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Sad, but important service

Website keeps Toronto's Jewish community informed on passings

Tags: Jewish, Web site

By Sarah Ryeland

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KEEPING CONNECTED: Marlene Kohn started her business JewishPassings.com to make sure that members of the community don't miss the funeral of a loved one.

Marlene Kohn saw an important void in her community and turned it into a business.

In June, Kohn launched a new Web site, [JewishPassings.com](#), to provide timely notification of deaths in the Jewish community. It offers a daily newsletter delivered to email inboxes across the city, telling subscribers of community members who have recently passed away.

"We stick to the facts," says Kohn. "People need to know dates and locations of funeral proceedings and shiva details so they can pay their respects."

Kohn was inspired to create the site a year ago when she was out of town and a friend's father passed away. With limited phone access, she was unable to find out about the death until she returned home.

"It was upsetting because I found out so late and couldn't offer my sympathies in a timely manner," Kohn says. "So the idea for the site came out of that experience."

According to practice in the Jewish faith, those who have recently passed away are buried within days, or sometimes hours of death.

This time-sensitive ritual means early notification of friends and family is essential.



The site isn't designed to be morbid or depressing, but to connect the Jewish community with friends and neighbours whose families might not contact them in the event of a death.

Response to the site has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Kohn. Testimonials from happy subscribers come in every day and as readership increases, so does the amount of satisfied customers.

"Our average subscribers are Baby Boomers with aging parents," says Kohn. "But we've had a great response from snowbirds too, who want to stay connected when they're away for the winter."

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