



Brett Mountain

A classroom in the Prentis Apartments building in Oak Park is now where Naomi Pinchuk's Yiddish class meets.

## JCC Without Borders

After Oak Park closure, many programs found new homes.

Shari S. Cohen | Contributing Writer

**J**ewish Community Center programming ended at the Jimmy Prentis Morris (JPM) Building in Oak Park on Aug. 31, but many activities continued at new locations beginning in September.

Plans for renovation or replacement of the existing building and pool, no longer owned or operated by the JCC, are not finalized, according to Ted Cohen, marketing director of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Communication with Oak Park JCC members about programming continuity began months earlier.

"The goal was to make the transition as smooth as possible and to maintain a presence in the Oak Park area," said Bret Hopman, JCC marketing director. The focus was on popular activities and classes that aren't available elsewhere; many of these were relocated under the banner of "JCC without Borders."

Noemi Herzig, JCC director of Arts, Culture and Education, found program sites in Oak Park and Southfield, several within walking distance of the JPM Building. Congregation Beth Shalom hosts the Institute for Retired Professionals events as well as dance and art classes. Yiddish and English conversation classes as well as classical movies and lectures are presented at the Jewish Senior Life (JSL) Prentis Apartments building in Oak Park.

Mondays with Meaning, a women's Judaic studies program, is held at the Mondry Building, also on the JSL Oak Park campus. The Oak Park Community

Center hosts Musical Adventures. The Child Development Center for infants and toddlers, which was operated by Temple Emanu-El at the JPM building, has relocated to the Oak Park temple. Jazz at the J, a cooking class and Writer's Corner are held at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield.

Herzig says that most JPM participants in arts, culture and education programs made the transition to new locations without any problem. All programs are open to the public and some additional individuals have joined the activities in their new locations.

### MAKING THE TRANSITION

Nancy Silverman of Bloomfield Township has attended the all-women Mondays with Meaning drop-in class for several years. Before the Oak Park JCC closed, participants received emails notifying them that the program would continue. A follow-up postcard provided the schedule and new location information.

Silverman says the transition was "quite smooth" and that their new location at the Mondry Building is "lovely, sunlit and more pleasant" than their previous space at the JCC. Participants who walked to the program can continue to do so because the Mondry Building is very close to the JPM Building.

A Yiddish conversation class led by instructor Naomi Pinchuk relocated to Prentis Apartments. Sidney Simon of Farmington Hills attends both the Oak

Park and West Bloomfield sessions of the class that he refers to as a "nostalgia trip."

"We're perfectly comfortable and delighted with this arrangement," he said. Since the move, several additional Prentis residents have joined the class.

Not everyone was pleased with their options after the JPM closure. Most exercise and fitness programs are available only at the JCC Kahn Building in West Bloomfield. Participants in a women's exercise class held for years at the Oak Park JCC weren't willing to make the move.

"We didn't want to be driving over there; that's not our community," said Jeanne Vogt, an Oak Park resident who attended the class for about 15 years. She said that a core group of eight or nine class members had become friends and that some joined other fitness facilities and lost touch with the group.

Their exercise teacher holds the class at the Woodward Avenue Shul in Royal Oak, but it is a "temporary fix that was not built to be an exercise studio," Vogt says. Their teacher expects to move to a more suitable Oak Park location soon.

About 20 percent of the JPM Oak Park fitness members chose to "migrate their membership to West Bloomfield," according to Hopman. Others may have opted for one of the area's low-cost gyms and fitness centers. ✱

Information about JCC without Borders programs is available at [www.jccdet.org/adults/active-life/](http://www.jccdet.org/adults/active-life/) or by calling the JCC at (248) 661-1000.