

# GREENBOOK

## A Guide to Intelligent Giving

Volume 4  
March 2016

### Funding Jewish Overnight Camp

WRITTEN BY RAMIE ARIAN

DEDICATED BY TALI AND SENDER COHEN  
IN MEMORY OF GETZEL COHEN Z"l





Dedicated in loving memory of Getzel Cohen (1942-2015). He cherished his camp experience, which proved formative to his Jewish identity. In his later years, he became a staunch advocate and supporter of Jewish camping for all children, creating a Jewish overnight camping program in Cincinnati. By his devoted son, Sender.



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Greenbooks are research reports written specifically for the funding community. Each unbiased, comprehensive guide focuses on a problem currently facing the Jewish community, maps out the relevant history, and details a wide range of approaches being taken to address the problem. Greenbooks are produced by the Jewish Funders Network, with a target publication of two guides annually. Greenbooks are available for download at [www.jfunders.org/Greenbooks](http://www.jfunders.org/Greenbooks).



# Goals of this book

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This book aims to inform the vital conversation about the role of Jewish overnight camps in fostering Jewish identity and commitment. To do so, the book offers funders:

- ★ A survey of past, present and possible initiatives that aim to extend the reach and effectiveness of Jewish overnight camps.
- ★ A catalyst to the sharing of innovative ideas with other funders, lay leaders and practitioners.
- ★ A menu of opportunities to leverage investments in the field of Jewish overnight camps; and
- ★ Links and citations to other resources, further information and deeper research.

## How to read this book

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This Greenbook is designed to raise the tone of the conversation about the growing field of Jewish overnight camps by articulating some of the challenges, offering background information, and surveying the landscape of initiatives. Throughout, we insert links and citations for further research. Because these resources are hyperlinked in the digital versions of this book, you may find that reading the digital PDF version offers a more versatile experience than the print version.

The Greenbook may be read either from cover to cover or as a collection of independent chapters. If you'd like an overview of all the various initiatives currently in the field, work your way through the chapters. If you are specifically interested in a particular type of initiative, read the introductory sections (Chapters 1-3) and then skip to the chapter(s) that are most of interest.

For ease of use, each chapter on initiatives in the field of Jewish overnight camps (Chapters 4-9) follows the same general format.

- 1. Introduction:** The essential background information on each type of initiative.
- 2. Description of initiatives:** A description of initiatives including programs that were previously attempted, those currently in use, and some untested opportunities.
- 3. Challenges:** A description of issues that may inhibit the successful implementation of these initiatives.
- 4. What funders can do:** The various ways that funders can most profitably catalyze and support these efforts.
- 5. Questions to consider:** Designed to spur discussion, these questions can be used to explore, debate and examine the initiatives from a variety of angles.

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# Part I

Laying the groundwork



# 1 Why Jewish camp matters

Suddenly, during [my first summer at camp], being Jewish became joyous. The summers at camp cemented my connection to being Jewish. They are not simply memories. If there is goodness and kindness in me today, much of it stems from my years at a Jewish summer camp. In that sense, camp is always there, not as a part of my past. It is an important part of me today and every day.

Budd Mishkin  
Television broadcaster, camp alumnus

Camp was a life-changing experience. The quality of the people involved, the beauty of the setting and the passion of the singing—all set me on a course of pursuing a high-quality of Jewish life—educationally and through our family philanthropy. Jewish camp gave me a sense of what joyful Jewish life can be!

Laura Lauder  
Philanthropist, camp alumna



Those summers at camp changed my life. Up until then, almost all of my associations with being Jewish were negative. I hated religious school and synagogue was a complete bore. At camp, I loved the idea of living Judaism and was turned on by the social-justice agenda. The infectious song (much of it composed there at camp) and dance seared my soul and is forever part of who I am.

Donald Kent  
Financial advisor, camp alumnus

*Over Shabbat dinner, on a late August evening, the talk turned to my visits to Jewish overnight camps. Frances, our host's 92-year-old mother, took a sudden interest. Her eyes lit up as she described, in vivid detail, anecdotes from her own summer camp experience: Tricks the girls used to bend the dress code at Saturday evening socials, lessons taught by a legendary visiting scholar, whom she recalled by name, as he gathered the campers on a hillside overlooking the New England lake, imagining it to be the Sea of Galilee, and conjuring images of early pioneers in Israel. The camp memories she recounted had taken place more than 75 years before!<sup>1</sup>*

Children love Jewish camp because it is fun. Parents love Jewish camp because their children are enriched there, as people and as Jews. (And parents love Jewish camp because their kids love it).

**Funders care about Jewish camp because of how powerfully it fosters Jewish identity and commitment** in the now almost 80,000 campers—and more than 11,000 collegiate staff members—who participate each summer.<sup>2</sup>

Ask a parent about camp, and he will tell you with pride about how much his children grow each summer, not only in their soccer, swimming and woodworking skills, but also in self-confidence and poise. He might compare his children's anecdotes with fond memories of his own exploits at camp a quarter-century earlier.

Ask a college-aged counselor about camp, and she will describe the first time she helped a camper, and felt like a real leader and role model.

Ask a child about camp, and a big smile will brighten his face as he recalls the fun, the friends, the secret pleasures of the best time of his year. And, as likely as not, he'll be happy to tell you exactly how many days are left until camp begins again next summer.

There is hardly any other childhood experience that so universally evokes blissful memories as summer camp.

Imagine if the power of such positive experiences could be harnessed in the service of building Jewish identity and commitment. Actually, you don't need to imagine: take a summertime day trip to visit one of the more than 150 Jewish summer camps that dot the landscape of 27 U.S. states and six Canadian provinces and you can watch that power in action.<sup>3</sup>

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1 I wrote this paragraph in 2002, describing a true story, for an article published in the January 2003 issue of *Jewish Education/ JESNA*, available at [www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/16056.pdf](http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/16056.pdf).

2 From *CAMP WORKS: Statistical Highlights*, a brochure available at [www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u5/NEW%20Camp\\_Works\\_Brochure\\_For\\_Web.pdf](http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u5/NEW%20Camp_Works_Brochure_For_Web.pdf) graphically summarizing the findings of *Camp Works: The Long-Term Impact of Jewish Overnight Camp*, a 2011 study by Steven M. Cohen, Ron Miller, Ira M. Sheskin and Berna Torr, available at: [www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u5/NEW%20Camp\\_Works\\_for\\_Web.pdf](http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u5/NEW%20Camp_Works_for_Web.pdf)

3 Cohen, Miller, Sheskin and Torr, *Ibid*.

There are two basic kinds of summer camps: residential camps and day camps. In residential camps (also called “overnight” camps or “sleepaway” camps), campers sleep at camp, away from home and parents. In day camps, campers attend during the daytime, leaving camp to sleep at home. Generally, day camps operate five days a week.

Because the existing literature on the Jewish educational value of camp is almost exclusively about overnight camps, **this book is concerned almost exclusively with overnight camps.**

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Jewish summer overnight camps have increasingly gained recognition for the powerful ways in which they connect participants to Jewish life, identity, and community.

Simply put: Jewish camp works to help create a more vibrant Jewish future.

## **Jewish Camp and the Jewish Community**

Those who experienced summers at Jewish overnight camp are far more likely as adults to be engaged in the Jewish community. Accordingly, an investment in Jewish camp today will continue to pay dividends far into the future.

The 2011 Camp Works<sup>4</sup> study compared adults who participated in Jewish overnight camp as children to Jewish adults who did not have a Jewish camp experience. The study found that those who attended Jewish camp are:

- ★ 45% more likely to attend synagogue at least once a month
- ★ 30% more likely to contribute to a Jewish Federation
- ★ 26% more likely to be members of a Jewish congregation
- ★ 25% more likely to donate to at least one Jewish cause

In 2010, Jack Wertheimer, a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, quantified the vital role Jewish overnight summer camp has played. Two-thirds of the up and coming Jewish leaders—Jewish educators, communal professionals, rabbis and lay leaders—were nurtured by their summers at Jewish camp.<sup>5</sup>

## **Jewish Camp and Jewish Identity**

The Camp Works study also found that those who had attended Jewish overnight camp as children (compared to those who had not) are:

- ★ 55% more likely to feel very emotionally attached to Israel

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<sup>4</sup> Cohen, Miller, Sheskin and Torr, *Op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Jack Wertheimer, *Generation of Change: How Leaders in their Twenties and Thirties are Reshaping American Jewish Life*, [www.bjpa.org/Publications/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=6383](http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=6383), pp. 24-25.

- ★ 37% more likely to light Shabbat candles regularly
- ★ 21% more likely to feel that being Jewish is very important *to them*

## Jewish Camp and Jewish Professional Leadership

The Wertheimer study, published in 2010, found that Jewish camp experience as a child is a powerful influence in encouraging careers in service to the Jewish community. More than two-thirds of younger Jewish leaders overall cited their Jewish camp experience as important influences in shaping their career decision.

Overnight summer camps are often run by a variety of Jewish organizations that take Jewish education and identity-building seriously. However, in the eyes of campers, parents, and most observers, even among those who were most deeply involved in Jewish life, camp was thought of more as a fun summer activity for children than as a serious program with *important educational and communal outcomes*. This began to change, very slowly at first, with the establishment in 1998 of the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) by entrepreneurial lay and professional leaders.

In recent years, FJC and programs such as the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's JCamp180 have developed a proven formula to ensure success. FJC seeks to engender the growth of:

1. excellent professional and lay leadership for the field
2. excellent Jewish, Israel-related, and general programming
3. excellent facilities

JCamp180 works with camps' boards of directors on:

1. governance and board development
2. strategic planning
3. planning to focus management goals and support facility renewal

These elements combine to produce outstanding results. Camps which have successfully addressed these six areas have increased enrollment, created self-sustaining fundraising, and offered more powerful Jewish experiences for their campers and staff.

The publication in 2002 of the first serious academic research about Jewish summer camps brought increased recognition to the field. This study, *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps*, was conducted by Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe of Brandeis University.<sup>6</sup> As the three excerpts below illustrate, it validated the efficacy and the potential of Jewish summer camp as a powerful vehicle for Jewish education and identity building.

6 *Limud by the Lake* was funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation, and published in 2002 jointly by AVI CHAI and the Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis. It is available at [www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=145](http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=145).

*The camp setting is an ideal place for realizing the full potential of informal Jewish education and for experimenting with programming that makes Judaism an organic part of everyday life. Informal education is not “sloppy” education. Rather it is serious pedagogy with philosophical and theoretical underpinnings and a treasure house of methods and techniques. People can be taught about informal Jewish education but it takes years to perfect the skills that are needed to develop curricula, design activities, and lead sessions effectively. A concerted effort is needed to develop informal Jewish education at camp.<sup>7</sup>*

*Powerful experiences result from integrated programming that infuses Jewish education throughout the camp and its myriad activities. To do so, camps need to upgrade the Judaic skills of bunk counselors, to create partnerships between these counselors and the Judaic experts at camp, and to spread responsibility for Jewish education among the entire staff.<sup>8</sup>*

*If Jewish camps are to maximize their potential as educational institutions, they must resolve their staffing issues. As seen in enrollment figures and waiting lists, the demand for Jewish camps is high. But the camps’ ability to expand their capacity is limited by the shortage of qualified staff. So, too, is their ability to deepen their Jewish commitments. The camping field needs to support counselors in their Jewish exploration and growth and to bring honor to these young adults on whom so many Jewish children depend.<sup>9</sup>*

**Two overall findings stood out from *Limud by the Lake*. First, Jewish summer camp did indeed offer a powerful way to build Jewish identity, commitment and education in large numbers of young Jews. Second, as then constituted, camps fell short of achieving their full potential, both because they could accommodate too few children and because of missed educational opportunities.**

The findings presented in *Limud by the Lake* yielded seven recommendations:

1. Expand the reach of Jewish camping.
2. Transform camp into a model of Jewish education.
3. Prepare directors to enhance Jewish life at camp.
4. Focus on staff as a target group in its own right.
5. Hire greater numbers of Jewish counselors.
6. Provide the training and support counselors need to advance on their own Jewish journeys and to flourish in their work as Jewish role models.
7. Conduct research to inform the field of Jewish camping and ground its future development in reliable information.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> The clearest summary of the recommendations can be found on page 3 of a follow-up study cited in the following footnote.

Almost a decade after the original study, a follow-up called *Limud by the Lake Revisited*<sup>11</sup> found a much-changed landscape. The following three passages from the revised study point toward key changes in the field:

*The very beginnings of the new study hinted at change in the Jewish camp world. In 2000 we encountered great difficulty getting camps to participate in the study. They could not see the value of the research and neither Brandeis University, The AVI CHAI Foundation, nor Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) were in a position to leverage camps' participation. Eight years later the situation was completely changed. Camp, which had been ignored as an area for study for decades, had become a hot topic. Several forces ignited interest and activity in Jewish summer camp: the original Limud by the Lake report; the emergence of FJC... and the support of The AVI CHAI Foundation and Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As these forces aligned, a number of other funders, foundations, and federations joined in serious support of Jewish summer camp. The resultant changes can be seen in four areas: new initiatives, the new reality of camps, new programming, and emerging target groups.*<sup>12</sup>

*In the years between 2000 and 2008, Jewish summer camp emerged as a field of practice in its own right. For one, the field enjoyed a plethora of capacity-building initiatives. On the business side, camps now see themselves as nonprofits and are getting serious about fundraising, governance, long-term investment, and the like. On the program side, they evidence an increased awareness of their educational mandate, stronger Judaic programming, and more openness to experimentation.*<sup>13</sup>

*These changes would not have happened without advocates and resources. In 2000, The AVI CHAI Foundation [did not yet have any experience with camp] and Jewish overnight camp was barely a field. Succeeding years saw the emergence of Foundation for Jewish Camp as a powerful umbrella organization. Early investment and commitment from The AVI CHAI Foundation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the fundraising success and marketing brilliance of FJC paved the way for other funders and federations to enter the game. Success bred success. Within a few years, the field arrived at a "tipping point" where relatively small change became a national movement.*<sup>14</sup>

The second study, too, concluded with recommendations that have set the agenda for further development in the field:

- 1. Expand the reach of camp**—The authors suggest that camps retool their marketing and recruitment in order to reach a much larger segment of the potential market; that they explore all available options to bring costs under control; that they seek ways to expand

11 Amy L. Sales, Nicole Samuel and Matthew Boxer, *Limud by the Lake Revisited: Growth and Change at Jewish Summer Camp*, published by The AVI CHAI Foundation and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, 2011. The study is available at [www.avichai.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Limud-by-the-Lake-Revisited.pdf](http://www.avichai.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Limud-by-the-Lake-Revisited.pdf).

12 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

14 *Ibid.*



camp-based opportunities for teens; and that they reach out with inclusivity efforts in order to better serve children with special needs.

- 2. Maintain the momentum**—The authors recommend that FJC and others in the field develop a range of efforts to support the expansion of physical capacity for camps; that their efforts be accompanied by serious evaluation research; and that they put particular focus on new, start-up camps.
- 3. Raise the level of professionalization**—The study encourages the creation of advanced degree programs for top professionals in the field of Jewish camps, and endorses the continued expansion of camps' year-round staff.
- 4. Help camps reach their full potential to promote Jewish life and learning**—Noting missed Jewish learning opportunities, the authors suggest that field leaders work with camps to strengthen Judaic programming; and that they strengthen their advocacy, so that camps attain a central place in the Jewish educational system.
- 5. Envision camp as laboratory for Jewish peoplehood**—The study envisions camps that serve as a forum where a diversity of Jews—Israelis and Americans, children of two Jewish parents and children of intermarried parents, children in Jewish multi-racial families and more—are brought together in an intentional exercise in *Klal Yisrael* (the unity of the Jewish people.)

## CONCLUSION

Very large numbers of Jewish children attend summer camps of one kind or another. For whatever reason, American Jews—in numbers that are proportionately greater than other groups—seem to be drawn to summer camp.<sup>15</sup> Jewish camps thus hold the potential to reach large numbers of children who are unlikely to participate in other Jewish educational or identity-building programs, such as Jewish day schools.

Between 2009 and 2014—the years following the economic downturn of 2008—enrollment at Jewish camps grew by 16%. On the other hand, private camp enrollment peaked in 2008, then dropped sharply, then gradually recovered, and now appears to have plateaued at a level slightly below the 2008 peak.

Jewish camp may provide the most fertile institutional setting in which young people—both campers and staff—can develop a love for joyous Judaism. Jewish camp allows campers to experience Judaism through a joyful, cultural, ethical and spiritual lens. It offers opportunities to construct an intense Jewish educational experience and build positive memories in an immersive environment.

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<sup>15</sup> This assertion is based on anecdotal reports by experts not only in the Jewish not-for-profit market, but also by owners of private camps operating in the general marketplace.

Jewish camp works—not only as a source of fun for participants, and of inspiration and pride for parents, but also as an especially powerful engine of Jewish identity and commitment in its participants and staff alike. And its effect is long lasting, especially for the college-age counselors on the brink of leadership roles on campus or in their home communities.

Jewish camps have come a long way since the first organized efforts to support the field as a whole got started just before the turn of the twenty-first century. The field of Jewish camping, with leadership from the Foundation for Jewish Camp, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and the camping movements, has worked with funders to enrich Jewish and Israel programmatic content. Forty communities are now investing in local Jewish camp efforts through community camping initiatives centered either in Jewish federations or local philanthropic foundations.

Yet a great deal remains to be done. A large majority of Jewish children have not experienced the transformative power of immersive Jewish summers. Jewish camp is a field on the move, one in which engaged funders can make a significant impact.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did you attend summer camp as a child? Did the camp communicate a clear Jewish mission? What kind of memories do you have of your camp experience?
2. Does camp resonate for you as an area which you'd like to support?
3. Experts say that the most effective education focuses on three areas (often called the ABCs of impactful education): **A**ffect, **B**ehavior, **C**ognition. Put in other words, effective educators influence what their learners FEEL about their subject, how they ACT in relation to it, and what they KNOW about the topic. Jewish camp focuses especially on creating Jewish feeling, and building comfort with Jewish actions. How do you feel about supporting an educational venture that shares this particular emphasis?



## 2 Landscape of the field



Going to Jewish summer camp was the best part of my year as a camper and as a counselor. It was where I got to be me and where my friends were, and where Judaism was fun and engaging and for young people.

Roger Horowitz  
Entrepreneur and camp alumnus

When I get together with friends we laugh at camp memories and sing lots of songs. And we are in our 60's... Jewish camp is one of the best things the community has going for it.

Deborah Lipstadt  
Professor of Jewish History and  
Holocaust Studies

The experience was as close to perfect as anything my son has done in his life.

Parent  
Camp Chi, Wisconsin

Before a funder can determine where and how she wants to make a difference in the field of Jewish camps, it is helpful to know the contours of the playing field. How many Jewish camps are there (and which are we counting)? How many children (and staff) do they serve? What are the trends in the field? Who are the major players? This chapter will address those questions.

## A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

It is worthwhile at this juncture to ask: where did all these Jewish camps come from? What led to their creation?

Jewish camps in North America have been established, for the most part, in three waves, each responding to a different set of needs and opportunities.

### Early 1900s

Early in the twentieth century, Jews in North America were largely immigrants crowded in heavily Jewish urban areas like New York's Lower East Side; Roxbury and Dorchester in Boston; Reservoir Hill and East Lombard Street in Baltimore; South Philadelphia and New Jerusalem in the Port Richmond section of that city; and the Cleveland Heights neighborhood of Cleveland. The average Jewish immigrant's main concerns mirrored those of other immigrants: learning English, earning a living, helping children acculturate to the norms of their new home in America.

Jewish institutions arose to help the immigrants meet these needs. Settlement Houses, orphanages and other social service agencies were in great demand. Many of these established summer camps to help their constituents manage their lives in America. As an added benefit, summer camps helped to protect children from the polio epidemics that periodically swept through urban areas, especially in the summertime.<sup>16</sup>

The earliest Jewish summer camps in the U.S. and Canada—camps like Surprise Lake (Cold Spring, NY) and Tamarack Camps (Ortonville, MI), both created in 1902—were established out of these impulses. The impulse to create camps that gave children opportunities outside of the inner cities continued at least into the 1930s. Camp Bauercrest, established by the Jewish Federation in 1931 forty miles north of Boston, is a good example.

### The Post-War Years

During the 1920s and 1930s, flourishing Zionist youth movements encouraged young Jews to learn

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16 According to [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_poliomyelitis](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_poliomyelitis), "The 1916 epidemic caused widespread panic and thousands fled the city [of New York] to nearby mountain resorts; movie theaters were closed, meetings were canceled, public gatherings were almost nonexistent, and children were warned not to drink from water fountains, and told to avoid amusement parks, swimming pools, and beaches. From 1916 onward, a polio epidemic appeared each summer in at least one part of the country."

about the efforts to build up the Jewish homeland in Palestine, and to consider making *aliyah*. These movements created summer camps to “simulate Israeli colony life.”<sup>17</sup>

In the years during and following World War II, increasingly affluent Jews moved in droves to the suburbs. The transmission of Jewish culture and heritage had once been accomplished mainly at home, where three generations often lived in close proximity both to one another and to Jewish norms. Now Jewish education was entrusted mainly to the synagogues that proliferated almost as fast as the suburbs themselves.

