



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Gay/Lesbian Group Launches First-of-its-kind Mentoring Program

*First of its kind program, directed by Rabbi Jacob Staub, will "give GLBT youth the gay Jewish families they never had"*

New York, NY, April 16, 2008. Nehirim, a national organization that provides spiritual and cultural community for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) Jews, partners, and allies, announced today that it has launched a first-of-its-kind program to match GLBT Jewish youth with elders and mentors.

Called Shalsholet (which means "chain"), the program is designed, in the words of Nehirim Executive Director Jay Michaelson, "to give GLBT youth the gay Jewish families they never had."

"Jews are very good about providing role models and guides to leading a Jewish life," said Michaelson. "But gay and lesbian youth often have to find their own way." Michaelson added that while many GLBT youth may seek elders, they are often justifiably fearful of sexual predation.

Shalsholet will be directed by Rabbi Jacob J. Staub, a professor at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia, where he served as Academic Vice President for seventeen years. At RRC, Rabbi Staub directs the first program in Jewish Spiritual Direction ever established at a rabbinical seminary, which he founded \_\_ years ago. Staub has studied Spiritual Direction at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and has taught advanced training for Jewish Spiritual Directors.

Said Rabbi Staub, "Both elders and youth benefit from this relationship. Just as many GLBT youth are looking for guides, so many older GLBT people, especially those without children, are eager to share their wisdom with a younger generation."

All participants are thoroughly screened by Rabbi Staub and Zvi Bellin, Nehirim's Director of Outreach, to ensure safety and compliance with the program's rules. Mentors commit to a monthly conference call with Rabbi Staub, and at least one monthly phone call with their mentees.

Founded in 2003, Nehirim is a nondenominational, independent organization under the fiscal sponsorship of the Jewish Funds for Justice, and supported by the Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund. For more information, visit [www.nehirim.org/shalsholet](http://www.nehirim.org/shalsholet).

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Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture and Spirituality ([www.nehirim.org](http://www.nehirim.org)) creates authentic spiritual and cultural community for GLBT Jews, partners, and allies. .  
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