



Young innovators discuss Jewish future

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By Ynetnews

What's the best way to build and strengthen the Jewish future? The answers are coming to Israel in early July, when 120 Jewish business and social entrepreneurs, innovators, thinkers and artists from all over the world — from San Salvador and Beijing, Los Angeles and Copenhagen and beyond — converge on Kfar Maccabiah, in Ramat Gan, for the ROI Global Summit for Young Jewish Innovators.

This summit will not only mark the fifth anniversary of ROI — a worldwide community of young leaders who dream of a better Jewish future, and then make it happen; the summit will also chart ROI's future course.

Coming together in Israel, these innovators will strategize how to strengthen ROI's expanding global network dedicated to Jewish education and identity, Jewish arts and culture, environmental responsibility, and "tikkun olam".

"I invite all those who fear for the next generation of Jewish leadership to come see the Jewish future and hear its many voices at ROI," said Lynn Schusterman, the American Jewish philanthropist who created ROI as a partnership between the Center for Leadership Initiatives and Taglit-Birthright Israel.

Since ROI's inception in 2006, Schusterman has invested \$600,000 in more than 60 projects, in what she regards as her signature philanthropic program. "I am deeply inspired by these 20- and 30-somethings, whose Judaism moves them to build networks of purpose — and to repair the world."

\$500,000 in grants

Over the last five years, ROI has played the key role in seeding and supporting such cutting-edge Jewish start-ups as PresenTense, Moishe House, Challah for Hunger, G-dcast and Oleh ! Records.

This year, to mark its fifth anniversary, ROI awarded \$500,000 in grants to 35 initiatives led by members in 11 countries, with a special emphasis on collaborative projects, including :

- * Jewcology, a web portal for Jewish environmentalists created through an international collaboration by 17 ROI members
- * Jewish Salons, an international network addressing Jewish identity through culture and arts
- * Jew It Yourself, whose 21st century Jewish catalogue will enable visitors to explore how to live Jewishly in a pluralistic context
- * Bat Kol, an organization for Orthodox lesbians in Israel, which promotes acceptance of lesbians and gays, especially in the observant community

"After five years of expanding this global network, we're embarking on a new direction," said ROI Director Justin Korda. "We will hold a global brainstorm—face-to-face for the members at the summit and tweet-to-tweet for the hundreds scattered in 40 countries—to determine our future course."

ROI provides professional development and financial support to its 500-strong network of innovators and activists, who have launched hundreds of projects in more than 100 communities over the past five years. At the this year's summit, ROI members will hone their managerial, innovation and communications skills to enable them to strengthen their projects, extend their networks, and realize one of the great truths of any real community: We can accomplish more together than we'll ever accomplish alone.

"ROI provides a vehicle where the most creative young Jewish minds can cross-pollinate," explained Rabbi Yonatan Gordis, executive director of the Center for Leadership Initiatives. "We're here to help them turn vision into reality as they take the car keys to the Jewish future."