To support their educational efforts, rapidly growing synagogues built—or enlisted their parent movements to build—both schools and summer camps. Educational clubs such as Zionist youth movements also built summer camps. Camp Massad, for instance, a Hebrew-speaking Zionist camp, was established in 1941, first as a day camp, then as a partnership with an Orthodox camp, and finally on its own site in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania by the HaNoar Halvri (Hebrew Youth) youth movement.<sup>18</sup> Camp Yavneh, a strongly Judaic, trans-denominational camp outside Boston, was established in 1944 as a summer school and camp by Hebrew College (then Boston Hebrew College). The first Ramah camp was opened in Conover, WI by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1947.<sup>19</sup> Young Judaea opened Tel Yehudah, its first summer camp, in 1948.<sup>20</sup> The first Reform movement camp was created in Oconomowoc, WI in 1951.<sup>21</sup> These new camps were the precursors of a major wave of camp construction. Several dozen new Jewish summer camps, created with goals that were mainly educational, were established in the post-war years, from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.

Today, the camps created during these first two waves are moving closer together in terms of their vision of themselves and their missions.

## The Twenty-First Century

A third wave of camp creation is underway now. The Foundation for Jewish Camp noted that many young people, especially teens, were attracted to summer programs that catered to their particular interests and passions.<sup>22</sup> Acting on this insight, and with the support of the Jim Joseph Foundation, FJC established a Specialty Camp Incubator to encourage and incentivize the creation of new camps with a narrow, specialty focus. To date, about a dozen new Jewish camps have been created in response to this insight. The first of these new specialty camps, combining Jewish values and education with an array of specialties ranging from sports to outdoor adventure to environmentalism and more, opened in 2010.

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17 “Habonim Dror has been providing a *machaneh* [camp] experience since 1932,” according to [www.habonimdror.org/summercamps](http://www.habonimdror.org/summercamps). In 1933, at a National Convention of Canadian Young Judaea, “a resolution passed making the movement’s new priority the setting up of summer camps which would simulate Israeli colony life,” according to a timeline presented at [www.youngjudaea.ca/history](http://www.youngjudaea.ca/history).

18 [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp\\_Massad\\_\(Poconos\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Massad_(Poconos)).

19 [www.campramah.org/content/history.php](http://www.campramah.org/content/history.php).

20 [www.youngjudaea.org/home/about-young-judaea/history-of-young-judaea](http://www.youngjudaea.org/home/about-young-judaea/history-of-young-judaea).

21 [www.urjyouth.org/?programlisting=urj-olin-sang-ruby-union-institute](http://www.urjyouth.org/?programlisting=urj-olin-sang-ruby-union-institute).

22 See the author’s 2010 article on this topic at [www.jta.org/2010/07/07/news-opinion/opinion/op-ed-fulfilling-summer-dreams](http://www.jta.org/2010/07/07/news-opinion/opinion/op-ed-fulfilling-summer-dreams).

With the support of the Jim Joseph Foundation and The AVI CHAI Foundation, a second cohort of new camps was created in 2014 in locations from Boston to Boulder to the Bay Area near San Francisco.<sup>23</sup> These new camps emphasize specialties from science to business to wellness to sports.

Beginning in 2015, FJC is offering a New Camps Accelerator, which is helping to create additional new camps, the first two of which are slated to open in 2016.<sup>24</sup>

Along with established camps expanding services for campers with special needs, the last decade and a half also saw the creation of new camps such as Camp Kaylie (upstate NY) and Camp Living Wonders (Atlanta) designed to serve children with special needs.

## SHAPE OF THE FIELD

Today about 150 non-profit Jewish overnight<sup>25</sup> camps operate in North America. They are scattered across the United States and Canada, from the Nova Scotia peninsula to the mountains outside Los Angeles. Together, they serve close to 80,000 campers each summer. The campers, in turn, are served by some 11,000 college-age counselors and staff who have powerful Jewish experiences, and are an important constituency in their own right.

The Jewish camps spread across the continent are not evenly distributed. Their geography more or less tracks the pattern of the Jewish population. More precisely, their locations trace the geography of where the Jewish population liked to spend its summer vacations two generations or so ago. Accordingly, there are large clusters of Jewish camps in the Northeastern U.S., particularly in a radius outside the Boston-New York-Philadelphia corridor, including camps in Maine, New Hampshire, eastern and western Massachusetts, upstate New York, and especially in northeastern Pennsylvania. Wisconsin is home to a substantial cluster of camps, mainly established to serve the Jewish children of greater Chicago and the Midwest. Another important cluster of camps in and around the north Georgia mountains (extending a bit into western North Carolina) serves the Jewish communities of south Florida, greater Atlanta, and the larger Southeast. A significant number of Jewish camps in northern Ontario and the Laurentian Mountains serve the greater Toronto and Montreal communities. And there is a growing cluster of camps in southern California. In general, the establishment of Jewish camps lags at least a generation behind the migrations of the Jewish community, so that areas into which the Jewish community is currently moving in significant numbers, such as the South and the West, are generally underserved.

It is difficult to estimate the number of camp-aged (and therefore eligible) children in the Jewish population at any given time. The general consensus is that this population varies from around

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<sup>23</sup> [www.jewishcamp.org/node/1384](http://www.jewishcamp.org/node/1384).

<sup>24</sup> [www.jewishcamp.org/new-camp-accelerator](http://www.jewishcamp.org/new-camp-accelerator).

<sup>25</sup> This Greenbook uses the terms "overnight camp," "residential camp," and "sleepaway camp" interchangeably.

500,000 to nearly 700,000,<sup>26</sup> so that the almost 80,000 Jewish children attending Jewish camps represents a market penetration level of about 13%.<sup>27</sup>

## Residential Camps and Day Camps

As noted in Chapter 1, there are two basic kinds of summer camps: residential camps and day camps. Residential camps (also called “overnight” camps or “sleepaway” camps) are those where the campers sleep at camp, away from home and parents. Day camps are those where campers attend during the daytime, leaving camp to sleep at home. Generally, day camps operate five days a week.

**This book is concerned almost exclusively with overnight camps.** This is because the existing literature on the Jewish educational value of camp is almost exclusively about overnight camps.

At the same time, it is worth noting that day camps under Jewish organizational auspices do exist, and in large numbers. Indeed, it is estimated that many more children attend Jewish day camps at any given time than attend Jewish residential camps. UJA-Federation of New York has made day camping an important priority.

The largest sponsors of Jewish day camps in North America are the JCC movement and Chabad. There are presently about 140 JCC day camps and a similar number of Gan Israel day camps operating under Chabad sponsorship.

Over the last several decades, two new hybrid models of camp have emerged: in the first, campers go home each evening but the counselors sleep at camp. Camp Ramah Nyack is a notable example.<sup>28</sup> In the second, campers sleep at camp five days a week, and then go home to spend the weekend with their parents. There are few if any examples of the second model in the Jewish community; one program of that kind, sponsored by the New Jersey Y Camps for the last 20 years, was recently discontinued.

## Non-Profit and Private Camps

Another relevant distinction is the difference between camps that are organized as not-for-profit agencies and those that are private, for-profit businesses.

While many private, for-profit camps serve constituencies which are largely or entirely Jewish, this book is concerned exclusively with not-for-profit camps. This is because non-profit organizations are, by definition, mission-driven; by contrast, the ultimate goal of a for-profit business is to generate profit for its owner(s). While there are many private camps which are

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<sup>26</sup> Based on figures used by the Foundation for Jewish Camp.

<sup>27</sup> The 13% figure is a snapshot of how many children attend Jewish camp in any given summer. FJC estimates that the overall percentage of Jewish children who have ever attended Jewish camp over their camp-eligible years is likely to be 30-35%.

<sup>28</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 8 below.

often thought of as “Jewish camps,” and even some which include Jewish programming, this is not their ultimate goal.

Further, and more simply, this book is a guide for funders, whose philanthropy may appropriately be guided to non-profit agencies, but not to private businesses.

The fact that the camps and sponsoring organizations which form the subject of this book are not-for-profit agencies means that they are registered as 501(c)(3) organizations (or the Canadian equivalent); many are listed and rated in such guides as Charity Navigator and GuideStar, which provide useful information for prospective funders.

### Denominational and Movement Camps

The majority of the 150 Jewish camps (about 60%) are sponsored by, or affiliated with, a larger organizing body. The organizing body may be the religious denomination or movement which governs their programmatic ideology (such as Ramah, the Union for Reform Judaism, Habonim Dror North America, and Bnei Akiva); the body which owns their property and operates their program (such as the New Jersey Y Camps and the Eli and Bessie Cohen Foundation); or an umbrella with which they choose to affiliate for the benefits it provides (such as the Jewish Community Center Association and the Association of Independent Jewish Camps); or it may be a hybrid of two or more of these.

The main organizing bodies with which Jewish overnight camps in North America are affiliated include:<sup>29</sup>

- ★ Jewish Community Center Association (24) [[www.jcccamps.org](http://www.jcccamps.org)]<sup>30</sup>
- ★ Union for Reform Judaism (15) [[www.urjyouth.org/camps](http://www.urjyouth.org/camps)]
- ★ Young Judeaea {United States and Canada} (12) [[www.youngjudeaea.org/home/summer-camps](http://www.youngjudeaea.org/home/summer-camps) and [www.youngjudeaea.ca](http://www.youngjudeaea.ca)]
- ★ Ramah (9) [[www.campramah.org](http://www.campramah.org)]
- ★ Habonim Dror North America (7) [[www.habonimdror.org/summercamps](http://www.habonimdror.org/summercamps)]
- ★ New Jersey Y Camps (7) [[www.njycamps.org](http://www.njycamps.org)]
- ★ Association of Independent Jewish Camps (7) [[www.aijcamps.org](http://www.aijcamps.org)]
- ★ Moshava/ Bnei Akiva (5) [[www.bneiakiva.org/?/camp](http://www.bneiakiva.org/?/camp)]
- ★ Agudath Israel (5)<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Listed in the order of the number of their affiliated camps, as provided by their respective websites, slightly adjusted for consistency.

<sup>30</sup> In this list, the number in parentheses represents the number of affiliated overnight camps; the name in brackets is the website where more information about the sponsoring organization may be found.

<sup>31</sup> There is no central website for this grouping. Rather, each of the camps has its own website. At least one, but not all, of the Nageela camps listed below are sponsored by Agudath Israel.



- ★ Cohen Camps (3) [[www.cohencamps.org](http://www.cohencamps.org)]
- ★ Nageela (3) [[www.nageela.org](http://www.nageela.org)]
- ★ Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (1) [[www.campjrf.org](http://www.campjrf.org)]

## Community and Independent Camps

In addition to the camps affiliated with a movement, a denomination, or another kind of sponsoring body, several dozen camps are independent and free-standing non-profits. Examples include the non-denominational boys' camps Bauercrest and Avodah outside Boston; Camp Morasha in Pennsylvania for children from Orthodox homes; Herzl Camp in western Wisconsin, mainly serving the Jewish community of the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area; and Camp Daisy and Harry Stein, sponsored by Congregation Beth Israel of Scottsdale, AZ. There are many, many others, and they come in all varieties: single-gender and co-educational; denominational and pluralistic; geographically based; or focused around a specific programmatic specialty.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, a significant number of summer camps operate under ultra-Orthodox auspices, especially (but not only) in the Catskills area of upstate New York, many of which are not included in the figures cited above.

## Less Traditional Programs and Sites

Talk of “summer camp” conjures images of rural enclaves, redolent with pine trees, on tradition-laden rustic sites which are utilized for just two months a year.

While that image is accurate in a general way, this book uses the term “summer camp” to refer to any programs under Jewish organizational not-for-profit auspices which are immersive and which offer recreational and educational programming for children and teens in the summer time. Using this definition, we include at least three kinds of programs beyond the image (above) of a summer camp in the pine forest:

- ★ Programs and specialty camps which utilize non-traditional sites, often rented venues on college or prep school campuses, in order to capture one or more of the following advantages: (a) proximity to sites and attractions related to their program that may be found in a nearby urban area; (b) availability of high-end facilities such as sports fields or science labs; or (c) use of a suitable site, without incurring the very substantial capital expenses often associated with starting a new camp.
- ★ Travel programs, mainly for teens, which capture much of the atmosphere and benefit of a “traditional” camp experience without being on the campus. Such programs include NCSY’s Give West, an Orthodox girls’ travel program in the Western U.S.; BBYO’s domestic Stand Up and Trek programs, which include numerous offerings throughout North America; and USY on Wheels, the Conservative movement’s domestic teen travel program.

<sup>32</sup> Information on all these camps is available on FJC’s website at <http://www.jewishcamp.org/find-camp>.



- ★ Service programs, also mainly for teens, which offer Jewishly grounded community building and social interaction while engaged in community service to the benefit of others. Some such programs are offered as teen options of existing summer camps, such as the Kavanah program of Camp Mountain Chai. Others are free-standing offerings like those occasionally sponsored by the American Jewish Society for Service, the American Jewish World Service, and others.

## DEFINING “JEWISH CAMP”

Before proceeding, we might pause to clarify the term “Jewish camp.” In order to list a camp in its directory, the Foundation for Jewish Camp requires that a camp meet five criteria:<sup>33</sup>

1. Registration as a 501(c)3 (or Canadian equivalent)
2. An explicit Jewish mission
3. An educational program that incorporates Israel
4. A recognition and celebration of Shabbat as different from other days
5. An aspiration to offer a recurring program to which campers could return in successive years

## CAMP AS A VOLUME-DRIVEN BUSINESS

Our discussion has so far focused on the programmatic side of camp: how its educational program builds Jewish identity, the need for leadership development, the need to get more children to experience the benefits of Jewish camp. We now turn to the business side of camp. Each camp is a small business, and to function effectively camps must be conscious of good business practice. Funders, too, ought to keep in mind that camps must run effectively as businesses. To this end, we now discuss one fact which is central to understanding how camps operate: camp is a volume-driven business.

Every camp incurs significant fixed costs, regardless of how many children are served. So, for example, every camp needs to pay the salaries of a camp director, cook, and medical staff. The director of a very large camp (say, a camp with 600 campers at a time) will likely command a larger salary than the director of a much smaller camp (say, a camp with 200 campers at a time), but the difference in salary will not be proportional to the difference in camper enrollment.

Indeed, most of the costs of operating a camp are fixed. The salaries of the key top staff; maintaining the buildings and grounds; operating the swimming pool or waterfront; insurance; all these and more are fixed. The only costs that are NOT fixed in the camp world are the salaries of

<sup>33</sup> For further details, see the document “Criteria for New Camps to Join the FJC Network,” available online at [www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u12/New%20Camp%20Guidelines%20and%20Info%20Form%20Feb%202015\\_1.pdf](http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u12/New%20Camp%20Guidelines%20and%20Info%20Form%20Feb%202015_1.pdf).

the lowest-paid staff (a camp with lower enrollment will hire fewer cabin counselors), the cost of food (much lower than the reader would probably imagine), laundry, and per-camper insurance.

This fact has several corollaries, which are important in understanding how camp works:

- ★ **It is economically much more efficient for a camp to run with full enrollment than with empty beds.** Camp directors generally understand that the most important priority of their year's work is to recruit enough campers to fill the available beds. Therefore, camp leadership will be very hesitant to experiment with programmatic innovation if there is a concern that the innovation might make the camp less attractive to potential campers.
- ★ **Generally, the larger the camp the more economically viable it is.** Camps are most economically efficient with a minimum of 200 campers and in increments of approximately 20 (the size of a bunk) after that. Funding experiments which create new small camps to fill niche markets have a steep economic barrier to overcome.
- ★ **The “marginal cost” of adding an additional camper to a camp with an available empty bed is minimal.** This was the theory undergirding FJC's BunkConnect® initiative.<sup>34</sup> If a camper who has registered for just the first session can be enticed to stay on for the second session as well, it is often economically possible to steeply discount their tuition for the additional session without any overall economic harm to the camp.

## STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS IN CAMPING

Summer camps must meet the high standards that parents expect in many areas of their operation. These areas include health and safety, food service, quality and training of supervising personnel, availability of medical care, variety of recreational offerings, religious standards, camper-counselor ratios, swimming instruction and water safety, emphasis on building community and making friends, stress on skill acquisition, educational program, and many others.

Standards in all these areas are set, generally, by either or both of the following:

- ★ The American Camp Association (or the regional bodies which constitute its Canadian equivalent) offers formal accreditation, which may serve as assurance that the accredited camp meets a broad array of standards appropriate to all camps (but not touching on religious practice or educational goals). Camps are required to be re-certified for accreditation every three years.
- ★ The camps' sponsoring organization or parent body, which (if a movement or denomination) will generally have its own expectations regarding programmatic offerings, educational goals and methodologies, and more.

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<sup>34</sup> BunkConnect® is described in Chapter 6 below.

## TRENDS IN CAMPING AND IN JEWISH CAMP

The field of Jewish camp is subject to all the trends which are current in the general field of camping, and some which are unique to the Jewish community as well. These include:

- ★ **Increasing specialization**—As in nearly every other field, specialization is a growing trend in the Jewish camp world. Once almost every camp offered a wide span of programming ranging from athletics to swimming, and from arts and crafts to drama. Today growing numbers of Jewish camps focus their programming on a single, specialized area. These specialties range from sports (or sometimes, just one or two specific sports) to business to healthy living to outdoor adventure, science and technology, and several others. Specialty camps typically employ trained staff with expertise in a particular specialty, in contrast to many traditional camps that expect counselors to teach sports and activities with little or no formal training. The rise of specialization in camps meets the demands of millennial parents who are seeking an edge for their children in school opportunities.
- ★ **Shorter sessions**—Fifty years ago almost every camp enrolled children for a summer-length session of about eight weeks. For several reasons, today sessions are growing shorter. First, the length of the “full summer” has shrunk almost universally from eight weeks to seven. Second, almost every camp has options for campers to attend for either of two sessions of about three-and-a-half weeks. Third, especially in the West, two-week sessions have become common, with many camps offering, for example, two two-week sessions and one three-week session. The trend seems to be continuing, driven by school calendars, the collegiate calendars that govern counselors’ availability, increasing costs of camp, and families seeking to retain part of the summer for a family vacation.
- ★ **Greater Jewish intentionality**—Most movement camps have long sponsored programs that were carefully designed to embody the particular vision of “Jewish” embraced by their sponsoring movement. Yet many non-movement camps offered very general programs in which Jewish elements were in the background. Today, by contrast, camps are becoming much more thoughtful about what kind of Jewish atmosphere they intend to create, what kind of Jewish program they mean to offer, and what kind of Jewish education they seek to impart, with the result that camps are becoming much clearer about their Jewish goals, and much better at achieving them.
- ★ **Population movement**—Over the past 10-15 years, the growth of Jewish camps has very gradually begun to follow the migrations of the Jewish population. The result is that the number of camp beds has been growing, especially in the Southeast and on the West coast.
- ★ **Non-traditional sites**—As noted above, new Jewish camps are increasingly being established on rented sites that for most of the year serve other purposes, such as the campuses of colleges or boarding schools. This trend reflects the very high costs—often in the tens of millions of dollars—presently associated with constructing a new camp from scratch, converting an existing camp to new use, and maintaining camp facilities that are not used year-round.

## MAJOR PLAYERS AND THEIR ROLES

The final section of this chapter describes two agencies which play major roles in the field of Jewish camp, in the sense that (a) their operation has materially helped the field to grow and to coalesce, and (b) that they are active operators of programs which benefit camps across the field. These agencies are the Foundation for Jewish Camp, and JCamp180, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Other agencies are “major players” in the Jewish camp world, in the sense that without their long-time, generous, and thoughtful philanthropic support the field would not be what it is today. The earliest major investor in the field of Jewish camp was The AVI CHAI Foundation, which has made the field of Jewish camp one of the two pillars of its philanthropy for nearly a decade and a half. More recently, the Jim Joseph Foundation has made extraordinary investments in the arena of Jewish camp. However, neither AVI CHAI nor Jim Joseph nor other very significant funders operate programming in the Jewish camp world, and so they won’t be the focus of our attention here.

### Foundation for Jewish Camp

The Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) was established in 1998 by two visionary, entrepreneurial philanthropists, Robert Bildner and Elisa Spungen Bildner, for the purpose of catalyzing the growth of the Jewish camp field. They perceived that the great potential of Jewish camp to build Jewish identity and commitment in thousands of young people remained largely untapped.<sup>35</sup>

Nearly two decades later, FJC continues to believe that “summers at Jewish overnight camp build strong Jewish identities.” Accordingly, “the Foundation for Jewish Camp elevates and supports the field by developing inspiring camp leaders, expanding access to meaningful summer experiences, and strengthening camps throughout North America.”<sup>36</sup>

Here is how FJC describes its mission and vision:<sup>37</sup>

Mission:

To build a strong Jewish future through transformational Jewish summers.

FJC believes passionately:

- ★ **Jewish camp is the key to the Jewish future.** Sending young people to Jewish camp connects them to each other and to their Jewishness—and creates the next generation of Jewish leaders.
- ★ **Jewish camp must be inclusive.** In our diverse and rapidly changing world, it is important to serve every kind of Jewish youth, every kind of Jewish camp and summer experience, and every kind of Jewish community.

35 In the interest of full disclosure, the author of this book had the privilege to serve as the founding Executive Director of FJC for the agency’s first six years, from 1998-2004.

36 Taken from the “What We Do” section of FJC website at [www.jewishcamp.org](http://www.jewishcamp.org).

37 This language was provided in February 2016 by FJC’s CEO and its director of marketing and communications, who say that it is soon to be posted to [www.jewishcamp.org/mission-vision](http://www.jewishcamp.org/mission-vision).

- ★ **Jewish camp is a business, and is managed by professionals.** It is a genuine field, managed by trained professionals according to best business practices.
- ★ **“Jewishness” will sustain Judaism.** By building a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, culture and tradition, we will ensure the Jewish future.

Today, FJC is one of the central addresses for the field of Jewish camp. It offers the field a sense of unity, raises awareness about the benefits of camp within the Jewish public, serves as the principal advocate for Jewish camp in the Jewish and public arenas, and collects and shares key data important to the growth of the field.

