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**PECK SCHOOL'S docUWM PRODUCES NEW FILM SHOWING
CHALLENGES, JOYS OF SMALL-TOWN WISCONSIN JEWS
Documentary to Screen at Discovery World September 18; Statewide Release to
Follow**

They live in Rhinelander and Kenosha, Sheboygan and La Crosse – and many places in between. Jews have been a part of more than 300 communities across Wisconsin since the 18th century. Whether members of a small, struggling synagogue in Appleton or the only Jewish family in Viroqua, all have faced the same enduring dilemma: how to balance their Jewish identities with the practical need to assimilate?

This issue is sensitively explored in the new documentary film *Chosen Towns: The Story of Jews in Wisconsin's Small Communities*. The documentary is a partnership between docUWM and the Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning's Wisconsin Small Jewish Communities History Project. *Chosen Towns* was produced by docUWM, a documentary media center based in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Peck School of the Art's film department that offers students opportunities to produce professional work under the guidance of faculty.

Chosen Towns will air statewide on Wednesday, Oct. 15, at 7 p.m. on both Wisconsin Public Television and Milwaukee Public Television. A series of seven public screenings begins on September 18 at Discovery World, 500 N. Harbor Dr., in Milwaukee. The free screening, co-sponsored by Milwaukee Public Television, begins at 7 pm and is followed by question-and-answer with student filmmakers and local experts.

docUWM students worked for two years in tandem with the Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning, a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to foster, encourage and support Jewish learning, scholarship and research, to research and produce *Chosen Towns*.

The hour-long film follows the lives of nine Jewish families who span the breadth of the state and 150 years. From a short-lived Jewish farming experiment in Arpin to the dynamic "miracle" synagogue in Wausau, from a Rhinelander boy who received little Jewish education to the Janesville girl who became Rabbi Dena Feingold of Kenosha, the complexities of small-town Jewish life emerge in this unique documentary.

"This is our first full-length student project to gain statewide release and I'm proud of our students for making such a professional and thoughtful film," said docUWM director Brad Lichtenstein. "Sharing that work with the public is an essential part of the educational experience. They are all looking forward to participating in the talkbacks

following the screenings.”

Chosen Towns was made possible by a generous grant from the Helen Bader Foundation. Additional funding was provided by The LE Phillips Family Foundation, Inc., and The Lucy and Jack Rosenberg Philanthropic Fund.

Preview screenings

Preview screenings are free and open to the public. Each screening features a question-and-answer with student filmmakers and local experts. The schedule is:

- **Thurs., Sept. 18, 7 pm** – Discovery World in Milwaukee (with Milwaukee Public TV).
- **Sun., Sept. 21, 7 pm** – Mt. Sinai Congregation in Wausau (with Wisconsin Public TV).
- **Tues., Sept. 23, 7:30 pm** – University of Wisconsin-Madison Memorial Union Play Circle (with the University of Wisconsin Center for Jewish Studies and Wisconsin Public TV).
- **Thurs., Sept. 25, 7 pm** – Moses Montefiore Synagogue in Appleton (with Wisconsin Public TV).
- **Sun., Sept. 28, 7 pm** – Congregation Sons of Abraham in La Crosse (with Wisconsin Public TV).
- **Thurs., Oct. 2, 7 pm** – Beth Hillel Temple in Kenosha (with Wisconsin Public TV).
- **Mon., Oct. 6, 1 pm** – Jewish Museum Milwaukee
- **Sunday, Oct. 12, 12 pm** – Congregation Beth El in Sheboygan (with Wisconsin Public TV).

For more information, contact Andy Muchin at the Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning, (414) 963-4135 or amuchin@wsjl.org; or visit <http://doc.uwm.edu> and www.wsjl.org. Photos available upon request.