

Dual purpose

Lubavitch students tour state

With the Farmington Hills-based Lubavitch Foundation as their starting point, 15 senior students from the Central Lubavitch Rabbinical College of New York Sunday kicked off a 12-day campaign trip to 35 Michigan cities.

These future rabbis and community leaders will contact Jewish communities as well as public schools, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes and other organizations with a dual message:

- For members of the Jewish faith, the message is Judaism — its 20th Century relevance;
- For the general public, the message is moral living and faith in God — regardless of religious affiliation.

The goal of the trip is to renew interest in their heritage among Jews in Michigan's smaller towns,

particularly in light of the Passover season. The rabbinical college students will arrange evening concerts and programs — "Evenings with Chabad." Chabad is the formal name of the organization called "Lubavitch," which originated 250 years ago in Russia in the town of Lubavitch.

"Our goal is to stir religious activity and build general awareness of our customs, traditions and observance among our co-religionists. Little or no Jewish activities are to be found within smaller towns of our state, and we feel that a 'shot in the arm' is needed in time for the Passover holiday," said Rabbi Yosef Shmoly.

The other goal of the campaign is to promulgate moral and ethical behavior in the general public, based on the belief in God, Creator

of the Universe.

Why would a Jewish organization concern itself with dissemination of morality in society as a whole? The answer can be found in the world leader of Lubavitch, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Brooklyn, known as the "Lubavitcher Rabbi," two years ago launched a campaign for the observance of the universal moral principles called the "Seven Noahide Laws" — a campaign which received support and endorsement from President Reagan and Gov. James Blanchard.

The "Seven Laws" open with the belief in one God, they contain prohibitions against idolatry, stealing, murder and immorality. The Seventh Law calls for establishment of courts and governments to enforce moral discipline in society.

Continued from Page 3

It is worthy to note that the average member spends 55 days a year attending training programs," Shurtleff wrote in the 1986 Annual Farmington Hills Fire Department Report.

OF THE four fire stations situated throughout the city, Shurtleff estimated that at any given time, at least 10 firefighters would be available to answer an emergency call.

That's more, he said, than those departments with only full-time staff members, where the amount responding to any given emergency would be greatly reduced based simply upon the limited number of full-time staff.

With an average response time of 5.47 minutes, that would mean, in

Farmington Hills, that the response of both full-time and part-time staff would match or even surpass the manpower of most career fire departments.

Richard Powell, executive secretary for the Michigan Firefighters Training Council, said that with the numbers of paid part-time or volunteer firefighters more than triple the numbers of career firefighters (24,700 to 5,203), the majority of departments are obviously happy with their combination force. The council establishes minimum guidelines for fire departments.

"It's simply a matter of attitude," Powell said. "If you accept this type of premise, then I'd say there is no difference in career firefighters and part-time firefighters."

POWELL SAID that it's all a matter of how the community anticipates the need for training. Since a majority of the departments are staffed by part-timers, it's safe to say that the community must feel reasonably comfortable with the arrangement.

"In a career department, you are literally paying people to sit until a fire occurs," Shurtleff said. "With a \$1.5 million operating budget, that would mean we'd be paying 35 firefighters full-time pay where in 95 percent of the time, they'd only be in some level of preparedness."

In small communities like Farmington Hills, only 5 percent of the time is spent by full-time members responding to actual fire calls, he said.

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