FJC is also a critical resource for funders. Its personnel are available to help funders find the appropriate outlet to accomplish the goals they have identified within the field of Jewish camp. FJC also works closely with many Jewish Federations on their Jewish camp initiatives.<sup>38</sup> FJC has historically served as an able partner, enabling the implementation of funders’ personal vision.

FJC strives to fulfill its mission by pursuing three strategies: leadership development, Jewish impact, and field expansion. Again, the agency’s website provides a clear statement of what this means:<sup>39</sup>

- ★ **Leadership Development**—Successful camps require talented and passionate leaders—both lay and professional. Through innovative training programs and consistent support we sustain key talent, nurture the next generation of leaders, ensure the long-term success of our camps, and sustain the field of Jewish camp.
- ★ **Jewish Impact**—Quality Jewish summer experiences allow campers to explore what it means to be Jewish and become something meaningful that will follow them throughout their lives. Strengthening the quality and depth of Jewish content, including Israeli culture and Hebrew at camps are significant components that drive and reinforce the role of camp as an important experiential Jewish educational platform.
- ★ **Field Expansion**—More campers participating in Jewish summer experiences will lead to a vibrant Jewish community in the future. Developing new opportunities that attract untapped potential campers will expand the impact of Jewish camp to the broader community reflecting our diversity. We extend our attention to provide support and direction to day camps and a wider range of immersive, experiential summer opportunities for Jewish youth and teens across North America.

In fulfillment of these strategies, FJC supports the development of leaders at every level, from camp directors to assistant directors to lay leadership to cabin counselors.<sup>40</sup> It offers several programs to help camps clarify and more strongly realize their Jewish mission. Its new camp incubator and accelerator programs have catalyzed the creation of more than a dozen new Jewish

<sup>38</sup> For further detail, see chapter 7 below.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> For further detail, see Chapter 8 below.

overnight and day camps. Its *One Happy Camper* incentive program has brought many thousands of new campers into the orbit of Jewish camp.

FJC also sponsors Camper Satisfaction Insights (CSI), which provides camps with a detailed look at what parents and campers really think of everything—from programming to pricing, to safety and food. This in-depth market research tool helps camps pinpoint strengths and weaknesses according to respondents' feedback. By revealing potential areas for improvement, CSI helps camp management to identify actions that will help managers better serve parents, campers, and their own budgets. Since its inception in 2006, CSI has gathered parent satisfaction data from over 75,000 camper experiences, allowing them to see clear and distinct trends on eight dimensions measured over time.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to continuing its many successful programs, FJC intends in the future to expand its offerings in a number of new directions. These include:

- ★ Engaging earlier with families with young children, especially by increased attention to the arena of day camps.
- ★ Encouraging camps' engagement of teens, by continuing to develop specialty camps that respond to their diverse needs, and by working increasingly with teen programs outside the traditional definition of "camp."
- ★ Attracting and retaining the thousands of college-aged youth who serve as staff at Jewish camps.
- ★ Expanding camps' diversity and inclusivity through outreach to significant underserved populations, such as children of interfaith families; children of Russian-speaking Jewish families; children of Israelis in North America; children of the LGBT community; and children with disabilities.
- ★ Addressing the affordability of the Jewish summer camp experience.

Readers with whom the above priority directions resonate are encouraged to contact FJC to determine how they can contribute in ways best aligned with their own philanthropic interests.

## JCamp180

Influenced by research indicating that Jewish overnight camping plays a key role in the Jewish identity of young people, philanthropist Harold Grinspoon and his foundation created the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy (GIJP) in 2004.<sup>42</sup> Eight years later, GIJP was renamed JCamp180.<sup>43</sup> JCamp180's stated mission is to enhance the long-term effectiveness of organizations that engage young people in meaningful Jewish cultural and educational experiences. Since its inception, JCamp180 has focused its efforts on helping camps in the areas of:

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<sup>41</sup> See [www.jewishcamp.org/camper-satisfaction-insights](http://www.jewishcamp.org/camper-satisfaction-insights).

<sup>42</sup> According to the organization's website: [www.jcamp180.org/about-the-institute/history.aspx](http://www.jcamp180.org/about-the-institute/history.aspx).

<sup>43</sup> Chapter 4 below takes a detailed look at JCamp180.

- ★ **Board development and governance**—JCamp180 provides management consultants (called mentors) who work with the camp lay leadership to assure board make-up and responsibilities are defined and in practice;
- ★ **Strategic planning**—JCamp180 personnel guide leadership teams through a process that identifies and achieves advancements in facilities, budgeting, marketing, financial development, governance, enrollment, board development, daily operations, programming and staff development.
- ★ **Organizing for sustained financial support**—Understanding that most camps have infrastructures that require ongoing support, JCamp180 focuses camp boards on the development of financial support to supplement camper tuition.

In fulfillment of these strategies, JCamp180 offers programs that include: training for fundraising personnel; the solicitation of endowment funds; technology and support that tracks and engages alumni and other donors; and challenge grants to encourage philanthropic support. Through its 20 matching grant programs, JCamp180 has enabled camps to raise tens of millions of dollars from local donors, obtaining leverage of nearly six-to-one on the direct contributions of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As a participating partner of the FJC's *One Happy Camper* program, JCamp180 has also supported hundreds of first-time campers in each of the last seven years.

Over more than a decade, the number of JCamp180's constituents has grown from 12 overnight camps to 114 day and overnight camps. It has had a palpable impact on the ways that Jewish camps manage their affairs, raise their funds, and mobilize their lay leaders. This has led to substantial organizational growth across the field.

## Others

The camping movements, as mentioned earlier, play an influential role for their affiliated camps. This role varies from movement to movement, and may include joint staff hiring, staff training (described in more detail below, Chapter 8), procurement, and much more.

# Part II

## Approaches to funding Jewish camp

Part I of this book, comprised of the two preceding chapters, provided general background about the field of Jewish camps. Chapter 1 explained why Jewish camps matter, and why a funder might choose to care about this field. Chapter 2 set forth the main guideposts to help a funder understand the lay of the land in the Jewish camping field. Now we get to the heart of the matter: how funders can make a difference in this field.



# 3 General considerations about funding Jewish camp

Our children love the ruach at camp. We live in an area that is not predominantly Jewish so the biggest strength that camp has for them is that for 3 weeks every year, they don't have to THINK about who they are. They can just BE who they are.

Parent  
Camp Hess Kramer, California

We are grateful to camp for giving our daughter a safe, fun, nurturing place to get away from her everyday stresses during the other 11 months of the year, a place where she can totally be herself, leave behind her electronics and enjoy nature, friends, and folk dancing (her favorite).

Parent  
Camp Louise, Maryland

Camp was profoundly life-changing. It was my first experience of community as extended family, and has never quite been duplicated. Camp secured my attachment to Judaism.

Anonymous Alumnus



Before turning to a one-by-one examination of the major categories of potential funding in the field of Jewish camp, we begin with a brief discussion of a few general considerations of which any funder in this field would want to be aware:

1. There are several different approaches to how a funder might opt to make a difference.
2. There is a pressing need for more research in the field of Jewish camp.
3. Significant funders are in the process of “sunsetting.”

## DIFFERING APPROACHES TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Funders can influence the field of Jewish camps in at least four types of arenas: field-wide; through a specific movement or organization; through a single camp or geographic cluster; or based on a particular topic or theme.

### Field-Wide Funding

There are some funders who may wish to extend their generosity and their influence across the entirety of the field.

As noted above, the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) operates numerous initiatives in each of its three areas of strategic priority: leadership development, Jewish impact, and field expansion.

FJC is a public foundation, whose funding and ability to operate is provided through the generosity of both its lay leaders and funders. For each of its initiatives, FJC partners with one or more major funder who provides the resources to operate the initiative. At any time, FJC has a pipeline of projects in development, each of which is in need of funding.

A funder eager to make an impact across the field would be well advised to connect with the Foundation for Jewish Camp, to explore whether any of the existing projects or projects in the pipeline match the funder’s priorities and interests. At a minimum, FJC will offer consultation to funders to help clarify their interests in the field of Jewish camp, and match them with an appropriate project, agency, or outlet.

Funders can support the field of Jewish camp as a whole, moreover, by supporting FJC itself.

### Movement-Wide Funding

Many funders hold personal affinity with at least one of the Jewish movements or denominations, and choose to make a difference through their chosen movement. Examples of movement-wide programming that have been created and might be supported in this way include the Louis and Shoshana Winer Institute for Division Heads and the Bert B. Weinstein Institute for Counselor

Training,<sup>44</sup> both of which operate across all the camps of the Ramah (Conservative) movement; or the Olim Fellowship for first- and second-year counselors<sup>45</sup> which operates across at least five of the camps of the URJ (Reform) movement.

The leadership of any of the Jewish camp movements or sponsoring organizations would be happy to discuss relevant opportunities with interested funders.<sup>46</sup>

## Single-Camp or Geographic Area Funding

Many funders prefer to direct their funding to an individual camp, either because they are themselves alumni, or because a member of their families are, or for some other reason. Virtually every not-for-profit Jewish camp has a list of funding needs, ranging from scholarship assistance to capital expansion to programmatic excellence to leadership development. Funding inquiries are best directed to the camp director or board leadership of each camp.

Other funders, while they have no special affinity for any particular camp, prefer to focus their philanthropy on the geographic area(s) where they or members of their family live. The Springfield, MA based Harold Grinspoon Foundation, for example,<sup>47</sup> has been providing campership funds to children from Western Massachusetts for the last twenty years. Through the Foundation for Jewish Camp's *One Happy Camper* program, some forty Jewish Federations have local camping initiatives which work in their local areas. The Tour de Summer Camps, a bike tour initiated by the Los Angeles area lay leader Rodney Freeman and sponsored by the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, also located in Los Angeles, raises funds to meet the scholarship and incentive needs of nine camps in the Los Angeles area.<sup>48</sup>

## Theme-Based Funding

Most funders opt either to make a difference field-wide, to fund across a movement, or to fund in a single geographic area or a single camp. But other funders focus on a particular programmatic theme, and are interested in funding growth in camps related to that theme, regardless of where the camps are or who sponsors them.

The Gottesman Fund, for example, several years ago created the Gottesman Camp Waterfront Improvement Program. A significant number of Jewish camps had seen the beauty and usefulness of their lakes and lakefronts adversely impacted by environmental factors. This initiative helped those camps to improve or expand their lake infrastructures.<sup>49</sup> In creating this

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<sup>44</sup> [www.campramah.org/content/staff/nrcleadershipdevelopment.php](http://www.campramah.org/content/staff/nrcleadershipdevelopment.php).

<sup>45</sup> The 2013 iteration of the program is described at [www.urj.org/about/union/pr/2013/?syspage=article&item\\_id=102621&printable=1](http://www.urj.org/about/union/pr/2013/?syspage=article&item_id=102621&printable=1). The program is discussed in slightly more detail in Chapter 9 below.

<sup>46</sup> The principal movements and sponsoring organizations in the Jewish camp field, together with the websites which include the movements' contact information, are listed in Chapter 2 above.

<sup>47</sup> Discussed above in Chapter 2 and in greater detail below, in Chapter 4.

<sup>48</sup> Tour de Summer Camps is described in a case study in Chapter 6 below.

<sup>49</sup> For more information, see [www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/Gottesman%20Waterfront%20press%20release%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/Gottesman%20Waterfront%20press%20release%20FINAL.pdf).

program, the Gottesman Fund worked with the Foundation for Jewish Camp, which served as program administrator.

Another form of theme-based funding is cohort based challenge grants. Administered through the JCamp180 program, cohort based challenge grants allow potential funders to reach a number of camps while multiplying the impact of their contributions through a challenge grant program. Independent funders can expand the impact or frequency of JCamp180 challenge grants by partnering with JCamp180. On average, funds directed through these program are multiplied 5:1 from local donors.

The FJC Ruderman Inclusion Initiative, to take another example, enables selected camps to hire and train new inclusion coordinators in order to increase the number of children with disabilities participating in their camps and to provide intensive in-person training and mentorship from FJC. The initiative was created at the instigation of the Ruderman Family Foundation,<sup>50</sup> later joined in sponsorship of this program by the Stanford and Joan Alexander Foundation. The initiative supplements the Ruderman Foundation's support of the Ramah camps' longstanding Tikvah inclusion program for children with disabilities.

Similarly, the Marcus Foundation created a Bunk Expansion Initiative which in 2011 and 2012 provided matching grants for camps whose directors were graduates of FJC's ELI (Executive Leadership Institute) program,<sup>51</sup> enabling them to add bunk space to build their camps' capacity. The initiative enabled the creation of more than 300 beds, permitting at least 600 new campers to attend Jewish camp each summer.

More recently, the Robert M. Beren Foundation and the Israel Henry Beren Charitable Trust created the Beren Sports Facilities Initiative, which funded new athletic facilities in several Jewish overnight camps. The Larry and Lillian Goodman Foundation supported the expansion of Israel education in camps throughout North America.

The PJ Our Way program is another example of a theme-based philanthropic opportunity. PJ Our Way is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that extends the popular PJ Library book-based Jewish engagement program to the 9–11 year old cohort. During the summer of 2015, JCamp180 piloted a program to bring PJ Our Way to summer camp. Counselors and campers each were provided with a PJ Our Way book, and the camps offered programming that used the book as a starting point to further Jewish engagement. JCamp180 has offered this program, *PJ Our Way in Camp*, to overnight camps for the 2016 season, and as of this writing, 51 camps have signed up.

In all of the above examples, the participating camps were chosen across a broad geographic spectrum, and without regard for movement affiliation or sponsorship.

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<sup>50</sup> For more information, see [www.jewishcamp.org/fjc-ruderman-inclusion-initiative](http://www.jewishcamp.org/fjc-ruderman-inclusion-initiative).

<sup>51</sup> For information on ELI, see Chapter 8 below.

## Camp Incentive Grants<sup>52</sup>

As noted previously, only about 13% of Jewish children in North America attend a not-for-profit Jewish overnight camp in any given summer. To lower the barrier of entry, FJC initiated the *One Happy Camper* program in 2006, through the generosity of an anonymous donor. Over the past ten years this program has awarded first-time campership grants to over 64,000 children throughout North America. Their surveys show that at least 62% of these children would not have attended these camps without this support. The same surveys show that 82% of children who receive these grants return to camp the next year.

The *One Happy Camper* program is initiated as a matching grant to local communities and other supporters. The program requires these agencies to gradually increase the proportion through which the initiative is locally funded. As most of these agencies are local Jewish Federations, support of the *One Happy Camper* or other local campership program offer donors an opportunity to have direct impact on individual campers.

## THE NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH

While Jewish camps have been a part of the landscape for more than a hundred years, camping as a “field” in the Jewish community has been the focus of attention since only (in rough terms) the start of the twenty-first century. The first serious academic study of Jewish camp field (beyond a single camp or a single movement) appeared in 2002.<sup>53</sup> The Camp Works study was published nearly a decade later.<sup>54</sup> While there is much that we know about Jewish camp, there is also much that we do not yet know, and there is a pressing need for more serious research in the field.

We do not know, for example, how much exposure to Jewish camp a child needs in order to attain the benefits to Jewish identity that Jewish camp can provide. The existing research that found strong outcomes from Jewish camp was based largely on a seven- or eight-week camp session. From an educational perspective, is there any such thing as an “optimal” session length? How many summers? How much is enough to make an impact?

The Consortium for the Applied Study of Jewish Education (CASJE), an evolving community of researchers, practitioners, and philanthropic leaders dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide the work of Jewish education, has taken up the task of formulating questions for research related to Jewish camp. According to the CASJE website, “*in partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Camp, CASJE is exploring how research can best be used to advance the field of experiential education at camp and understand the impact of camp*

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<sup>52</sup> This topic is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7 below.

<sup>53</sup> This was Sales and Saxe, *Op. cit.*, *Limud by the Lake*, discussed in Chapter 1 above.

<sup>54</sup> Cohen, Miller, Sheskin and Torr, *Op. cit.*, also discussed in Chapter 1.

*on the Jewish lives of campers and counselors. We held a Problem Formulation Convening in January 2015, with a larger program of research intended to follow.”<sup>55</sup>*

CASJE, in other words, will work with FJC to identify significant topics for research. It will also, in all likelihood, have the wherewithal to attract appropriate researchers who are interested in exploring these topics. All that will be needed will be the requisite funding to make it happen. Funders can address their inquiries to FJC.

## SUNSETTING FUNDERS

Any philanthropist must confront a fundamental decision: do I organize my assets so that they leave an enduring legacy and make a permanent mark, or do I spend assets more quickly in order to have an impact that is much deeper and larger, though also more time-limited? At least two major Jewish philanthropies—the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and The AVI CHAI Foundation—have chosen the latter course. These philanthropies are in the process of “sunsetting,” or spending down their assets in a planned and orderly process of going out of business.<sup>56</sup>

As noted above,<sup>57</sup> The AVI CHAI Foundation, in particular, has worked in close partnership with FJC to enable projects that focus on enhancing the Jewish impact of Jewish camps, including, but not limited to, programs on enhancing leadership development. As AVI CHAI approaches the planned conclusion of its grant making, scheduled for the end of 2019, it is eager to find partners who will continue the work that it initiated and enabled for many years. For others who have similar interests in enhancing the summer’s Jewish experience, there is perhaps much to learn from the successes and challenges experienced by a funder that began working in the field many years ago.

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<sup>55</sup> [www.casje.org/focus/jewish-experiential-education-camp](http://www.casje.org/focus/jewish-experiential-education-camp).

<sup>56</sup> See Joel L. Fleishman, *New Uncertainties—and Opportunities—as the End Approaches: Year Six Report on the Concluding Years of The AVI CHAI Foundation*, Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, July 2015; available at [www.cspcs.sanford.duke.edu/sites/default/files/Fleishman%206th%20Report%20-%202014.pdf](http://www.cspcs.sanford.duke.edu/sites/default/files/Fleishman%206th%20Report%20-%202014.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> In Chapter 2.

# Section A

## Growing camps' capacity

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As described above in Chapter 1, studies demonstrate that Jewish camp works as a powerful, effective, and joyous means to build Jewish identity and Jewish commitment in a growing generation of younger Jews. The first comprehensive, academic studies of the field of Jewish camp, *Limud by the Lake*, and the subsequent follow up, *Limud by the Lake Revisited*, generated the two major findings which have guided the agenda of the Jewish camp field since the first study's publication in 2002: first, the need to expand the Jewish camp system's capacity in order to give more children the opportunity to grow through a Jewish camp experience; and second, the opportunity to capitalize on missed opportunities in order to make the "product" of Jewish camp even stronger.<sup>58</sup>

The next several chapters will focus on the first of these two priorities: expanding the number of children in Jewish camps—or, as some say, putting increasing numbers of "heads in beds."

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<sup>58</sup> Sales and Saxe, *Limud by the Lake*, Op. cit., and Sales, Samuel and Boxer, *Limud by the Lake Revisited*, Op. cit.



# 4 Organizational sustainability

Spending my teenage years at Jewish camp solidified my identity as a Jew and my engagement with my synagogue and community. My Jewish camp experience strengthened my commitment to serve and work for the community and Israel.

Mark S. Anshan  
Attorney, synagogue movement leader,  
and camp alumnus



As a camper, I LOVED being in Jewish summer camp. But I don't think it was until years later that I understood how formative my experience was for the rest of my life. My context for being Jewish is entirely grounded in my experience at camp—how I celebrate, how I digest news, even how I relate to other people. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had that experience—for the incredible friendships and for the life lessons that I learned there.

Anonymous camp alumnus

All three children had an amazing, invaluable experience this summer. As for me, I realized rather quickly that 30 years later, I still love camp as much I did as a kid! It was a great summer.

Parent  
Camp Ramah Darom, Georgia



## INTRODUCTION

An important first step in the critical work of growing the field of Jewish camp is to ensure that camps are sound, effective and sustainable enterprises. At the turn of the twenty-first century, this was far too rarely the case.

Stripped down to their essence, Jewish camps are small businesses. Driven by altruistic and educational purposes, camps focus intently on their missions: growing children into responsible, resilient, creative human beings, and fostering their Jewish development. Camp professionals often bring both passion and professional training in such fields as social work, Jewish education, and recreation. For a long time, far too few had the qualifications to ensure the success of the business side of their operations.

As a result, most camps in the not-distant past were run like mom-and-pop shops, with a casualness that belied the fact that many were operating complex facilities with dozens of buildings, hundreds of employees, and budgets in the millions of dollars.

“Deferred maintenance”—a euphemism that obscured the fact that planning for the upkeep of facilities was non-existent—was more often the rule than the exception. Camps did little or no fundraising to meet current or future needs. Pecuniary activity of that sort was regarded as far outside their purview. Too many camps managed to run successful, impactful programs, despite physical plants that were run-down and decaying.

There was a sense that camps had always operated successfully on sub-standard facilities, would continue somehow to manage to continue to do so, and indeed, that nothing else was possible or even desirable.

And then Harold Grinspoon got involved.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

Grinspoon, a real-estate entrepreneur, brought his business acumen to the field of Jewish camp, confident that the some of the same principles that drove his success in business would positively impact the field of Jewish camp.

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation has been supporting and promoting Jewish camp for the past 20 years. Starting in 1995, the foundation began providing non-needs based camp incentives to children in its geographic area, funding it still provides. In 2004, it expanded the scope of its investment, focusing on building the capacity of camps, beginning with a small cohort of twelve Jewish overnight camps, most of which were local to its home geographic area of Springfield, MA. The Foundation’s work in the Jewish camp field was centralized in the Grinspoon Institute of

Jewish Philanthropy (GIJP), later rebranded as JCamp180. The initial mandate of the Grinspoon camp programs was to stimulate Jewish philanthropy by providing free consulting services and grant-making opportunities to non-profit Jewish overnight camps. Today, JCamp180 programs and services have grown to include:

- ★ Consultation to camp lay people and professional leaders.
- ★ Matching challenge grants for participating camps, mainly for capital construction.
- ★ Technology and social media support and training for outreach to alumni and other potential donors, together with training for other specialized areas of camp leadership.
- ★ Conferences to promote networking and learning across the field.
- ★ Training for selected camps to promote legacy giving.

