



‘Won’t you be my neighbor?’

Aish of the Rockies succeeds at recruiting new community members

By LARRY HANKIN
IJN Associate Editor

A quarter of a century ago, the southeast Denver suburban neighborhoods, nestled between the Denver Tech Center and Cherry Creek State Park, were home to many Jewish families. There were probably Jews living on nearly every block within a one-to-two-mile radius of the intersection of East Belview Avenue and South Yosemite Street, where Denver meets Greenwood Village. There were Jewish residents, but it was not a Jewish communi-

ty. That started to change in 1995 when Rabbi Yaakov Meyer, the director of outreach for Yeshiva Toras Chaim — at the urging of some loyal students who had been attending his outreach classes in a Yeshiva-sponsored trailer on a vacant lot in southeast Denver — ventured further south and further east to open the “Southeast Center for Judaism.” Rabbi Meyer envisioned a center that would offer educational and social opportunities for Jews — those involved in Jewish life and those interested in connecting with Judaism, perhaps for the first time

Seventeen new households in two years; more waiting in the wings



THE HOT ‘HOOD

The Southeast Jewish community, centered around Aish of the Rockies, is adjacent to the Denver Tech Center and extends to Cherry Creek State Park.

in many years. The center would be Orthodox but welcoming and “user-friendly” to Jews of all backgrounds. Rabbi Meyer’s vision materialized as the small core of singles, couples and families steadily grew into a Jewish community, and the area around Belview and Yosemite has grown into a strong Jewish neighborhood. This is the story of that neighborhood and its continued growth. It is partly surrounded by the M.B. Glassman Southeast Eruv, so on Shabbat the sidewalks are bustling with people walking to and from what is now called Aish of the Rockies, based in its educational center and synagogue on Belview, half a block from Dayton St. The people also walk to and from each other’s homes for Shabbat dinner or lunch, another sign of



NEWCOMERS

Sara and Rabbi Yonatan Nuszen with Bracha and Yehuda Simcha.

the neighborhood feel. The neighborhood is also home to the Denver Community Kollel Southeast Center, which also holds Shabbos and daily services, and offers educational opportunities.

The current growth spurt of the neighborhood has seen 17 new families move in over the past two years. According to Aish of the Rockies Chief Operating Officer Zev Jacobs, these new neighbors are “a mixture of a number of different demographics,” including new Aish of the Rockies staff members Rabbi Menachem and Nechama Siderson, Dov and Shoshana Ort, and Rabbi Yonatan and Sara Nuszen. “We have families who have moved from the West Side of Denver who have found that the welcoming environment, the openness, the aesthetics, the conveniences and the neighbors attracted them to relocate from one side of town to another.” Others have moved to the area from out of Colorado. Chaya and Eli Berger, for example, spent the first two years of their marriage in Manhattan, and last summer, returned to Denver where Chaya grew up. They now have two children, Yossi, 18 months, and Bayla, 4 months.



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