

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life Presents:

The Southern Cycling Sabbatical

WITH THE JEWISH PEDALER, RABBI BOB LEVY

By Rabbi Marshal Klaven

From the end of February to the end of March, the ISJL Rabbinic Department unleashed its first ever **Southern Cycling Sabbatical** with Rabbi Bob Levy. Rabbi Levy is the senior rabbi of Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor, MI. Blessed with a sabbatical from his congregation, Rabbi Levy volunteered to pass along this blessing to others by cycling across five states, over a course of 700 miles, to support small and remote Jewish communities, of various movement affiliations, who are fighting to maintain Jewish life.



The ISJL **Southern Cycling Sabbatical** was a mutually beneficial program. Congregations had the opportunity to experience the tremendous skills of a superb rabbi as he officiated Shabbat/holiday observances, facilitated youth/adult education sessions, engaged in pastoral care, and more! "Usually we get 40-45 people attending [services]," stated Beth Tefillah's president, Mark Friedman, "but, as a direct consequence of Rabbi Levy's visit, we drew in over 80! He arrived a stranger," added Friedman, "but left as a good friend."

As for Rabbi Levy, he was enriched by the history of each community, the individual stories of their members, and the depth of their hearts and souls as they opened the doors of their congregations and lives to him. Reflecting on his trip, Rabbi Levy stated, "It was really refreshing to see, in these small towns, that there exists a really strong Jewish identity and the strength of Jewish knowledge. And cycling," assessed Rabbi Levy, "was just fast enough to get to places and, importantly, slow enough to meet people along the way."



While this cycling program was the first of its kind, the ISJL hopes that Rabbi Levy's experience will inspire other rabbis and cantors, in the future, to find meaningful ways (on two wheels or four) to spend their own sabbaticals. Whether it is for a weekend, a week, a month, or a few months, the ISJL Rabbinic Department is ready, willing and able to creatively assist clergy in making a unique gift that will last a lifetime for the recipients as well as the giver.