JCamp180's services are made available to camps which have been admitted to participation in the program. Interested camps contact JCamp180 directly, and are guided through the application process. As of the autumn of 2015, 114 camps, including 91 overnight camps and 25 day camps, participate in the JCamp180 program.

## Consulting

Once a camp is admitted into the JCamp180 program, it is assigned a “mentor” from the program's stable of nearly a dozen consultants. The mentor works collaboratively with the camp's top leadership team, including its director and board leadership, on areas related to governance, strategic planning, fundraising, and technology.

- ★ **Governance**—Helping to ensure that the lay leaders who carry responsibility for ownership and supervision of the camp have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and prerogatives, and are appropriately organized to maximize effectiveness, within a context of respect for the camp's history and traditions.
- ★ **Strategic planning**—Working with the camp's key stakeholders to develop a clear sense of the camp's mission and vision for where they want camp to be at various mile markers in the future. This strategic planning function might touch on such aspects as facility development, benchmarks for financial sustainability, enrollment targets, programming growth, and more.
- ★ **Fundraising**—Guiding the camp's leaders to embrace a culture of fundraising, and to work together with stakeholders to develop the financial resources required to meet planning goals. Depending on the camp's circumstances, this might include development of an annual fund, a capital campaign, a legacy giving program, and so on.
- ★ **Technology**—Assisting the camp in assessing whether it has the appropriate management tools in place to track alumni and donors, to drive fundraising, to manage enrollment, and to keep health and other records for current campers.

## Challenge Grants

JCamp180 encourages a culture of fundraising in its constituent camps, and assists in that fundraising by making direct grants to participating camps that are undertaking capital projects—generally for expansion or for upgrading facilities. The formula for such challenge grants varies according to how long camps have participated in the program, and guidelines change from time to time.

A program called Create Your Match, for example,<sup>59</sup> is currently in its sixth iteration. This is a two-stage matching program that offers participating camps \$75,000 of the Foundation's funds if they raise \$375,000 from a prescribed balance of both larger (\$25,000) and smaller (\$3,600) individual donors. Thus, a camp that completes the program successfully will generate up to \$450,000 in new funding, leveraged from a JCamp180 contribution of \$75,000. This both generates significant new funding and utilizes the challenge to help the camp become accustomed to, and adept at, fundraising. Additionally, this and other JCamp180 programs encourage the creation of a pattern of giving by participating donors.

## Technology and Specialized Trainings

One of the fundamental facts in the field of camping in general – true as well of Jewish camps – is that the overwhelming majority of kids love their camp experience. Camps therefore benefit from a tremendous reservoir of good will, an exceedingly valuable asset in terms of fundraising and maintaining a powerful stream of ongoing support.

The catch is that, until recently, most camps made little effort to keep track of their alumni. Many of today's adults who are camp alumni went to camp before the computer era. Camp rosters were mimeographed documents. Families moved. Children grew up and moved away from their parents. Growing families may have changed addresses several times. Alumni are not so easy to keep up with.

The challenge, which applies equally to schools, colleges, and other organizations, has attracted multiple technological solutions. To address these needs and opportunities, JCamp180 helps participating camps with:<sup>60</sup>

- ★ Determining appropriate software solutions
- ★ Planning for collection and maintenance of alumni, donor, and gift data
- ★ Understanding best practices in alumni and fundraising technology for the purpose of tracking alumni and driving financial resource development.

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<sup>59</sup> [www.jcamp180.org/current-participants/matching-grants/create-your-match-6.aspx](http://www.jcamp180.org/current-participants/matching-grants/create-your-match-6.aspx).

<sup>60</sup> [www.jcamp180.org/about-the-institute/services/technology.aspx](http://www.jcamp180.org/about-the-institute/services/technology.aspx).

Additionally, JCamp180 provides periodic trainings for specialized niches in the camp development world. These have included:

- ★ Training for camp development directors
- ★ Training in use of social media
- ★ Training to find and engage “lost” alumni

## Conferences

To promote networking, learning and exposure to best practices, JCamp180 holds an annual conference for camp lay and professional leaders. Conferences seek to address camp-related themes and topics of high interest and impact. The annual conferences take place in early November in the Springfield, MA area. Representatives—both lay and professional—of camps which are JCamp180 constituents are invited to participate in the conference with no registration fee. The program and meals are provided at no cost to participants, who are responsible only for their travel and hotel costs.

## LEGACY

In 2008, JCamp180 created the Camp Legacy Initiative, inspired by Gail Littman z”l, then of the San Diego Jewish Community Foundation. The initiative motivates Jewish summer camps to secure legacy gifts from loyal donors. In its first two years, the Camp Legacy initiative was financially supported by the Areivim Philanthropic Group.

At the time of this writing, 54 camps across North America participate in the Camp Legacy Initiative. Cumulatively, they have received some 3,400 individual and family legacy pledges valued at \$74 million.

The Camp Legacy Initiative provides participating camps with:

- ★ Coaching and training of lay and staff leadership teams on planned giving tools and solicitation approaches
- ★ Helping camps create legacy giving action plans, and set goals
- ★ Sourcing for educational information, and assistance with marketing and outreach
- ★ Funding of incentive grants upon completion of mutually agreed goals for donor conversations and donor legacy pledges per year
- ★ Travel funding for team members to attend trainings.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> [www.jcamp180.org/About-the-Institute/Services/Legacy-Programs/1-For-Camps.aspx](http://www.jcamp180.org/About-the-Institute/Services/Legacy-Programs/1-For-Camps.aspx).

## CHALLENGES

No initiative comes without its challenges. The initiatives of JCamp180 have brought business-like thinking to the world of Jewish camps, and they have helped to reorient the field to expect that that camps operate with sound, sustainable business models. In so doing, they have helped to grow and upgrade the facilities of dozens of camps, and have generated a culture of fundraising which helps camps to reach and stay at the cutting edge of the field.

1. This strategic vision involves tremendous culture change, sometimes on the part of professionals, sometimes on the part of boards, and often on the part of both. No change comes without resistance, and a key challenge has come from the many constituents of every camp who liked things just as they always were, and who resist leaving the old ways behind, fearful that with change, their beloved camp will lose its character.
2. Many camps join JCamp180, at least initially, lured by the attraction of direct monetary grants. They soon learn that in order to participate, they need to do their homework. The JCamp180 challenge grant programs, like the one described above on p. 35, require buy-in by camp leadership at many levels, and require diligence to fulfill. It is not uncommon for camps to threaten (at least in settings in which directors gripe to one another) to withdraw from the programs because of their complexity. But few, if any, have actually done so.

## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

JCamp180 is a complex multi-million dollar operation. It is unlikely that a funder could match its range and scope. However, inspired by its example, there are a number of paths funders might take.

1. Matching funds: Funders might create a matching fund to incentivize capital construction and fundraising at the individual camp (or within the movement) of their choice. Alternatively, a funder might choose to support JCamp180 matching grant programs to encourage their growth in frequency or funding.
2. Consultation and mentoring: JCamp180 provides mentors who work in the arena of strategic planning. Funders might choose an area of camp life about which they are passionate (programming; education; waterfront; etc.) and provide mentoring to the camp(s) of their choice in the selected area.
3. Specialized programs: JCamp180 provides trainings for development directors and alumni outreach. Funders might choose to underwrite another critical need in one or more camps, or in the development of the fundraising capability of one or more camps. For example, funders could help a camp to hire a grant writer, or to purchase a needed software system.
4. Endowments: JCamp180 provides training and incentives to help camps solicit legacy gifts. Funders might opt to make a legacy gift to the camp or camps of their choice.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. JCamp180 programs help camps to enhance their organizational sustainability. In what direction do your interests, passions, and areas of expertise point? Are you interested in supporting camps at this level for the long term, or are you more interested in something that will pay more direct, obvious dividends?
2. The old adage says: "Give a person a fish, and she'll eat for a day; teach her how to fish, and she'll eat for a lifetime." JCamp180 programs teach camps "how to fish." This requires a large investment, and involves delayed gratification before the payout becomes visible. Do you have the patience and commitment to make this kind of gift? Or, again, would you find it more satisfying to contribute in a way that has a more immediate pay-off? Providing scholarship funds for a needy camper? Getting some campers to try a Jewish camp as their first camp experience?
3. If you like the JCamp180 model, are you interested in partnering with JCamp180? Funders can benefit from the opportunities that the JCamp180 model provides to leverage philanthropic investments through challenge grants.

# 5 Capital funding

Thanks to camp for providing a place where, for several weeks, my child is not "other" but rather is part of the majority (Jewish kids).

Parent  
B'nai B'rith (BB) Camp, Oregon



I am grateful to camp for creating an atmosphere of Jewish belonging and fun, where relationships trump affluence and campers can really relax and be themselves.

Parent  
Camp JCA Shalom, California

Our child has social problems at school, and the three weeks at camp every year are when she is most at ease and happy.

Parent  
Camp Miriam, British Columbia



## INTRODUCTION

Although relatively rare, there are times in the lifespan of almost every camp when significant capital funding is required. When, for example, a decision is made to start a new camp, significant funding is required to purchase the property and transform it from its previous use into a Jewish overnight camp. Beyond initial funding for a new camp, an infusion of capital funding may be indicated for one or more of the following reasons:

- ★ **To enable growth.** Sometimes the demand for registration at a camp outstrips the facility's capacity. Occasionally, the solution to such a (generally welcome) challenge is as simple as adding one or more bunks. More often, expansion includes adding not only bed space, but also expanding the larger infrastructure of the facility. This may include the dining hall, the swimming pool, and sometimes even the water and septic systems.
- ★ **To make the facility more attractive and competitive.** Sometimes a camp can lose its competitive edge when its facility begins to appear worn and frayed at the edges. A first-class facility not only encourages first-class programming; it also creates a first-class impression and makes camp more marketable.
- ★ **To solve facility challenges.** Sometimes a facility's limitations are mainly visible to those who run programs there. Depending on the climate, this could include a lack of sufficient indoor space in which to handle rainy-day programming; or to afford shade from the sun; or to serve in severe weather as a storm shelter; and the like. It could entail resolving issues with zoning or other regulatory compliance. It could include grading some land to serve as a ballfield where the topography is hilly; acquiring property to provide lakefront access; or constructing a swimming pool if none exists.
- ★ **To make the facility accessible to those with disabilities.** Camps increasingly seek to be inclusive, and more and more are adding accessibility to the list of priorities for their facilities.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

### Interest-Free Loans

The Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) administers an interest-free building loan program to help nonprofit camps attract and accommodate more campers. The program builds on the success of The AVI CHAI Camp Building Loan Program.<sup>62</sup> Qualified residential nonprofit Jewish camps are

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<sup>62</sup> Formerly offered by The AVI CHAI Foundation. The AVI CHAI program has been closed to new applications due to the planned forthcoming "sunsetting" of The AVI CHAI Foundation. While active, The AVI CHAI building loan program provided \$27 million in loans to camps, and enabled or accelerated construction and expansion projects totaling \$112 million. During the course of the program, 36 camp building loans were made to 27 camps, an average of five loans per year and an average loan amount of \$600,000. Over a third of these camps received two loans, which were used for construction or expansion projects. The loan program helped purchase sites for 3 new camps in geographic areas that were previously underserved and enabled construction of the following: new or upgraded bunks for campers and staff at 18 camps; six indoor activity buildings; five dining halls; four swimming pools or waterfront upgrades; three arts and crafts centers; three sports centers; three infirmaries; two welcome centers; one camp administration building; and one drama center.



eligible for an FJC interest-free loan of up to 50% of their project cost, subject to the following maximum loan amounts: \$750,000 for camps with fewer than 250 campers, and \$1 million for camps with more than 250 campers.

The FJC Building Loan Program is intended for renovation and construction projects that expand camper capacity as well as for projects that upgrade accommodations or facilities. The program, administered by FJC, is funded by the Maimonides Fund.<sup>63</sup>

The FJC interest-free loan offers a useful tool to handle bridge funding during the course of a construction project. For at least two reasons, it is not a substitute for a capital campaign: (1) It is a loan, not a grant, and must be repaid within five years. Therefore, the recipient camp still needs to develop its own sources to fund its construction projects. (2) The FJC loan program is capped at either 50% of a project's cost or \$1 million, whichever is less. Most capital campaigns seek to raise significantly more than this \$1 million ceiling. Again, this means that the interest-free loan cannot by itself substitute for a capital campaign.

## Support for Camp Initiatives that Don't Involve Capital Construction

Some camps operate, by design or by necessity, on leased facilities. Some camps, particularly in the West, lease their property from the United States Forest Service. Others, especially those which were created through the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Specialty Camps Incubator,<sup>64</sup> rent facilities which belong to such hosts as colleges and universities.

Operating on a leased site has the great advantage of eliminating the need for major capital funding, both at the beginning of a camp's existence and as the camp grows and matures. Conversely, it has the great disadvantage of severely limiting the extent to which a camp can determine the nature of the facility it occupies, or adapt it to the needs of a growing and changing camp.

While such camps do not have to contend with up-front construction costs, they do incur significant costs associated with providing the facilities they require for the program they seek to offer. While not the primary target of this chapter, these camps, too, are very often worthy targets of meaningful philanthropy.

## The Capital Campaign

A capital campaign is a major undertaking, and it is rarely quick or easy. Depending on the location, the size of the project, the current and proposed size of the camp and other variables, a camp capital campaign can entail tens of millions of dollars. When Camp JORI had outgrown

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<sup>63</sup> Additional information is available at [www.jewishcamp.org/buildingloan](http://www.jewishcamp.org/buildingloan).

<sup>64</sup> The Specialty Camps Incubator program requires a suitable site which is rented, not owned, and which does not require major capital funding to occupy. Additional information is available at [www.jewishcamp.org/node/1384](http://www.jewishcamp.org/node/1384).

the limits of its longtime home in Rhode Island and needed to relocate,<sup>65</sup> it mounted a \$7 million capital campaign.<sup>66</sup> Ramah Darom, opened in 1997, required a capital campaign in excess of \$25 million. Camp Moshava California has raised \$7.5 million to date, against a \$10 million goal to build out its new site.<sup>67</sup> URJ Camp Newman in California is presently in the midst of a capital campaign with a goal of \$30.7 million just for what is being described as Phase I.

If you are working with a camp that is considering starting a capital campaign, and the camp is a participant in the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's JCamp180 program,<sup>68</sup> consider consulting with the camp's JCamp180 mentor, who is likely to have extensive experience with capital campaigns. Additionally, JCamp180 camps may be eligible for matching grants for capital construction, under certain circumstances.

The camp should also determine whether its construction plans might be eligible for one of several programs that support the upgrading of camp facilities. These are generally administered through the Foundation for Jewish Camp.<sup>69</sup>

## Case Study: The URJ Camp Newman Capital Campaign

### Background

Located in Santa Rosa, CA, in Sonoma County, about 90 minutes by car from San Francisco, URJ Camp Newman is the Reform movement's camp serving Northern California. The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) purchased the facility and opened the camp in 1997 as the successor to the URJ's previous camp in the area, the much smaller URJ Camp Swig, in Saratoga, CA. When Camp Newman was acquired by the URJ, the facility had previously served as a cooking school for the merchant marine.

The illustrative story of the Camp Newman capital campaign starts with the camp's plan to construct a substantial deck to serve as additional programming space. The camp solicited a significant (high five-figure) gift from Daryl Messenger, who served as chair of the camp board, and her husband Jim Heeger. At a ceremony at camp to celebrate the gift and dedicate the new deck, Jim perceived a need for expansion and renovation at camp on a much larger scale. In concert with the camp's administration and board, he set out to frame the capital campaign.

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65 Built in 1909 on a 13-acre site in Narragansett, RI, JORI was originally an acronym for Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. The orphanage has long since gone out of business, but the camp remains one of the premier Jewish institutions in the state. In 2003, the camp moved from its original site to a 45-acre, lake-front site in Wakefield, RI.

66 Information provided in private correspondence with Ronni Gutin, who served for many years until recently as camp director.

67 Camp Moshava California was formerly known as Camp Moshava Malibu. The new site is in Running Springs, CA, in the San Bernardino Mountains. Information provided by Menachem Hecht, camp director, in private correspondence.

68 The JCamp180 program is described in considerable detail in Chapter 4 above.

69 Such programs currently exist for programs to expand bunk capacity, to upgrade waterfront facilities, and to expand or enhance sports facilities. These programs are briefly described in Chapter 3 under the heading "Theme-Based Funding."

## The Master Plan

A well-conceived capital campaign starts with a Master Plan that outlines the overall change envisioned for the camp. Ideally, it should be drafted by a qualified architect, following extensive consultation with the camp's stakeholders. The Master Plan asks and answers the question: what do we want our camp to be when it has grown to reach the potential we envision? After articulating desired outcomes, it specifies what capacities are required to attain those outcomes, and proceeds to what facilities are needed to enable those capacities.

Developing a Master Plan, which precedes the launch of a capital campaign, itself costs significant money. Developing a good Master Plan is likely to require an investment in the range of \$100,000-\$250,000 from a donor, the camp's sponsor, or an accrued surplus. This is not the place to cut corners.

In the case of URJ Camp Newman, developing the Master Plan involved a visioning process that extended for three to four years, and was guided, in part, by the camp's JCamp180 mentor. This process involved stakeholders at all levels: the camp's board and donors; the director; the campers' parents; members of the full-time, year-round staff; the seasonal (summer) staff, including bunk counselors; and the campers. Stakeholders, from the most significant donors to the youngest campers, were asked to imagine what Camp Newman would look like if it could be anything they wanted.

Once the ideas were gathered and culled, the architect worked with the camp's planning team to lay out how the envisioned changes would sit on the camp's site. The planning group identified four ideas which clearly rose to the level of being first priority:

- ★ Replacing the dining hall with a new facility that could accommodate the entire camp in a single seating
- ★ Constructing new offices and a new health center
- ★ Replacing the bulk of the camp's housing stock, including nine buildings, most of which were double cabins (housing two bunks each)
- ★ Greatly expanding the camp's ability to house retreat groups in the 40+ "off-season" weeks per year

These items were packaged to constitute "Phase I" of the capital campaign. In consultation with the architect, who had expertise in managing construction and who knew construction costs in the local area, the planning group put a price tag on this construction, which became the first goal of the capital campaign. In the case of URJ Camp Newman, this was \$30.7 million.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Experts with experience in institutional construction estimate that construction costs in California are roughly double what they would be elsewhere in the U.S. An atmosphere of intensive regulatory supervision, the need for careful attention to water rights and resources, and the requirement that buildings be built to earthquake-proof standards, together with some other locally-determined variables, combine to drive up construction costs there.

The camp's leadership, in concert with the architect, meanwhile brought the master plan to local authorities to assure that the plan as envisioned would comply with the various layers of local regulation.

## Planning the Campaign

In a large capital campaign, the common wisdom is that a small number of wealthy contributors will provide the bulk of the necessary funding. At Camp Newman, the planning group—led by Jim Heeger, Ruben Arquilevich (the camp director), and Ari Vared (director of advancement and year-round programs)—established the following table of required gifts, which is provided by way of illustration:<sup>71</sup>

Number of Gifts	Amount	Cumulative Total
1	\$5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
1	\$4,000,000	\$ 9,000,000
3	\$2,000,000	\$ 15,000,000
5	\$1,000,000	\$ 20,000,000
5	\$500,000	\$ 22,500,000
8	\$250,000	\$ 24,500,000
14	\$100,000	\$ 25,900,000
21	\$50,000	\$ 26,950,000
46	\$25,000	\$ 28,100,000
130	\$10,000	\$ 29,400,000
200	\$5,000	\$ 30,400,000
300	\$1,000	\$ 30,700,000

Working with the JCamp180 mentor, the leadership team set out to identify potential donors, prepare the fundraising narrative, and implement a multi-year development plan.

## Developing the Narrative

Once the Master Plan is in place, so that the camp knows what it wants to accomplish, and once the campaign plan is in place, so that you have an idea (subject to revision as the project proceeds) how the requisite funding might be assembled, it is time for the campaign team to develop the narrative that will accompany fundraising. At this stage, it is important to remember that while, for the planning group, this is all about facilities, for the potential donor, it's all about vision.

<sup>71</sup> This and much other information in this section was provided in the course of formal interviews with Jim Heeger (November 30, 2015) and Ari Vared (December 3, 2015).

The campaign needs to tell the story of why the camp is important to the community; of how the expanded and enhanced camp as envisioned will better serve the community; of what will be possible when the plan is complete that is not possible now. This is a time for language that expresses big thinking, big ideas, big vision.

In the case of URJ Camp Newman, two big ideas informed the narrative. One was that the campaign would enable the camp to more than double the number of people who were served. The second, which proved to be even more compelling to many potential donors, was that the campaign would enable the camp to develop into THE Jewish retreat center for Northern California.

By way of illustration, here's what the URJ Camp Newman campaign offered, in a chart from its literature under the title "Our Promise."

Today	Tomorrow
5,000 year-round participants	13,000 year-round participants
Youth-centered facility	Family, youth, school group & adult-appropriate facility
Limited program support	Onsite programmatic support (e.g., outdoor education)
26 ft <sup>2</sup> per participant	35 ft <sup>2</sup> per participant
1 ADA accessible building	Accessible & inclusive environment
27 retreats per year	68 retreats per year
1 retreat at a time	3 retreats at a time
Weekend only	Full-week programs

## Leadership

An effective capital campaign depends heavily on effective leaders who have vision, significant giving capacity, and the ability to call on contacts to join them. Leaders need to set the example by giving generously, so that they can ask others to "join me" in supporting this effort at an unprecedented level.

