is a perfect addition.”

Bellin says that, “my goal is to pass on the gift that Nehirim has given me -- an extended family of passionate GLBT Jews that is supportive and accepting.”

The retreat features an array of workshops including “The Torah of Radical Inclusion,” and “Diversity Within the Jewish Community,” religious services, and social activities.

Founded in 2003, Nehirim is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, and is supported by the Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Arcus Foundation, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, the Rose Community Foundation, and a network of individual supporters.

For questions or excerpt and interview requests, please contact:

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