



Krakow Jewish Community Center Named Europe's JCC of the Month

The European Association of Jewish Community Centers (EAJCC) honored the Krakow JCC as its JCC of the Month for February 2011, having selected it from 50 contenders all over Europe. In choosing the Krakow JCC, the EAJCC particularly noted the phenomenon of young people discovering their Jewish roots and getting involved in Jewish life, and the JCC's active role in promoting Jewish life in a place that is so often associated in the public mind with Jewish death and suffering.

Krakow is one of the most active hubs of Poland's Jewish cultural revival for a variety of reasons, including the very sizable university community, which draws Jewish students from all over Poland and the European Union. These young people, seeking Jewish connections, are finding their way to the JCC and becoming part of the growing Jewish community. Now that many of them have graduated, married, started families and settled in Krakow, they are seeking ways to build and fortify a Jewish future for their families and friends, and the JCC is the perfect partner and space for meeting their needs.

Opened in April, 2008, by HRH, The Prince of Wales, the Krakow JCC now has annual participation rates of 20,000, a remarkable accomplishment for this small but growing Jewish community. A nursery and Sunday school now educate the youngest set, while an Orthodox and a Reform rabbi offer guidance and education and lead religious services for the JCC's diverse participants. An active seniors' club supports older people with special programs, social events and multi-generational activities. In addition, a library and new fitness club are open to every age group.

The Krakow JCC also acts as a welcome center year round for Jewish visitors from abroad. The young volunteer staff gives orientation tours of the JCC, Kazimierz and Krakow. All these accomplishments are achieved on a lean budget with a minimum of staff. Helise Lieberman, the director of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland, said, "In honoring Krakow, the EAJCC not only gives the JCC well-deserved recognition for its success in enriching Jewish life in Krakow, but it also highlights Poland's expanding role in strengthening Jewish Peoplehood through building sustainable Jewish institutions and communities." Our congratulations to Jonathan Ornstein, Director of the Krakow JCC, and to all who have worked in support of this strikingly successful example of the Jewish renaissance in Poland.

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