At URJ Camp Newman, Jim Heeger serves as campaign chair for the capital campaign. Prior to this campaign he and his wife Daryl Messinger had made significant charitable contributions, the largest of which was in the range of \$250,000. Because of their passion about Camp Newman, and because of how important they judged the camp and the campaign to be, they pledged a \$2 million gift, a pledge that surpassed their previous largest gifts by a factor of eight.

According to Ari Vared, the camp's director of advancement, if the lead donors are "reaching," that is, extending their giving beyond their comfort zone, they can ask other potential donors to join them in doing so.

## The Campaign

The campaign uses printed and digital materials, of course. But the bulk of what will happen results from person-to-person, face-to-face interactions. Campaign leaders should meet with stakeholders—alumni, parents, important community members, community agencies, foundations in the area, and more—who have significant giving capacity. They should explain the idea of the campaign, cultivate relationships, and ultimately solicit them, in person, and ideally, at camp. This allows donors to see themselves as partners in the success of the campaign, and in the success of the camp.

One of the surprising and welcome by-products of the Camp Newman capital campaign has been that the camp board has become a very popular board, on which people are eager to serve. Presently, Camp Newman has more well-qualified people who have asked to serve on its board than it can accommodate; there is, in effect, a waiting list.

A well-conducted solicitation for a major capital gift should offer the prospective donors (and not just the camp) an opportunity to "think big," to think about the values they care about, and to consider helping to build an institution that will embody those values.

The opportunity for naming gifts and other forms of recognition also plays a part in capital campaign strategy. The relative importance of this will vary considerably in accordance with the culture of the host institution and other factors. In the case of Camp Newman, only a relatively small handful of prospective donors—roughly one in six—have asked about naming opportunities or other recognition for their gifts.

It seems fitting, as a postscript to this section, to note how the Camp Newman campaign is doing to date (it is very much an ongoing campaign). As of early December 2015, about \$23 million has been pledged. Construction is presently underway, and of the 11 new buildings planned in Phase I of the capital campaign, 10 are expected to be complete in time for the summer of 2016 (all except the new dining hall).

## CHALLENGES

A camp's capital campaign involves many challenges:

- ★ First and foremost, it involves raising a great deal of money. This is challenging in the best of circumstances, and success requires a confluence of need, vision, leadership, and capacity.

- ★ Even in the best of circumstances, it can be very tricky to make the case for new construction without over-emphasizing the limitations of the current facility. Too much emphasis on the latter runs the risk of undermining registration, and hurting the camp.
- ★ A capital campaign has been described as “a marathon, not a sprint.” It takes a lot of work over the long haul. There is, accordingly, a great temptation to take shortcuts. These might include: trying to raise the funds before fully developing the vision; launching the campaign before determining that the community has the requisite financial capacity; building the vision before developing the requisite buy-in from key stakeholders. Any of these shortcuts can have disastrous results later on.

## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

Lay leaders in general, and funders in particular, play essential roles in developing capital funding for a camp at every stage and at every level. There is much that funders can do:

- ★ Provide leadership, guidance, and a funder’s eye to any capital funding project.
- ★ When a project is considered, help the institution to determine whether the project would benefit from FJC’s Building Loan Program. If so, spearhead the application process.
- ★ If the camp does not own its facility, help camp leadership to determine its capital needs, and to devise an appropriate way to raise the requisite funds.
- ★ If a capital campaign is warranted, consider providing leadership by joining the leadership and planning group.
- ★ If the campaign is a “fit” for your interests and priorities, give in a way that will inspire other funders to follow suit.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do the values of the camp which seeks my involvement/participation/donation resonate with my own?
2. Does the camp have leadership whose vision is inspiring, and whose capabilities are admired among people I respect in the community?
3. Is the camp's professional and lay leadership adequate to the task of raising the proposed capital funding? Do I trust them to be vigilant stewards of my contribution and those of others?
4. When the capital campaign is completed, will the finished facility fulfill the promise envisioned in the campaign's literature and narrative?
5. Do I find myself drawn to capital funding, which will enable me to institutionalize my values and leave a legacy?
6. Or would I get "more bang for my buck" by supporting camp in some other way, such as—for example—by raising or by providing scholarship funding that directly supports participation at camp by children from less wealthy families?



# 6 Affordability and scholarships



All I ever needed to know I learned in camp. There I learned how to be a good friend, a good person, a good Jew, a good educator, a good activist, a good Zionist – or at least how to aspire to be all those things, which I also learned there as we sang, "lo alecha hamelacha ligmor—it's not for you to complete the task, but neither can you abstain from it."

Gil Troy  
Professor of history, McGill University, and  
camp alumnus

Camp for me was where my real friends were. Camp was where I could be myself, even with all the pre-teen angst, where I learned who I was and who I could be, and where being a proud and loud Jew was not only acceptable, it was expected! I look back on camp as being probably the most influential part of my life – Jewish and otherwise. My friends today are still my friends from camp, or people who went to Jewish summer camp. My work comes out of my time at camp, the people I learn and grow the most with in my work and in my journey as a human being come from people who are Jewish summer camp people. My life was, is, and always will be camp.

Rosalie Boxt  
Cantor and camp alumna

Both my children enjoyed camp so much they cannot wait to go back next summer. I was so saddened that there was a possibility that they would never be able to go based on our income. Having been a camper myself at a Jewish camp, that possibility broke my heart. I am truly blessed and my children are so lucky that they were afforded this opportunity to be a part of something special, memorable, and that will be with them. I hope to be able to one day return the reward that was offered to my children so others can go and I am thankful that they are aided and not shunned because of finances.

Parent  
Goldman Union Camp Institute, Indiana

## INTRODUCTION

*Being Jewish in North America has become an expensive proposition. From synagogue dues, high holiday tickets, keeping kosher, day-school tuition as well as overnight Jewish summer camp, the cost of 'being Jewish' is an ever escalating expense. At the same time, the challenge of passing along Jewish connection and commitment to the next generation has been and continues to be one of the most pressing concerns of the North American Jewish community.*

*Based on the 2011 study by the Foundation for Jewish Camp, Camp Works: The Long Term Impact of Jewish Overnight Camp, there is compelling evidence that overnight Jewish camp builds Jewish identity, ties individuals to community, and grows Jewish leadership. Yet, less than 15% of Jewish camp-aged children in North America are attending one of the 150+ nonprofit Jewish overnight camps across the continent. One barrier to entry for too many families is the cost of Jewish camp.*

*In order to increase participation in camp and other Jewish educational experiences, we must create affordable quality options.<sup>72</sup>*

Like much else about Jewish life, Jewish camp is expensive. As of the summer of 2015, the mean per-week tuition<sup>73</sup> at non-profit Jewish camps in North America is above \$1100.<sup>74</sup> With an average session length of 3½ weeks, tuition for a single child for a single session at camp typically runs about \$3,900. For a family wishing to send three children to camp, the cost for a single session would be nearly \$12,000. Experience indicates that camp costs tend to increase by approximately 4% per year.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

### Affordability

In general, there are three possible ways to make camp more affordable: (a) to reduce costs; (b) to provide scholarship assistance to those in need; or (c) to create a multi-tiered tuition structure.

Convinced that the need would constantly outstrip the community's ability to raise sufficient scholarship dollars, the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) in 2011 embarked on a concerted program to explore options for reducing camp costs.

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<sup>72</sup> Excerpted from "Project SABABA Overview," an internal document provided by the Foundation for Jewish Camp.

<sup>73</sup> To permit meaningful comparisons among camps with differing session lengths, tuition is provided on a per-week basis.

<sup>74</sup> Statistics provided by [www.jdata.com](http://www.jdata.com).

Analysis conducted in 2012 by the FJC found that “the connection between income and participation in Jewish life and Jewish educational experiences is clear. Among non-orthodox Jewish overnight campers:

- ★ 70% come from households earning more than \$100,000.
- ★ 24% come from families earning between \$50,000- \$100,000.
- ★ Only 6% come from families earning less than \$50,000.<sup>75</sup>”

FJC commissioned a preliminary market study which “clearly demonstrated the need and interest of families (in particular, those earning between \$75,000 and \$125,000)” in Jewish camps with a significantly lower price point than what is generally available. Accordingly, FJC engaged a market research firm<sup>76</sup> and a consulting firm<sup>77</sup> to assist with “Project SABABA,”<sup>78</sup> an effort to explore options for reducing costs or creating a new, lower cost model.

**Other camp systems**—By way of comparison, some camp systems outside the Jewish world—notably the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and a wide variety of church programs—consistently offer camp programs at roughly half the price (on a per-week basis) of Jewish camps. FJC’s research attributed their much lower prices to several factors which are not replicable in the Jewish community:

- ★ Many such programs rely heavily on volunteer staffing (often consisting principally of parents), and offer very short sessions of 5-7 days, neither of which is practicable in the Jewish camp world.
- ★ Some such programs operate on facilities which are owned, debt-free, by parent bodies (such as churches or denominational headquarters) which offer their use at no cost or at heavily subsidized rates.
- ★ Many such programs are heavily subsidized by substantial government grants in return for providing free or very-low-cost service to impoverished families.<sup>79</sup>

**Volume-driven cost savings**—As part of Project SABABA, FJC worked with at least one camp which sought to dramatically decrease tuition by dramatically increasing enrollment. This camp’s hypothesis was based on the fact that camp is a highly volume driven business in which fixed costs can be driven down on a per capita basis by increasing enrollment.<sup>80</sup> In the end, this camp discovered little tolerance or interest among its existing camper and parent constituency for a camp which would be enlarged and transformed as the initiative envisioned, and it abandoned its plans.

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<sup>75</sup> *Prospectus—PROJECT SABABA: Affordable Jewish Overnight Camp for Everyone*, an internal document dated May 2012, FJC.

<sup>76</sup> The Geppetto Group.

<sup>77</sup> Wellspring Advisors LLC.

<sup>78</sup> *Sababa* is a Hebrew slang term, derived from Arabic, that is roughly equivalent to “cool.”

<sup>79</sup> *Project SABABA: Feasibility Study—Next Steps and Future Recommendations*, FJC, August 2012.

<sup>80</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3 above.

**Off-site “adventure” programs**—A number of camps offer off-site programs, generally “adventure” programs (hiking; biking; service projects). Since these programs do not use the camp’s fixed facility, their per capita operating costs are lower. Some camps have experimented with expanding their enrollment in such programs, so that more campers can attend off-site programs at a lower cost than “main camp” programs. After some experimentation, this, too, seldom proved to be a scalable solution.

**BunkConnect®**—The SABABA research generated the idea to create a clearinghouse to match available camp beds with families seeking a lower-cost alternative. The concept derived from a sales model that had become commonplace in the travel industry. There are several websites dedicated to helping hotels and airlines with unsold rooms or seats to offer them at discounted prices based on load factors; and conversely, to help consumers who are willing to wait until the last minute to find bargain hotel rooms and airplane tickets.

Similarly, although the occupancy rate for Jewish camps generally exceeds 90%, almost every camp always has a few openings. To address this opportunity, FJC joined with the Center for Entrepreneurial Jewish Philanthropy and with a consortium of funders led by Mike Leven (a longtime hospitality industry executive, and former President of Las Vegas Sands) to create BunkConnect®. Parents could search a specially designed website for a camp that met certain criteria (geography, movement, specialty, etc.) in the hope that an appropriate camp would have an available bed at a substantially discounted price.

In creating an easy-to-navigate online portal to match families with available camp beds, BunkConnect® attracted a substantial number of parental inquiries. In the end, however, only a small percentage of website visitors actually pursued BunkConnect® options. FJC and its evaluators concluded that affordability is just one, albeit very important, component of camp choice. The idea behind BunkConnect®, they found, may ultimately conflict with the way most parents choose an overnight camp for their children; unlike hotels, families have much stronger preferences of where their child should attend camp and families remained focused on their choices.<sup>81</sup> In 2015, FJC concluded that BunkConnect®, too, had failed to live up to its hoped-for promise, and the program in its current form was discontinued. (FJC is still evaluating options for using the BunkConnect® system as a portal for other affordability initiatives.)

Ultimately, FJC recognized that none of the experiments that had been explored through Project SABABA had borne fruit. In concert with their project consultants and evaluators, they reached the conclusion that, in general, although price often impedes camp enrollment, **parents generally do not shop for camp for their children based on price.** Most parents who wanted a camp with a lower price point were not willing to change the kind of camp to which they sent their children, despite the availability of a lower price point. These parents preferred not to send their children to Jewish camp at all.

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<sup>81</sup> From *BunkConnect® Update, July 1, 2015*, an internal FJC document created by the Summation Research Group.

## Scholarships

The primary alternative to lowering the cost of camp is to make need-based scholarship assistance more widely available.

According to JData,<sup>82</sup> about one-third of families presently sending children to Jewish camps receive some form of scholarship assistance. Scholarships average slightly above \$1,000 per child. With almost 80,000 children attending Jewish camp, those currently participating in Jewish camp experiences require some \$25-30 million dollars in need-based scholarships *every year*.

From a family's perspective, there are four principal sources for camp scholarship grants. In order of importance, they are:

- ★ **The camps themselves**, which raise funds to meet campers' scholarship requirements. Camps allocate, on average, about 10% of their operating budgets, or some \$15-20 million, to support for needy campers. In some places this can be considerably higher.
- ★ **Jewish Federations**. Many local Federations allocate need-based scholarships from the funds raised in their annual campaigns, based on a recognition of the importance of a Jewish camp experience in building the Jewish community of the future.
- ★ **Synagogues**. Many synagogues dedicate scholarship funds for the children of members who require assistance. Synagogues, like Federations, are interested in investing in the Jewish future. Generally, average synagogue scholarship awards are slightly less than average Federation awards.
- ★ **Local foundations**. Many foundations provide scholarships for children from their respective areas. For example, through the offices of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, the David and Inez Myers Foundation, working through the Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland, provides funding for camp scholarships for very low-income Jewish families. For those in serious financial need, these awards provide not only *full* scholarships to area Jewish camps, but also all the clothing and accessories the children will need for a successful summer at camp. Other foundations—notably the Robert M. Beren Foundation, the Israel Henry Beren Charitable Trust and the Legacy Heritage Foundation, among others—have offered camp scholarships targeted for children who come from Jewish families in small communities where other scholarship sources may be lacking.

In order to qualify for a scholarship, the family of the prospective camper generally has to apply for assistance to each of these agencies (the camp, the federation, the synagogue, and local foundations). Each request puts the family in the emotionally difficult position of being a supplicant, and each agency has its own application process, which often requires submission of tax returns and other sensitive financial disclosures. To simplify this process, the Foundation

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82 [www.jdata.com](http://www.jdata.com), *Op. cit.*

for Jewish Camp is presently exploring the possibility of creating a unified, common scholarship application—similar to the Common Application that many colleges and universities now use for admissions. Even though a common scholarship application would neither reduce camp costs nor add scholarship dollars to the system, it could make the sensitive process of applying for camp scholarships less onerous.

## Multi-Tiered Tuition Structure

There is an alternative to reducing costs and enhancing scholarship funding: adopting a multi-tiered camp tuition structure. In such a system, tuition might be offered, for example, at three levels: a middle level which would be sufficient to cover the full cost of a child's participation; a lower level, perhaps \$1,000 below the "standard" tuition, which parents could choose if they required a lowered tuition, and a higher level, perhaps \$1,000 above the "standard" tuition, which parents could choose on a voluntary basis if they could afford to do so in order to help less-fortunate families afford camp for their children. Such a multi-tiered system is in effect in certain Jewish day schools, and with appropriate community discussion and buy-in has proved effective.

In fact, many Jewish camps already, in effect, operate with such a multi-tiered system, though they don't name it as such. Many camps charge a regular tuition which is somewhat higher than required to meet operating costs. This surplus tuition offers a cushion which enables camps to offer scholarship assistance from the camp's operating budget.

## CHALLENGES

Here are a few of the most important challenges inherent in the arena of camp affordability and scholarship:

- ★ How to identify opportunities that have not yet been explored to lower costs so that high-quality Jewish camp is more affordable for more children.
- ★ How to raise scholarship funds in sufficient quantity to meet the extensive need, which—as noted above—is of the magnitude of \$25-30 million per year across the United States and Canada.
- ★ How to determine families' degree of "need" given that every family's circumstances are unique and rarely comparable. For example, how are factors beyond income, such as divorce, employment uncertainty, Jewish day school tuition, university tuition, debt, and many more factored into a fair assessment of a family's "need"?
- ★ How to create a scholarship allocation process that is neither overly burdensome nor overly intrusive.
- ★ How to provide needed scholarship assistance—even if it were abundantly available—to families whose sense of pride prevents them from asking for it.



## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

- ★ Contact the Foundation for Jewish Camp to ascertain whether there are special opportunities in the arena of affordability and scholarship in your area; or to determine whether you have expertise to offer other affordability initiatives.
- ★ Contribute generously to the scholarship fund of your favorite camp, or to an organization which raises scholarship funds for camps. Scholarship campaigns and funds come in an extraordinarily broad range of sizes and styles: from the Hadassah chapter in Long Island which sells Chanukah-themed teddy bears to raise money in \$18 increments for scholarship to Young Judea camps to the Tour de Summer Camps initiative in Los Angeles which raises more than \$1 million annually to meet the scholarship needs of the area non-profit Jewish camps (see the case study, below).
- ★ Endow a camp's scholarship program. Every camp offers scholarships for attending camp, but the amount of those scholarships are limited. Endowing a scholarship program would provide the camp with long-term access to scholarship funds for children from families that otherwise could not afford camp.
- ★ Launch a fundraiser that blends your own area of passion with the benefits of enabling children to experience vibrant Jewish life at camp (see the case study, below).
- ★ Explore the scholarship allocation process of your favorite camp or organization, and make sure that it is anonymous, fair, impartial, easy to access, and not overly intrusive. If it does not meet these criteria, get involved to help fix it.

## CASE STUDY: TOUR DE SUMMER CAMPS<sup>83</sup>

Rodney Freeman is a passionate bike rider—and a passionate devotee of Jewish camps. A few years ago, while fulfilling his dream of making the 650 mile ride down the California coast from San Francisco to San Diego, he conceived an idea to bridge his two passions: organizing a large-group bike ride to raise funds for the Jewish camps across his home city of greater Los Angeles.

Not long after, the leadership of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles invited him to become chairman of its real-estate division. Freeman, the founder and principal of a construction management firm, accepted the position on the condition that Federation would support the launch of the bike ride.

And so Tour de Summer Camps<sup>84</sup> was born.

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<sup>83</sup> Information in this Case Study is based on a telephone interview with Rodney Freeman, conducted August 20, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> More detailed information is available at [www.tourdesummercamps.org](http://www.tourdesummercamps.org).

Freeman was determined that this should be a major event, the best cycling event in Los Angeles, in order to raise awareness and thereby raise funds for Jewish camp scholarships. Key steps in creating the project included:

- ★ Recruiting a sponsor to ensure that basic infrastructure costs would be covered. Freeman secured a major commitment from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation,<sup>85</sup> a significant area foundation on whose advisory board he sits.
- ★ Putting in place a leadership group recruited from Freeman's friends, contacts, and colleagues from the Federation.
- ★ Engaging a professional firm to handle logistics. It was important that the details of the ride—determining the route, securing permits, managing security, setting up rest stops, and the like—would be handled professionally by an outfit with experience and credibility in this area. This ensured the project would not be derailed by logistical snafus. While this entails considerable expense, project organizers emphasized that it was crucial for the program's safety, security and success.
- ★ Determining the cause and beneficiaries. Tour de Summer Camps set out to raise scholarship funds and incentive dollars for all of the non-profit Jewish summer camps that serve the Greater Los Angeles area.
- ★ Setting up a sponsorship structure. Tour de Summer Camps works like many bike- or walk-a-thons. Participants raise funds from sponsors. Additionally, event sponsorships from \$2,500 to \$100,000 are secured.
- ★ Recruiting riding teams. With the Federation's blessing and backing, the leadership team reached out to Jewish organizations across the Los Angeles area, including synagogues of all denominational affiliations and other groups, to encourage them to set up teams. The camps themselves became hugely important in generating riding teams. A mechanism was also put in place so that individuals could ride without a team.
- ★ Organizing volunteers. Large numbers of volunteers are needed to reach out to potential riders, to handle registration, to staff rest stations, to process donations, and a myriad of other tasks.

Tour de Summer Camps completed its third ride in October 2015, and has successfully raised scholarship and incentive funds that enable the beneficiary camps to accept more children. Here are some key benchmarks of the project's success:

- ★ Over 500 riders, organized in nearly 100 teams, take part, along with nearly 400 volunteers.
- ★ The rides offer a non-threatening way for disparate elements of the Jewish community, which rarely interact with one another, to cooperate together for a common cause.

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<sup>85</sup> See [www.thegilbertfoundation.org](http://www.thegilbertfoundation.org).



- ★ More than 3,000 individuals make donations.
- ★ The project has raised over \$1.1 million for scholarship and incentive funds for camps.
- ★ More than one scholarship recipient has joined the ride team as a volunteer, and even as a fundraiser.
- ★ One girl enrolled as a “virtual rider” as her Bat Mitzvah project, and raised over \$2,000.

Freeman notes that this remarkable project is replicable in other communities under certain conditions:

- ★ Strong leadership at the helm. The leaders must be:
  - Passionate about Jewish camp
  - Dedicated to cycling
  - Able to “rally the troops.”
- ★ Solid and credible financial backing at the outset. This serves to:
  - Provide leverage
  - Open doors
  - Neutralize any suspicion the project comes with ulterior motives.
- ★ A commitment to do the project “big,” and to do it right.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you have ideas about how to make camp more affordable without compromising quality? What are they?
2. Could you serve dispassionately on a scholarship distribution committee? Does this appeal to you? Such committees exist in most non-profit Jewish camps, Federations, and synagogues.
3. As noted above, the most significant source of camp scholarship funding is the camps themselves. Absent outside fundraising, this means that camps, in effect, use funding provided by more affluent families to subsidize tuition costs for less affluent families. Does this seem fair and appropriate to you?
4. Does it appeal to you to provide funding that gives the Jewish camp experience to children who would not otherwise be able to afford it?
5. Do you have a compelling fundraising idea that could be turned into a camp scholarship fundraiser?
6. Does multi-tiered camp tuition, described above, appeal to you? Do you think it would work in the camps that serve your area? How could you help implement it?
7. Some leading colleges have endowments which permit them to offer some programs tuition-free. Two examples are the Yale Graduate School of Music and the Graduate School of Theatre at the University of California at San Diego. Harvard is reported to be debating whether to make its undergraduate program tuition-free. What if a camp had sufficient endowment that it did not have to charge tuition to attend? Should funders aim to create tuition lowering endowments?

# 7 Incentive programs and community-based initiatives

*This was one of the best decisions that we've made for our son. He loved it and can't wait to go back next year!*

Parent  
URJ Six Points Sports Academy  
North Carolina

*My kids live forty-eight weeks waiting to go to camp for four.*

Parent  
Shwayder Camp, Colorado

*Camp meant getting to spend time with an amazing group of people away from my family in a unique and special experience where I built relationships in a Jewish setting without being hit over the head, so to speak, with Judaism. It also led to a lot of personal growth and development for me, and I feel that much of who I am today is a direct result of having been to and worked at Jewish summer camp.*

Shoshana Smolen  
Advocacy officer and camp alumna



## INTRODUCTION

Kids love camp. Once they experience it, they want to go back again and again. Kids who have been to camp usually love not just camp in general, but their own, *particular* camp.

A corollary of this fact is that once kids choose a Jewish camp, they are very likely to return for multiple summers. And children who choose a secular option instead of a Jewish option for their first camp experience are less likely to switch to a Jewish camp later.

Therefore, a key goal in marketing Jewish camp is to encourage families to choose Jewish camp as their child's *first* camp experience. This is the basic rationale for camper incentive programs.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

The pre-eminent camper incentive program is the Foundation for Jewish Camp's One Happy Camper® program. *One Happy Camper* (OHC) provides incentive grants of up to \$1,000 to children attending nonprofit, Jewish overnight camp for the first time.

### One Happy Camper®

Designed as a marketing tool to get families through the front door of the Jewish camp experience, OHC essentially works like a coupon. Unlike a scholarship program,<sup>86</sup> eligibility for OHC does not include a needs test.

Its primary goal is to expand the number of families that choose Jewish camp for their children. A very important secondary goal is to encourage Jewish federations to make Jewish camp a priority within their communities.

*One Happy Camper* is offered by the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) and is operated in partnership with a wide variety of Jewish federations, foundations, PJ Library, and camps across North America.

### How OHC Works

The first step in the OHC program is establishing a partnership between a local community and FJC. The community end of the partnership is generally carried by the Jewish federation, but in some communities the partner is a foundation or other community agency. While a community

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<sup>86</sup> See Chapter 6 above.

can customize the program according to its particular understanding of its needs and its resources, in general the program works as follows:<sup>87</sup>

- ★ The community raises or allocates money to makes funding available to serve as an incentive for first-timers to attend qualifying nonprofit Jewish camps.
- ★ Historically, the community’s funding has typically been matched by FJC, on a declining scale over a three-year period, as follows:

Year	FJC	Community Partner
Year 1	50%	50%
Year 2	37.5%	62.5%
Year 3	25%	75%
Year 4 and beyond	0%	100%

- ★ FJC integrates the community into its *One Happy Camper* registration system,<sup>88</sup> a simple, seamless portal for eligible families across North America. Simultaneously, FJC provides training and technical support to community personnel who need to use the system.
- ★ FJC provides a comprehensive suite of customizable marketing materials for the community’s use in marketing both Jewish camp and the OHC incentive program. FJC provides staff support to the community’s personnel in utilizing the marketing materials, including a marketing training and a community of practice to share best practices among the liaison personnel for the community partners. Typically, an OHC partner gathering meets on an annual basis (every other year it takes place at FJC’s biennial conference, Leaders Assembly).
- ★ On an annual basis, FJC engages an evaluator to survey parents prior to their children’s departure for camp, to determine the impact of the incentive program on the parents’ decision to send their child to Jewish camp.

### Community Partners

At the time of this writing, 41 communities across North America, listed below, are participating as OHC partners.<sup>89</sup> Twenty of these partners receive matching funds from FJC;

87 By way of examples of communal-level customization of the program, the Los Angeles community has opted to provide incentives that are moderately larger than elsewhere. First-time campers attending a camp session of 12-18 consecutive days (fairly common on the West Coast) receive an incentive of \$750. Those attending a camp session of 19 consecutive days or longer receive an incentive of \$1,250. As another example, the Chicago community provides an incentive of \$1,000 for the first participating sibling in a family, and an incentive of \$500 for a second or subsequent sibling participating in the program from the same family.

88 Accessed at [www.onehappycamper.org](http://www.onehappycamper.org).

89 A nearly complete list of these communities, showing the agency or agencies which provide the funding for their participation in the partnership, is accessible at [www.jewishcamp.org/community](http://www.jewishcamp.org/community) (scroll down to bottom of page).

the other 21 have completed their cycle with FJC funding, and are continuing in the program with funding entirely raised locally.

Atlanta, GA	Heart of New Jersey	Palm Springs, CA
Boston, MA	Houston, TX	Philadelphia, PA
Broward County, FL	Indianapolis, IN	Pittsburgh, PA
Calgary	Kansas City, MO	Portland, OR
Chicago, IL	Los Angeles, CA	Rhode Island
Cincinnati, OH	Louisville, KY	Rochester, NY
Cleveland, OH	Madison, WI	San Diego, CA
Colorado	Milwaukee, WI	San Francisco, CA
Columbus, OH	Montreal, QC	Seattle, WA
Delaware	Nashville, TN	St. Louis, MO
El Paso, TX	New Hampshire	Syracuse, NY
Greater MetroWest, NJ	Northern New Jersey	Toronto, ON
Greensboro, NC	Omaha, NE	Washington, DC
Hartford, CT		

In addition to the communities listed above, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation provides the OHC incentive, under the *PJ Goes to Camp* program name, to members of its PJ Library program<sup>90</sup> who come from areas throughout North America where there is no community partner.

A further 60 individual camps (some operating through their sponsoring movements) self-fund OHC incentives for children who come from communities where there is no other partner to provide the funding.

### The OHC Public Interface

Despite the complicated behind the scenes system involving FJC, community partners, marketing campaigns and the like, *One Happy Camper* is extremely easy for families to access. They simply go to the OHC public interface, accessible at [www.onehappycamper.org](http://www.onehappycamper.org), and enter some basic demographic information.

Based on answers provided to simple prompts, the interface verifies the applicant's eligibility for OHC, and then, based on their zip code, routes their application to the OHC partner program in their own community. If their community does not have a participating OHC partner, the application is automatically routed to the *PJ Goes to Camp* program. If the child is a member of PJ Library, their incentive is handled there. If not, the application is automatically routed to a list of camps that support the OHC program, and parents select the camp their child is attending.

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<sup>90</sup> For information about PJ Library, see [www.pjlibrary.org](http://www.pjlibrary.org).

In all cases, if there is participating partner, the camp is notified that the camper is eligible, and the community sends each camp the appropriate incentive funding for the approved campers. The parents' invoice is reduced by the corresponding amount, usually \$700 or \$1,000.

## Background and History

Inspired by a program begun in 1995 by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation for children from Western Massachusetts, the *One Happy Camper* incentive program began in Chicago with a pilot in 2006. The following year, FJC began offering the OHC incentive across the continent. The number of communities which partner with it in offering the program has been growing ever since.

The JWest program, operated by FJC with generous funding from the Jim Joseph Foundation (from 2008-2013), applied the *One Happy Camper* idea in the western United States. JWest was designed to make attendance at Jewish camp more normative for children from the West, where it had been a less popular option than elsewhere, and to focus the incentive on middle-school children, who often constitute Jewish camps' largest population.<sup>91</sup> JWest introduced incentives to the West and FJC was able to engage many local federations to support OHC as a result.

## Outcomes

The following are highlights of the outcomes of the *One Happy Camper* incentive program, as determined by outside evaluators:<sup>92</sup>

- ★ 64,000 grants have been provided through summer 2015 to entice children to choose Jewish camps rather than other summer options.
- ★ Of these, 88% of families reported that they were choosing from among a variety of summer options for their child, most of them secular, including simply staying at home. Only 12% said that going to Jewish camp was always the plan, and that they would have registered either with or without the incentive.
- ★ 60% reported that without the incentive, their child would have attended a non-Jewish option, including staying at home.
- ★ Of those who attended, 82% stayed on for a second summer.
- ★ Of those who attended for a second summer, 90% stayed on for a third summer.
- ★ 97% of parents reported that their child's camp created an atmosphere in which children are proud to be Jewish.
- ★ 36% of families receiving the incentive increased their participation in Jewish activities after their child's first summer at camp.

<sup>91</sup> A more detailed description of JWest, including some evaluations of the program, is available on the Jim Joseph Foundation website at [www.jimjosephfoundation.org/evaluations/foundation-for-jewish-camp-jwest-campership-program-2](http://www.jimjosephfoundation.org/evaluations/foundation-for-jewish-camp-jwest-campership-program-2).

<sup>92</sup> The statistics which follow come from a booklet titled "Communities Investing in the Future, One Happy Camper at a Time," Foundation for Jewish Camp, 2015 edition, pp. 4-5. A version of the booklet is accessible online by clicking on the "Click to Read" button in the middle of the page which is accessed at [www.jewishcamp.org/community](http://www.jewishcamp.org/community). At the time of this writing, the online version was not the most recent edition.

- ★ 78% of participants' parents reported feeling more positive about their family's connection to the Jewish community.

## Other Incentive Programs

While *One Happy Camper* is by far the largest and most comprehensive incentive program, other programs are available in certain areas:

- ★ The Harold Grinspoon Foundation offers a camper incentive program for individuals who live in parts of western Massachusetts and southern Vermont.<sup>93</sup> The program predated One Happy Camper, and for campers residing in that region, it is more generous.
- ★ Since 1999, the Jewish Endowment Fund of New Orleans has administered a camper incentive program underwritten by the Goldring Family Foundation for families that live in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, or the Florida panhandle.<sup>94</sup>
- ★ In addition to generous first-year incentive grants, the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, in partnership with the local Jewish Federation, provides local families with access to second-year camp grants. These grants are also needs-blind. Camp incentives are part of Cincy Journeys, an initiative which helps every child in the greater Cincinnati area attend overnight Jewish camp and every young adult travel and learn in Israel.

## Community Initiatives<sup>95</sup>

The *One Happy Camper* incentive program has enhanced community involvement in Jewish camp in a wide variety of locales. As of this writing, some 21 of FJC's community partners are entirely self-funding their local OHC programs, having successfully integrated it as a priority in their funding agency's agenda. These communities include:

Boston	Indianapolis	Philadelphia
Cincinnati	Kansas City	Pittsburgh
Cleveland	Los Angeles	Rhode Island
Colorado	Louisville	St. Louis
Columbus	New Hampshire	San Diego
Delaware	Omaha	Toronto
Greensboro	Palm Springs	Washington, DC

Five communities—Chicago, Cleveland, Greensboro, Greater MetroWest, and Montreal—have endowed or are in the process of endowing their OHC or other Jewish camp initiatives, ensuring that resources will be available to future generations of campers.

<sup>93</sup> Details can be found at [www.hgf.org/What-We-Do/Grants-in-Western-MA/For-Individuals/Jewish-Overnight-Camping.aspx](http://www.hgf.org/What-We-Do/Grants-in-Western-MA/For-Individuals/Jewish-Overnight-Camping.aspx).

<sup>94</sup> Details can be found at [www.jefno.org/youth-camping/goldring-summer-camp](http://www.jefno.org/youth-camping/goldring-summer-camp).

<sup>95</sup> The information in this section is substantially based on FJC's booklet "Communities Investing in the Future, One Happy Camper at a Time," *Op. cit.*



Beyond continuing the *One Happy Camper* initiative in their communities, a number of locales have engaged one or more staff members dedicated (part-time or full-time) to supporting the growth of Jewish camp in their areas. In collaboration with area camps, communities have adopted one or more of the approaches detailed below.

## OHC Marketing Campaign

A thoughtful marketing and outreach campaign can enhance the success of a community OHC program. Such a campaign should take a holistic approach to family engagement by integrating the message of Jewish camp into already successful programs and by reaching out to the community at large. Some elements might include:

- ★ **Synagogue-based camp ambassador program**—Enlisting synagogue staff and parents to serve as camp ambassadors who share their children’s Jewish camp experiences with fellow congregants.
- ★ **Outreach to targeted demographics**—Using culturally relevant marketing to engage diverse populations, and identifying key support to get the word out (examples might include the Jewish LGBTQ, Russian speaking, Israeli, interfaith, multi-racial, and differently-able communities).

## Scholarship

Offering financial aid to ensure that all who want to attend camp can afford it, including (but not limited to) returning OHC recipients who may require financial aid.

## Evaluation

Helping camps that serve area children to access evaluation tools, such as FJC’s annual Camper Satisfaction Insights study, which can provide important parental feedback.

## Capacity

Understanding the supply and demand at area Jewish camps. Determining whether there are enough beds in area camps to meet the demands of the community, and exploring what role the community agency can play in extending capacity.

## Tactical and Strategic Consulting

Facilitating customized consultations for area camps (either as a cohort or one-on-one) in the areas of marketing, communications, recruitment, customer service, fundraising, board/lay leadership development, staff training, program development or other areas of need.

## Innovation Funding

Providing funding opportunities to create new specialty programs at existing camps. Offering experiences that reach underserved populations within the community, as well as offering

area camps a competitive edge in the crowded marketplace of available summer experiences. Encouraging area overnight camps to develop local day camps to serve younger children and serve as feeders to their own programs.

## CHALLENGES

The OHC program has proved a highly effective strategy to encourage the growth of Jewish camping and to support the future health of the Jewish community. Still, there remain some impediments to its universal implementation and challenges that need to be overcome.

- ★ Some object to providing funding to families who don't need the financial help and would have sent their children to Jewish camp even without the incentive. Such critics need to understand that while this is something of a drag on the system's efficiency, there is simply no way for an incentive to work with 100% efficiency. Consider, for example, a retailer who offers a coupon online or in a mailer to entice customers to buy, in the expectation of increasing sales. In the process, the retailer offers a discount to some customers who would have bought anyway. Yet the retailer is likely to decide that on balance the coupon is an effective mechanism. Similarly, some families will cash in an available incentive though they didn't need to be convinced about Jewish camp and didn't need financial help. But the high number of new customers who are brought in through this marketing tactic—as indicated under “Outcomes” above—seems to justify taking the chance.
- ★ Funding is always a challenge. For a camper incentive program like One Happy Camper, this is especially true in smaller communities, where funding is especially scarce; and in particularly large communities, where the scope of the potential demand may seem daunting.

## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

There is much that funders can do to support the development and success of incentive programs and community camping initiatives.

- ★ The Foundation for Jewish Camp's financial contribution to the *One Happy Camper* program over the years, measured in the tens of millions of dollars, has been made available through the singular generosity of an anonymous donor. That funding—though cumulatively very substantial—is inherently limited. In the foreseeable future, additional funding will be required to sustain the program. Funders might consider supplementing the funding available to FJC to maintain the *One Happy Camper* program.

- ★ As noted above, FJC is dedicated to encouraging the creation of endowed funds on a community basis to provide camper incentives. An endowment would ensure that the OHC program continues in perpetuity. FJC has developed a match concept which could help communities generate permanent or long-term endowments of their local OHC program. Funders might consider helping to provide FJC with the requisite resources to supply this encouragement to communities.
- ★ Funders can support community camping initiatives in their area, both financially and by offering their own leadership and involvement.
- ★ If there is not yet a community camping initiative or *One Happy Camper* program in their area, funders can advocate within their federation or other agency for its creation, and can help to develop the resources needed to make it viable.
- ★ As PJ Library continues to expand its reach with deeper market penetration, the *PJ Goes to Camp* program, through the JCamp180 initiative of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, could be a worthy investment to reach more families who live in areas that do not have a *One Happy Camper* community partner.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Have you ever tried something that you weren't yet excited about because it was offered to you as a bargain, even though you could have afforded (but weren't sure you wanted to pay) full price? If so, you will understand the power and the appeal of a camper incentive program.
2. Does your community participate as a partner in FJC's One Happy Camper incentive program? If not, why not? What can you do to change the situation?
3. What Jewish camps serve children in your area? Are you familiar with their offerings? How do they differ from one another?
4. Does your community have an initiative that supports Jewish camp? If so, what can you do to support it? If not, what can you do to help bring it into being?



## Section B

# Improving the “product”

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As described above in Chapter 1, studies demonstrate that Jewish camp works as a powerful, effective, and joyous means to build Jewish identity and Jewish commitment in a growing generation of younger Jews. The first comprehensive, academic studies of the field of Jewish camp, *Limud by the Lake*, and the subsequent follow up, *Limud by the Lake Revisited*, generated the two major findings which have guided the agenda of the Jewish camp field since the first study’s publication in 2002: first, the need to expand the Jewish camp system’s capacity in order to give more children the opportunity to grow through a Jewish camp experience; and second, the opportunity to capitalize on missed opportunities in order to make the “product” of Jewish camp even stronger.<sup>1</sup>

The next several chapters will focus on the first of these two priorities: expanding the number of children in Jewish camps—or, as some say, putting increasing numbers of “heads in beds.”

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<sup>1</sup> Sales and Saxe, *Limud by the Lake*, Op. cit., and Sales, Samuel and Boxer, *Limud by the Lake Revisited*, Op. cit.

# 8 Leadership development

Camp Ramah was, and continues to be, my home away from home. It was always the place where I felt like I could be my best and most authentic self. And as a staff member in particular, Camp Ramah really invested in me, helping me develop my leadership skills and my professional potential.

Myra Meskin



When I reflect on my time at Jewish summer camp, I realize that each lively song session, each *t'filah* [prayer] service looking out on the lake, each joyous Shabbat dinner, and each conversation I had in the gazebo - whether it was about social action or who was dating whom - were all tiny pieces of something much bigger. Those kinds of memories - those brief moments as teenagers that will forever be ingrained in our minds - are what bring us together as a community and give us strength as Jewish adults moving forward.

Liba Bronstein-Schwartz  
Educator and camp alumna

Camp was the sum and substance of my entire Jewish awareness as a young person. My family was Jewish by name and culture. I had no Jewish education. Camp made me feel connected to the Jewish people and to Israel. I loved the music, the rituals and Zionist message. Later, as a staffer, it was the social circle that meant the most to me. It was a time when I felt true to myself, my developing moral compass, my values. It was where I thought about what my future would look like. And, yes, it was a time of experimentation in a relatively safe environment.

Laurie Thomas  
Executive coach and camp alumna

## INTRODUCTION

The quality of the camp experience is strongly related to the quality of a camp's personnel. The development of talent and enhancement of skills at all levels is therefore of paramount concern in building both the capacity and the quality of the Jewish camp experience.

Camps differ from many other kinds of enterprises in the nature of their staffing. Summer camps generally employ a relatively small number of full-time, year-round staff; the overwhelming bulk of the staff is comprised of seasonal employees, most of whom work for the duration of the summer camp season (most often seven weeks), plus a week of training immediately prior to the start of the season.

The full-time, year-round staff is usually limited to the camp director and assistant director. Many camps may also employ a year-round facilities manager or groundskeeper; a bookkeeper; a development director; and (if the camp has a year-round retreat business) perhaps a chef.

On the other hand, it is not uncommon for a camp with only a half-dozen year-round staff to employ upwards of 150 staff members for the summer season. These include bunk counselors (generally entering freshmen or sophomores in college); unit leaders (often college juniors or seniors); specialists who have well-developed skills—and perhaps certification—in fields ranging from water safety to ropes course supervision to song- and dance-leading to tennis, and many more. Additionally, a camp needs non-program staff, including office staff, kitchen and dining room staff, maintenance workers, and perhaps babysitters for the young children of some older staff members. Most of these departments (office, kitchen, maintenance, etc.) have a single head staff member who is an adult with significant experience; nearly all other workers in each department are likely to be 17- or 18-year old students.

Many camps employ a small staff of “older” adults (older than 25 or 30, that is) who may serve in such roles as camp social worker, camper care coordinator, camp nurse or doctor, and so on. Some camps have a dedicated education staff, which may include one or more Judaic specialists, or alternatively, a rotation of visiting rabbis, cantors and educators who may come to camp for a week or two. At some camps, this education staff may consist of a single undergraduate who is majoring in Jewish studies, while at others it may include up to a dozen rabbis and educators who teach in Jewish day schools during the academic year.

Many Jewish camps hire Israelis to serve in positions ranging from cabin counselors to specialists to security personnel to education staff. Israelis who hold positions on the programmatic side of camp (cabin counselors, specialists, education staff) are called *shlichim* (emissaries). Most come to camp through the Jewish Agency's Summer *Shlichim* Program, which brings more than 1,200 Israelis to North American overnight summer camps each year. *Shlichim* bring many benefits to camp, including exposing campers to Hebrew language and Israeli culture, and lending color and depth to the campers' and staff members' developing relationships with

Israel. Conversely, the *shlichim*—and through them Israeli society more generally—themselves benefit from the exposure to American Jews.

All of these staff must be trained for their various roles in the very short time available.

Beyond the full-time and seasonal paid staff, lay leaders play a very significant role. As in any non-profit, camp board members, committee chairs and members, and other volunteer leaders play critical roles in setting policy, providing oversight, establishing direction, and ensuring fiscal viability, both through supervision of the business operations and through fundraising. These volunteer leaders, too, need training in order to fulfill their roles effectively.

Thus leadership development is both an imperative challenge for Jewish camps, and a significant opportunity for potential funders.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

During the last decade or so, a large number of initiatives has been launched to strengthen the recruitment, professional skill development, and retention of Jewish camp staff.

### Year-Round Senior Leadership

#### Executive Leadership Institute (ELI)

Camp directors work year-round, confronting challenges a mayor of a small town might meet: they oversee multi-million dollar budgets, hire and supervise a staff of several hundred, manage communications, supervise physical sites, work with a board of directors, initiate new programs, and much more.

The Executive Leadership Institute (ELI), a program offered periodically by the Foundation for Jewish Camp, has been characterized as an executive MBA program for the twenty-first-century Jewish camp director. The program, which has a highly selective admissions process, provides seasoned professionals in the field of Jewish camp with the business, management, and leadership skills required to enrich their camps and compete in the summer marketplace. Participants meet in a seminar setting six times during the eighteen-month program.

The ELI program completed its third cohort in 2012, and to date has graduated 51 elite camp leaders. ELI is offered through the generous funding of the Marcus Foundation.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> [www.jewishcamp.org/executive-leadership-institute](http://www.jewishcamp.org/executive-leadership-institute).



## **Yitro Fellowship<sup>97</sup>**

Assistant and associate directors are generally year-round staff who have primary responsibility for important aspects of camp life such as staff hiring and supervision, camper recruitment, and program development.

Yitro offers training for assistant and associate directors of Jewish camps, providing them with a range of important skills and resources, and focusing especially on enhancing the Jewish experience at their respective camps.

Participants are admitted to the program as a cohort which meets together for intensive training in five, four-day sessions over the course of nineteen months. Participants study with experts and leaders from various disciplines. The program challenges participants to widen their lens of Jewish leadership in order to enhance the Jewish culture and experience at their home camps.

Additionally, participation in the Yitro cohort encourages the assistant and associate directors to build a network of peers who can support one another in developing their skills as Jewish leaders and educators.

Yitro helps its participants to hone their skills regarding camp staff leadership development, supervision, management and mentorship, while exploring the Jewish foundations of these skills. Participants are expected to engage in conversation with their camp directors about the vision and mission of their respective camps. In consultation with the program faculty and camp director, each participant creates and implements an individual action plan that focuses on enhancing Jewish life at camp. A skilled advisor is assigned to work with each participant, and visits the participant for support during the summer camp season.

Of approximately thirty-five Yitro graduates from the program's first two cohorts, to date eight have become camp directors, either in their original camp or in another Jewish camp. Six others have been promoted within their organization to more senior roles. Thirty Yitro graduates continue to work in professional service to the Jewish community, and twenty-five continue to work in the field of Jewish camp.

With the continuing support of The AVI CHAI Foundation, FJC launched the third cohort of Yitro in 2015 with twenty-three participants.<sup>98</sup>

## **GIFT**

GIFT (an acronym for Grinspoon Institute Fundraiser Training) is offered by the JCamp180 program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. The year-long program uses bi-weekly face-to-

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<sup>97</sup> The name Yitro is Hebrew for Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. In Exodus 18, Jethro visits the Israelite encampment in the wilderness and offers Moses lessons in leadership.

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.jewishcamp.org/yitro-leadership-program>.

face or internet-based sessions, selected reading assignments, and team projects to train both experienced and newly appointed development directors. The program leads participants through the creation of a two-year customized development plan for their camps.

## J-TEC

This JCamp180 “Technology for Effective Communications” program guides participants through the maze of social media. Through a year-long program of monthly webinars, participating camp communications specialists learn how social media can be used effectively to interact with stakeholders, be they parents (for communications), alumni (for stewardship), or others. Participants analyze case studies of the most current social media methods to assure that their camps’ communications tools are supporting all camp initiatives.

## Seasonal Staff

Early research in the Jewish camp field has demonstrated that counselors initially come to camp for essentially the same reasons that campers do: to have fun, to make friends, and to spend time with them.<sup>99</sup> Gradually, counselors come to understand the powerful position they are in as role models for the campers in their charge. As they gain experience and skills, they become increasingly valuable to their camps. Yet as they progress through their collegiate years, the pressure increases for them to “get a real job” for the summer, something that is perceived to prepare them for careers in the workplace. Just as counselors are becoming most valuable to their camps, they tend to leave for the business world. The Cornerstone and Olim Fellowship programs and Ramah’s Bert B. Weinstein Institute each address this challenge.

## Cornerstone

The Cornerstone Fellowship, a program of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, was established in 2002 with funding from The AVI CHAI Foundation. Growth in the program has recently been made possible by a funding consortium including The AVI CHAI Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, the Marcus Foundation, and the Morningstar Foundation.

The Cornerstone Fellowship offers professional development to camp leaders and Jewish educational training to exemplary returning third-year bunk staff. The main part of the program takes place at a five-day training seminar held in May (after the end of the college semester and before the start of camp). The Cornerstone Seminar seeks to empower fellows to play a larger creative role in Jewish programming at their respective camps. Each participating camp sends a camp liaison—a member of the year-round, senior staff—who provides guidance and support to the fellows from their camp. The program also offers ongoing advising and guidance for camp directors and camp liaisons.

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<sup>99</sup> Sales and Saxe, *Limud by the Lake*, Op. cit. pp. 15-16.

Both fellows and the senior staff who serve as camp liaisons gain experience in interacting with exemplary Jewish experiential educators, and with their peers from a wide variety of camps across North America. The Cornerstone Seminar typically includes 275-300 fellows, plus 100 liaisons and other leaders from more than 65 camps (almost half of all the camps in FJC's roster in this program).

Fellows are expected to work together to develop and implement a project that enhances their camp's Judaic program, consistent with their camp's particular mission and vision. Training continues during the camp season via a weekly meeting conducted under the leadership of the camp's liaison.

Camps must apply to have their staff participate in the Cornerstone Fellowship. Participating camps nominate a delegation, typically consisting of about five highly successful returning counselors.<sup>100</sup>

### **Olim<sup>101</sup>**

The Olim Fellowship, shared by five Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) camps, offers leadership development to select first- and second-year counselors. Fellows receive additional training, and a modest salary increment above the normal camp scale. In return, they make a commitment to participate in all training programs, and to work at their respective camps for a minimum of two summers. The training consists of three retreats at participating camps each academic year. During each of the retreats, fellows learn leadership lessons from prominent rabbis and scholars, including leaders in the Reform movement. They share a Shabbat experience, and have the (relatively unusual) opportunity to interact and to compare experiences with peers and leaders from the other participating camps.<sup>102</sup>

At most of the participating camps, the second-year Olim Fellows are given the extra responsibility of helping to supervise the counselors-in-training (CITs).<sup>103</sup>

The participating URJ Camps include: Coleman (GA), Harlam (PA), Crane Lake (MA), Eisner Camp (MA), and Greene (TX). The costs of the Olim Fellowship program are underwritten by the participating camps.

### **Weinstein<sup>104</sup>**

Under the educational direction of the National Ramah Commission, the Bert B. Weinstein Institute provides an intensive experience of Jewish studies, leadership workshops, and the

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<sup>100</sup> [www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u12/Cornerstone%202015%20Information%20Guide.pdf](http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u12/Cornerstone%202015%20Information%20Guide.pdf).

<sup>101</sup> The word "olim" is Hebrew for "those who are rising."

<sup>102</sup> [www.blogs.rj.org/blog/2013/04/04/100-college-aged-camp-staffers-gather-for-inspirational-weekend](http://www.blogs.rj.org/blog/2013/04/04/100-college-aged-camp-staffers-gather-for-inspirational-weekend).

<sup>103</sup> At most camps, CITs are considered the oldest camper unit. Typically 17 year-old entering seniors in high school, they have some training in leadership and some opportunity to help supervise younger campers, in addition to age-appropriate programs for their own benefit.

<sup>104</sup> In addition to the Weinstein Institute, Ramah sponsors an extensive program for leadership development and skill building for its personnel at many levels. Additional information is available at: [www.campramah.org/content/staff/nrcleadershipdevelopment.php](http://www.campramah.org/content/staff/nrcleadershipdevelopment.php).

sharing of best practices. This annual five-day program is designed for a select group of college freshmen and sophomores returning to Ramah camps as counselors, chosen by their respective camp directors for their leadership potential.

## Camp Staff and the Year-Round Jewish Community

Camp spans seven weeks or so during the summer. What about the other forty-five weeks of the year? How can the camp staff remain connected and engaged during the “off season?” Equally important, how can we mobilize the talents and experience of camp staff to energize local Jewish communities with what is often called “the magic of camp” throughout the school year? Several initiatives are beginning to tackle these challenges.

### Service Corps

The Service Corps program, initially piloted with funding from FJC, engages young camp staff and alumni who apply their experience, talents, and skills to create experiential, camp-style programming for families and youth in synagogue communities around the country. These camp staff are given the opportunity to introduce the magic of camp to thousands of Jewish children and to bring camp-style programming to communities across North America during the school year.

The program is a collaboration between the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), sponsor of the Reform movement’s summer camps, and the National Ramah Commission (NRC), which coordinates the Conservative movement’s camps. The program seeks to place 180 young adult educators in part-time youth leadership roles in Conservative and Reform communities throughout North America over the course of three years. This partnership between camp and congregation offers two benefits: (1) Service Corps Fellows actively recruit for camp in their congregational placement, increasing its enrollment, and (2) at the same time they help reenergize the communities they serve through innovative, inspiring, and immersive Jewish programming.<sup>105</sup>

The Service Corps program requires that its fellows have spent a minimum of two summers working at a camp of their movement; they are strongly encouraged to continue that work during the summer following their participation.

Throughout the program, fellows work a minimum of four hours weekly at a host synagogue. During that service, fellows organize camp-style programs, create opportunities for camp alumni in their respective local communities to connect, reach out to prospective camp families, maintain relationships with current camp families in the synagogue, and assist with camp recruitment efforts.

Each Fellow is mentored by an experienced Jewish professional and participates in training sessions via webinar and at an annual conference with other participants from both movements.

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<sup>105</sup> [www.urj.org/cye/servicecorps](http://www.urj.org/cye/servicecorps).

The Service Corps Fellowship, funded by the Foundation for Jewish Camp, began in 2010. Subsequent additional support came from the Legacy Heritage Foundation and a Covenant Foundation Ignition Grant. In Detroit, the program enjoys additional funding from the William Davidson Foundation.<sup>106</sup>

## **Shlav Hachshara Bet**

Sponsored by the Zionist movement Habonim Dror North America (HDNA), Shlav Hachshara Bet is a program similar to Service Corps for college aged students who have been counselors at HDNA summer camps. The program provides year-round engagement for participating students, and offers them advanced learning and leadership training. Individuals who are serving as counselors at Habonim Dror summer camps are also given the opportunity to be placed as advisors to youth movement chapters around the U.S. and Canada, or as youth leaders, teachers, or education assistants in synagogues or other Jewish organizations in their local communities. They attend a minimum of two annual leadership training seminars in North America, and one seminar in Israel every other year. Some 85-100 camp counselors participate in the program each year.<sup>107</sup>

The growth of Shlav Hachshara Bet is supported by a Signature Grant from the Covenant Foundation.

## **Camp is Really All About the Counselors**

Some contend that it is the staff, more than the campers, who are the primary constituents and principal educational audience of Jewish camp. They hold that it is the staff—late adolescents and emerging adults whose thinking and identities are especially open—who are most likely to grow and develop as Jews and as Jewish leaders in the course of their camp experience. Jewish camps involve some 11,000 staff each summer.

Whether they agree that staff should outweigh campers as camps' principal educational audience, serious observers agree that the staff is an important constituency which we ignore at our peril. Several models highlight the importance of providing educational programming geared to staff.

## **Staff Education at Ramah**

The Ramah movement, for example, views its staff as a critical educational constituency. Ramah offers staff members numerous opportunities to deepen their Jewish education. Ramah overnight camps hire an entire layer of educators who serve as teachers to counselors rather than to campers. And they set aside time in every week during which the staff is expected to participate in its own learning, not supervision of the campers.

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106 [www.campramah.org/content/ramahservicecorps.php](http://www.campramah.org/content/ramahservicecorps.php) and [www.urj.org/blog/2013/07/09/reform-and-conservative-camping-movements-service-corps-will-engage-synagogue-youth](http://www.urj.org/blog/2013/07/09/reform-and-conservative-camping-movements-service-corps-will-engage-synagogue-youth).

107 The name literally means "Advanced Leadership Training." Information provided in a telephone interview with Sara Zebovitz, 2015-2016 *mazkirah klalit* (general secretary) of Habonim Dror North America.

Like many others, Ramah camps go out of their way to identify opportunities for leadership development and Judaic enrichment that are available to their staff members during the year, and to bring them to the attention of their staff.<sup>108</sup>

## Staff Programming at Herzl

Herzl Camp, in Webster, WI, serves the Minneapolis-St. Paul region and the Mid-West. Its education director, who works for camp on a part-time basis throughout the year,<sup>109</sup> coordinates and implements a series of monthly Judaic learning webinars for staff. Once a month for the six months leading up to the summer, she lines up a leading rabbi or educator in the Jewish community of the greater Minneapolis area, who conducts an interactive webinar for camp staff. The program attracts about 30 participants in each month's webinar, and has been well-reviewed by participants. For the 2014-15 school year, for example, the overall topic was "*Tefillah* talks," and the webinars explored different aspects of prayer.

These school-year webinars set the stage for a series of weekly lunch-and-learn sessions which take place at camp during the summer. Counselors are polled to identify topics of interest. They sign up in advance to participate in these Judaic learning programs, each of which affords the opportunity to study for an hour for their own benefit, free from the responsibility of supervising their campers.

## The Ramah Nyack Model

Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, NY is an eight-week day camp sponsored by the (Conservative) National Ramah Commission. It is a traditional day camp for the campers, but staff stay at camp overnight and on weekends. When campers are not present—namely the late afternoons, evenings, and weekends—staff members participate in an intensive program of Jewish learning, leadership development, and social engagement.

The rationale for this unique program is given on the camp's website, in a list of FAQs geared for potential staff members. The site poses the question, "What can I do at camp after my workday ends?" and offers the following answer:

*Your own growth and well-being are of prime importance to us and we want to be certain that the summer experience is resoundingly positive for you. You will have opportunities to participate in programs that are meaningful, educational, recreational and entertaining. Once campers have departed for the day, you can study text, swim, compete in a sports league, learn Mitzvah clowning, sing with an a cappella group, join a Zumba class, practice your Hebrew with a member of the Mishlachat (Israeli staff corps), and so much more.<sup>110</sup>*

108 For a good example, see the booklet on "Staff Opportunities and Leadership Incentives," published by Camp Ramah in California and available at [www.ramah.org/cms-assets/documents/138200-553849.staff-leadership-packet.pdf](http://www.ramah.org/cms-assets/documents/138200-553849.staff-leadership-packet.pdf).

109 This model was created through an FJC program called Nadiv, which created partnerships between a Jewish camp and a Jewish school in six communities. Each partnership jointly hired an educator who split his or her full-time, year-round attention between the two institutions. Nadiv was established with funding from The AVI CHAI Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation.

110 [www.ramahnyack.org/staff/faqs](http://www.ramahnyack.org/staff/faqs).

## Shlichim and Returning Israelis

The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) sponsors a Summer *Shlichim* Program, which brings more than 1,200 young Israelis each year to join the staff of Jewish camps in North America. The program offers camps a one-on-one opportunity to engage with Israel. JAFI *shlichim* become an integral part of their assigned camp's staff and work together with local counselors. Through their personal and professional interactions, they educate campers and staff about Israel and help to build strong, personal relations with Israel for campers and fellow staff members alike. Some camps bring a small number of Israelis to camp—perhaps just two or three—while others bring large delegations, numbering several dozen.<sup>111</sup>

While Israeli *shlichim* bring many advantages to camp, providing them with the necessary and appropriate training presents several challenges:

- ★ The Israelis—most just out of the army—may never previously have had an extended stay away from home.
- ★ Many aspects of North American culture are likely to be unfamiliar to them. Even those fluent in English are apt to misread the cultural nuances of spoken language, or even of body language.
- ★ The whole notion of summer camp may be unfamiliar, as is the American Judaism that they will find in the camps that they are expected to participate in. Over time, many find the rituals comforting and they become enthusiastic participants, but it is part of the culture shock they have to initially overcome.

These special challenges are added to the training challenges that confront all camp staff members: the need to learn the names, places, procedures, health and safety protocols, goals and missions, and much more of their selected camps.

To meet this intense training challenge, the JAFI Summer *Shlichim* program includes a week-long seminar for the Israelis who will be participating, which takes place in a camp-like setting in Israel during the spring prior to their summer camp assignments. Prospective *shlichim* come together in a setting which simulates an American summer camp, and spend the week addressing many of the cultural, programmatic, and educational challenges they are likely to face during their summer assignments.

In recent years, JAFI has invited camps which will host *shlichim* to send a senior staff representative to come to Israel to participate in the *Shlichim* Seminar, and increasingly, many camp directors or assistant directors participate. Both camp personnel and the *shlichim* themselves report that the participation of the camp directors or assistant directors greatly improves the experience the camps have with the *shlichim*, and the experience the *shlichim* have in camp.

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<sup>111</sup> See [www.jewishagency.org/shlichim-israeli-emissaries/program/289](http://www.jewishagency.org/shlichim-israeli-emissaries/program/289).



Summer *shlichim* face many challenges of acculturation, as do most new seasonal staff. Experienced camp personnel report that like all staff *shlichim* tend to become more effective and more valuable if they return to camp for two or more summers. Yet a number of logistical and financial barriers make it difficult for them to do so. Some of these barriers are gradually being overcome since the introduction of Achva. This program provides enhanced training to about 120 *shlichim* each year who return to camp for a second, third, or fourth summer, and also to the Israeli heads of *shlichim* contingents (which in some camps can exceed 30 Israelis). Participants must have a commitment from their camps to bring them back; they attend six or seven training seminars each year in Israel, and receive a salary supplement for their participation. Achva is a program of The AVI CHAI Foundation,<sup>112</sup> which has recently invited JAFI to share in sponsorship of the program.

## Board Members and Lay Leaders

As noted above, lay leaders exert very significant leadership in camps. Board members, committee chairs and members, and other volunteer leaders play critical roles in setting policy, providing oversight, establishing direction, and ensuring fiscal viability, and they too require training in order to fulfill their roles effectively.

JCamp180, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, has established an extensive program which provides this training to key lay leaders of nearly 100 Jewish camps in the United States and Canada. The work of JCamp180 is described in considerable detail in Chapter 4 above.

## CHALLENGES

People within the camp world are generally open to projects that boost staff and lay leadership training, recruitment, and retention. Challenges arise not due to resistance from within, but rather from structural issues and cultural issues from the larger society:

1. As noted above, new counselors come to camp for the same reasons campers do: to have fun and to be with friends. First-year counselors, especially, may not fully appreciate the need to dedicate time and attention to training.
2. Retention of counselors suffers from the widely held (but mistaken) impression that camp work “isn’t a real job,” or in other words that it will not enhance a counselor’s resume. As the economy strengthens, camps will increasingly need to compete with internships offered in fields that may be a priority for the counselors to experience before they enter the job market.
3. Numerous issues of logistics and timing complicate the hiring of Israeli *shlichim*. The overwhelming majority of Israeli high school graduates are drafted into the army in the months following graduation. It may be difficult or impossible to adjust the time of

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112 [www.avichai.org/program-listings/jewish-agency-for-israel-jafi-summer-camping-programs](http://www.avichai.org/program-listings/jewish-agency-for-israel-jafi-summer-camping-programs).



their enlistment to enable them to spend the summer at camp in America. For those who are post-army, or otherwise attending university, the Israeli academic calendar has collegiate classes running until June 30, which is typically at least two weeks too late for participation in North American summer camps.

4. Research shows that most camps have a staff retention rate of at least 55%.<sup>113</sup> But there is a point at which counselors simply “age out” of camp. Once they leave college and enter the workforce, relatively few work on a schedule that would permit them to spend the summer at camp. This means that high staff turnover is endemic.

## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

Each of the initiatives described in this chapter attempts to overcome one or more of the challenges to providing well-trained, high-quality staff to meet the programmatic and business needs of Jewish camps. Most of these initiatives were enabled—and in some cases, were initiated—by motivated funders. There are many things a funder could do to enhance the caliber of leadership available to Jewish camps.

1. A funder could opt to work at the national level, partnering with the Foundation for Jewish Camp or with JCamp180 to sponsor one of their excellent, existing training programs, or helping to design and implement a new program for an as-yet-underserved staff grouping.
2. Funders might prefer to work on a movement level, seeking to partner with the camping movement which most resonates with their own preferred style of Jewish involvement. The leaders of most of the camp movements—and of many individual camps—have a wish list of staff enhancement projects they would undertake were funding available.
3. A funder could decide to work on a regional or local level. Many communities have community camping initiatives (described in Chapter 7 above), some of which would welcome the opportunity to introduce a funder-supported professional training opportunity to camps in the area.
4. Many funders are themselves experienced and successful business leaders. Such funders could take counsel with the lay leaders of the camp or camping movement of their choice, or of the local camping initiative in their locale, to determine whether their leadership expertise would be helpful in designing a program to meet the leadership challenges the camp or movement or region is facing.

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113 Sales and Saxe, *Limud by the Lake*, Op. cit. p. 18.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Being a camp counselor is often considered the most basic of entry-level jobs. How important is it, really, to provide high-caliber training to counselors? If you had one week to give counselors all the information they needed to care for children at camp, what topics would you include? Why?
2. There is a difference between job training that enables an employee to perform a task effectively and professional development that provides a broader view of the field as a whole, and opens to the employee the possibility of pursuing a career in the field. What is the right balance between job training and professional development for a camp counselor? For a unit leader? For an assistant director? For a camp director?
3. Israeli *shlichim* bring many important benefits to their camps, as described above. At the same time, the costs to a camp of bringing Israelis is considerably higher than hiring local staff. If you were in charge of a camp, how would you determine how many Israeli *shlichim* to bring?
4. The Ramah Nyack model, presented above, is a day camp for its campers, and an overnight camp for its staff. This gives its staff, too, opportunities for learning, professional development, social growth, and just plain fun. Although widely hailed as successful, Ramah Nyack remains the only camp employing this model. In order to emulate it at other day camps, a great deal of staff housing would need to be constructed. Would you be interested in making an investment of this nature?

# 9 Deepening camps' Jewish impact

I believe that the values [my family and I] learned from Jewish camping have literally made us better people - more caring, more relational, more attuned to the importance of mystery, awe and joy in our appreciation of the world. I attribute the core values of my life as a rabbi, a teacher, a parent, a spouse and a citizen to the values I learned at Jewish summer camp.

Jim Bennett  
Rabbi and camp alumnus



It was not until my early summers at camp that I appreciated what I had not experienced until then: the warmth of a Jewish environment, the beauty of the Hebrew language, the meaning of a "living" Judaism.

Faculty spouse and parent  
URJ Camp Harlam, Pennsylvania

Camp has been a great Jewish environment for the kids to grow and be enriched. As a convert to Judaism I didn't have the background to teach the children all they need to know. Camp teaches them how to be strong leaders there and in their own community.

Parent  
Camp Shwayder, Colorado

## INTRODUCTION

Jewish camp is one of the most powerful ways to build Jewish identity, connections, engagement, and knowledge in campers and staff. Many funders take interest in Jewish camp primarily, or even exclusively, because of this power and potential. Maximizing Jewish camps' effectiveness in delivering their Jewish message is, accordingly, of primary interest and importance.

Just as there is a wide variety of ways to be Jewish, a broad array of Jewish educational visions animates Jewish camps. It is important for each camp, each camp family, and each actual or potential funder to determine for themselves which of these many approaches makes sense for them. But it is also essential for camps representing the various movements, denominations, and approaches to relate to one another respectfully, and to work together effectively. The Jewish camp world, like the Jewish world as a whole, is much stronger for its diversity.

When we speak of strengthening the Jewish and Israel-related components of camp, we need to be clear that we are speaking of strengthening those components according to the varying Jewish approaches and visions of each camp. To be more precise, we need to speak of strengthening the Jewish components of each camp according to the way it defines its own Jewish mission.

There are excellent Jewish camps which adhere strictly to *halacha* (rabbinic law), for example. And there are excellent Jewish camps that are careful in their marketing to avoid appearing "too Jewish." Many such camps know that large portions of their constituencies are Jewishly "marginally affiliated," and they feel it is important for Jewish messaging to be less overt in order to maximize the number of potential campers who will benefit from the Jewish and Israel messaging, learning and growth that will happen in their programs during the summer.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

### Enhancing Jewish Intentionality: *Hiddur*

In order that a camp's program effectively reflects its Jewish vision, a camp must have clarity about what that vision is, and intentionality about reflecting the vision in as many aspects as possible of the camp's programming. In many Jewish camps, this is the norm. But many other Jewish camps would benefit from careful thinking and periodic reflection on these issues.

The *Hiddur* Initiative<sup>114</sup> is a project of the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC), enabled by a funding consortium including The AVI CHAI Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation, and the Maimonides Fund. The program helps camps become more effective at delivering Jewish educational experiences to their campers and staff, in ways that align with each camp's unique Jewish mission.

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114 For more information, see [www.jewishcamp.org/hiddur-initiative](http://www.jewishcamp.org/hiddur-initiative).

Through *Hiddur*, a diverse team of camp stakeholders—including senior professionals, program staff, and key lay leaders—work with a seasoned organizational coach to enhance their institution’s ability to transmit Jewish values, culture, and tradition in line with their camp’s particular mission.

Each participating camp focuses on which Jewish experiential learning outcomes they want to see in their campers, staff, and camp community. They emphasize eight key content areas:

- ★ Klal Yisrael: Jewish Peoplehood
- ★ Shomrei Adama: Nature and Environment
- ★ Ivrit: Hebrew Language
- ★ Eretz Yisrael: Connection to Israel
- ★ Shabbat: Marking Sacred Time
- ★ Tikkun Olam: Social Justice
- ★ Tikkun Middot: Personal Ethics
- ★ Kavanah: Spirituality and Mindfulness

What do the camps want their participants to know, value, and do differently after having spent time at camp? What activities foster these outcomes? In answering these questions, each camp works to establish and enhance systems by which it seeks to fulfill its unique Jewish mission.

The first *Hiddur* cohort, launched in late 2015, is comprised of eight overnight camps. Participating camps commit to three years of work in concert with its *Hiddur* coach.

While the *Hiddur* demonstration project is underway, a rigorous outside evaluation will ensure that the lessons learned are captured for the benefit of the field.

## Judaic Skills for Camp Directors: *Lekhu Lakhem*

*Lekhu Lakhem*<sup>115</sup> is a two-year program for directors of JCC and independent (non-movement) camps. Initiated in 2004 by the Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA), more than fifty-five residential camp directors have already graduated. The program, made possible by a grant from The AVI CHAI Foundation, will launch its fourth cohort with twenty more directors in 2016 as a partnership between JCCA and FJC.

Participants engage in a series of five seminars in North America and one extended seminar in Israel, along with an ongoing program of Jewish learning and educational mentoring.

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115 For more information, see [www.jcca.org/day-resident-camp-staff-training/lekhu-lakhem](http://www.jcca.org/day-resident-camp-staff-training/lekhu-lakhem).

The seminars focus on Jewish education and leadership, using texts to grapple with issues of philosophy, Jewish vision, camp administration, and educational leadership. All these subjects are examined within the context of the issues that camp directors face in the course of their work.

*Lekhu Lakhem* aims to provide senior camp personnel with:

- ★ An understanding that as directors of Jewish camps, they are Jewish educators, and that there is Jewish educational import to all their decisions
- ★ An accessible, positive, enriching experience with Jewish learning
- ★ The ability to articulate a vision for their camps as Jewish educational institutions
- ★ A set of skills and strategies to translate their Jewish visions into camp programming
- ★ An understanding of how a Jewish camp community is built and operates
- ★ A professional development experience that will enhance their careers as they become recognized, potent change agents and leaders within the field of Jewish camping.

## Enhancing Judaic Resources: *Nadiv* and *Chizuk*

*Nadiv*<sup>116</sup> is a project of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation and The AVI CHAI Foundation, and modeled after earlier work by the Legacy Heritage Foundation. *Nadiv* created a partnership between a Jewish camp and a Jewish school<sup>117</sup> in six different communities.<sup>118</sup> Each partnership engaged a full-time Jewish educator who worked year-round in the camp and in the school. Three of the partnerships involved a camp affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and three involved independent, community-based Jewish overnight camps.

The complex initiative aimed to enhance the Judaic resources available to the participating camps by bringing them well-trained Jewish educators who would have camp on their radar screen throughout the year, and who would return to camp and direct its Jewish educational program each summer throughout the four-year life of the program. Additional goals included bringing some of the experiential educational methodologies at which camps are adept to the participating schools; and creating synergies between the participating camps and schools that, it was hoped, would outlive the program.

With the program scheduled to conclude in June 2016, the program operators and funders are presently at work understanding what elements have been most successful, with an eye to sharing the lessons across the field of Jewish camp.

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116 For more information, see [www.jewishcamp.org/nadiv](http://www.jewishcamp.org/nadiv).

117 Four of the partnerships included a Jewish day school, and two included a Jewish synagogue school.

118 The partnership communities included Atlanta, Minneapolis, New York (2), San Diego, and Seattle.

*Chizuk*,<sup>119</sup> funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation, is an initiative designed to enable Lechu Lakhem Fellows (see above) to take the next steps to significantly raise the bar for Jewish life, Jewish learning, Jewish identity, and Israel experiences in their camps. This is accomplished through the addition of a Jewish programming director (*Chizuk* Fellow) to the senior staff of their camps. The *Chizuk* Fellow's mandate is to touch all aspects of the camp and organically integrate meaningful, purposeful, quality Jewish content and experiences.

*Chizuk* Fellows are senior Jewish educators who have a solid grounding in education, along with extensive experience in camping. They work directly with camp directors to implement the directors' visions for Jewish education, functioning to coordinate all facets of Jewish content and experiences for campers and staff alike. Over time, participating camps absorb the salaries for the *Chizuk* Fellows, while AVI CHAI continues to pay their training costs.

## Jewish Skills for Key Staff: Cornerstone and the Nachshon Project

The **Cornerstone Fellowship** is FJC's signature program providing leadership training for experienced bunk counselors and enhancing Jewish programming at camps across North America. Currently in its thirteenth year, the program has provided leadership education and Judaic enhancement to more than 2,800 graduates. The Cornerstone Fellowship is described in detail in Chapter 8 above.

The **Nachshon Project** targets college juniors who have significant camp leadership experience and who intend to return to camp, and to pursue careers in the Jewish community. Participants receive a full scholarship for a semester at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where their regular course load is supplemented by six hours per week of seminars, weekend retreats, and programs based on a curriculum of Jewish and Israel education.

Sponsored by the Legacy Heritage Fund, the first cohort of Nachshon Fellows went to Jerusalem in January 2015 for the spring semester. Fellows came from camps affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Ramah, and JCCA.

## Israel Education, Israel Engagement, and Hebrew Language

The **Goodman Camping Initiative for Modern Israel History**<sup>120</sup> is a partnership between the iCenter and the Foundation for Jewish Camp; among the funders are the Lillian and Larry Goodman Foundations, the Marcus Foundation, and The AVI CHAI Foundation.

Launched in late 2011, the initiative helps independent Jewish camps in North America develop and implement an Israel education curriculum. The program's goal is to enhance and expand the

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119 For more information, see [www.jcca.org/day-resident-camp-staff-training/chizuk](http://www.jcca.org/day-resident-camp-staff-training/chizuk).

120 For more information, see [www.goodman.theicenter.org/about](http://www.goodman.theicenter.org/about).



commitment of North American camps to Israeli history, and to enable Jewish campers across the age spectrum to deepen their connections with Israel outside of camp.

Prior to the inauguration of the Goodman Initiative, many camps' Israel education program was limited to hosting Israeli *shlichim* (emissaries). As noted in Chapter 8, most camps bring Israelis to serve as members of their staffs through the Summer *Shlichim* Program of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Each summer, JAFI posts more than 1,200 *shlichim* to Jewish camps in North America.<sup>121</sup>

The Goodman Initiative includes the following main components:

- ★ The iCenter: A Chicago-based educational institute dedicated to expanding Israel education across North America, the iCenter develops curricula and resources designed for experiential educators at camp.
- ★ Sponsors partner with camps to embed Israel education at 36 Jewish overnight camps over four years.
- ★ The program trains a permanent, in-house Goodman Israel Educator at each camp.
- ★ Through the initiative, each camp recruits and trains five senior staff as Israel educators.
- ★ The project provides program enhancement grants of \$2,500 to participating camps.

**The Arevim Hebrew at Camp (AHAC) program**<sup>122</sup> is a project of the Arevim Philanthropic Group which uses the Foundation for Jewish Camp as its operating platform. Financial sponsorship comes from the national partners of the Arevim Philanthropic Group, with a participating local funder sponsoring the program in each participating camp. AHAC creates a Hebrew immersion unit for young children within the larger programs of selected day camps.

Learning Hebrew transforms children's connections to Jewish civilization, Israel, and Jewish peoplehood. Giving young children the opportunity to gain proficiency in the modern Hebrew language creates deep connections with the fabric of life and culture in Israel.

Starting with Camp Ramah Nyack, which served as the pilot partner in 2013, the program has grown to five camps in 2015. The funders hope to expand the program to considerably more camps in the future.

AHAC uses the pedagogical strategies of the Proficiency Approach to second language acquisition, which the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages endorses as the gold standard in foreign-language instruction. Immersion in an environment where only Hebrew is spoken and where children are actively engaged in meaningful interactions in the language enables them

<sup>121</sup> See Chapter 8 above. For more information, see [www.jewishagency.org/shlichim-israeli-emissaries/program/289](http://www.jewishagency.org/shlichim-israeli-emissaries/program/289).

<sup>122</sup> For more information, see [www.steinhardtoundation.org/programs/primary-areas-of-focus](http://www.steinhardtoundation.org/programs/primary-areas-of-focus) (scroll down to the Hebrew at Camp heading), and [www.jewishcamp.org/arevim-hebrew-immersion-camp](http://www.jewishcamp.org/arevim-hebrew-immersion-camp).



to develop their speaking and comprehension skills in a highly effective way. Experiencing the rhythms and routines of camp in Hebrew—including communal meals, study, play, and worship—provides for a very rich initiation into the language.<sup>123</sup>

**Camp USA**<sup>124</sup> is an Israel-based project to bring Israeli campers to nonprofit Jewish camps in the United States and Canada. Funding has come from UJA-Federation of New York, the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Awards Committee, the Louis D. and Morton J. Macks Family Foundation, and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, in addition to tuition paid by participating families.

Camp USA has operated since 2005, and works mainly with selected JCC overnight camps. Campers 10-16 years of age are accompanied by some of their own counselors, who help with their social transitions to camp. The campers are “mainstreamed,” usually two at a time, into regular camper cabins according to their gender and age.

Camp USA promotes Jewish peoplehood by fostering interactions between Jewish youth from Israel and the Diaspora in the informal, educational setting of overnight summer camp. The experiences shared between the visiting Israeli children and their American peers foster friendships, dissolve stereotypes, and create a sense of closeness. Israeli campers provide the Americans with a window into Israeli life, while the Israeli participants gain a sense of connection to a Jewish community outside of Israel.

## CHALLENGES

The initiatives outlined above, like others which seek to strengthen the Jewish educational content of nonprofit Jewish camps, typically face these major challenges:

1. Most of the Judaic enhancements identified above require the leadership and participation of members of the camp staff. Sometimes the camp director, assistant director, relevant specialists and/or counselors lack a sufficiently strong Jewish educational background to lead the Judaic enhancements successfully. Given the short, seasonal nature of camp, the time available to provide needed training is in very short supply.
2. Some camp leaders worry that the enhancements will make camp appear “too Jewish” in the eyes of its constituents. As noted above, especially in camps which serve “marginally affiliated” constituencies, there is often a concern that “too many” Jewish enhancements will make camp less attractive to some potential camper families and cut into registration. This concern sometimes originates with the professional leadership, and at other times is expressed by board members, key alumni, or other stakeholders.

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123 From *Hebrew Immersion at Your Day Camp*, Summer 2016, a brochure prepared by Areivim Philanthropic Group and FJC.

124 For more information, see [www.camp-usa.co.il/camp-usa-about-english](http://www.camp-usa.co.il/camp-usa-about-english).

3. New enhancements, such as the Judaic enhancements identified above, generally require new financial resources for their implementation. Such additional financial resources are often difficult to identify and to obtain.
4. The careful reader will have noted that a large number of the initiatives to introduce Judaic enhancements at camp over the last decade and more have been funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation, which is planning to sunset at the end of 2019. The absence of AVI CHAI from the landscape of funders who care deeply about these issues will create a vacuum that will be difficult to fill. AVI CHAI is now looking for partners who can continue to fund the many projects it initiated.

## WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

- ★ If one or more of the initiatives described above matches your philanthropic vision, consider contacting the program sponsor and joining the program's funding consortium.
- ★ If your philanthropy focuses on one or more priorities which are not yet addressed by the initiatives described above, consider initiating a project that will apply your expertise in the area of your funding priority to the world of Jewish camp. FJC can help you to find the best partner(s) and to craft the best strategies for your initiative.
- ★ If the Jewish camp with which you are most closely connected would benefit from Jewish enhancement in general, or from participation in one of the initiatives described above in particular, contact the camp, and become an advocate for the requisite Judaic enhancements there.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Front-line camp staff should ideally view themselves as Jewish role models, and even as Jewish educators. Yet the time available for staff training is severely limited. One alternative is to create an Internet-based training mechanism. Is this an initiative that you would like to see in the camp with which you are most closely affiliated? Would it resonate with your philanthropic priorities?
2. Some parents hesitate to send their children to a camp that is “too Jewish.” Accordingly, some directors hesitate to introduce Judaic enhancements at a rapid pace. In your opinion, how should a camp balance the competing priorities of fulfilling their potential as potent programs to build Jewish identity and commitment, on the one hand, with creating a program that is perceived as comfortable for the large majority of families in its target market, thereby maximizing recruitment potential, on the other hand?
3. Are the camps with which you are connected taking full advantage of available Judaic resources? Could they be doing more to be involved with Israel engagement? What are the impediments to their deeper engagement? How could you help overcome those impediments?
4. Is there a philanthropic priority about which you care deeply that could make a difference in the world of Jewish camp, but is not yet being tackled? How could you help to design and launch an initiative to address that priority?

# A Final Word

Jewish overnight camp is one of the most powerful and effective means at our disposal to build Jewish identity and commitment in young people, to cement their sense of Jewish pride and belonging, and thereby to ensure a vibrant Jewish future. In the words of Rabbi Ed Feinstein:

*There are certain things you can learn by description. And there are others that can only be learned in the doing—learned not by words and concepts, but by involving fingers, hands, and heart. That kind of knowing has its own special character.*

*There is much of our tradition that can be conveyed through description. One can learn about the history, about the philosophy, about the culture of Judaism. But the core of holiness, the experience of God's presence, cannot be learned about. It cannot be done for us by others. It cannot be made lighter, easier, more convenient. It requires the intensity of full personal involvement and investment. It requires the whole self.*

*Kids who have been to Jewish camp carry home crafts and new friends, and a profound sense of having touched the core of Jewish life. They bear vivid memories of Friday night sunsets, havdallah beneath the stars, new Hebrew songs, and a sense of belonging. They learn little about Judaism. Rather, they have lived Judaism personally and intensely.*

*Centuries from now, when the definitive history of American Judaism is written, scholars will note the contribution of synagogues and seminaries to American Jewish life. But they will single out the summer camp as the most unique American Jewish institution. No institution changes young lives as powerfully as does camp. No other institution offers the chance to come so close to the core of holiness and feel the joy of carrying Judaism oneself.*

*Returning from camp, our kids have a thirst for Jewish learning and a new joy in Jewish living. Having touched the core of holiness, they take up an ancient song. If you are tired of the depressing pessimism that accompanies so much of Jewish life, do yourself a favor this summer: go and visit a Jewish summer camp and breathe in its joyful spirit.<sup>125</sup>*

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<sup>125</sup> Excerpted from a congregational message provided courtesy of Rabbi Ed Feinstein, Senior Rabbi of Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA, and former Executive Director, Camp Ramah in California.

Over the last fifteen or twenty years, the field of Jewish overnight camping has begun to gain the recognition it has long deserved for its power to shape coming generations of Jews. The field has grown greatly. But as the pages above attest, there is a great deal yet to be done. Despite its power and its appeal, Jewish overnight camp still reaches only a small minority of Jewish youngsters each summer. Too many Jewish camps still miss too many opportunities to reach their full potential.

This book aims to encourage leaders and funders in the Jewish community to debate, discuss, plan, and implement innovative ideas to spur the further growth and development of the field of Jewish camp. There is much room for expansion. The initiatives described in the preceding chapters, however powerful, do not fully exhaust the potential repertoire of successful projects. New ideas are both needed and welcome. As the Talmudic sage Rabbi Tarfon said: No one is expected to complete the whole task; but neither is anyone exempt from the obligation to engage with it.<sup>126</sup>

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126 Pirkei Avot 2:21. [Pirkei Avot, which translates as "Sayings of the Ancestors," is a tractate of the Mishnah, an early compilation of Jewish law and the first major work of rabbinic literature, dating from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.]

# Ways to use this Greenbook

Below are some suggestions for using this book as a text, and as a study tool.

**Chapter questions:** Each chapter concludes with questions that can be used to guide group discussions. You can focus on concepts in the chapter or examine how the concepts play out in your local communities.

**A philanthropic resource:** The Greenbook is specifically written for funders. As you read this book, consider how you can take this philanthropic resource and convert it into action.

## CHAVRUTA FORMAT

**Chavruta**, (Aramaic: חברותא, lit. “friendship” or “companionship”), is a traditional Jewish approach to Talmudic study in which a pair of students discuss and debate a shared text. Chavruta-style learning encourages each student to analyze the text, explain his reasoning to his partner, and hear out his partner’s reasoning. By means of questioning and sharpening each other’s ideas, a chavruta often arrives at entirely new insights into the meaning of the text.

- ★ Set up a time to meet with another funder (or a camp leader), possibly as a recurring “learning” time. Pick one chapter to learn together. (Take turns reading it, ask each other questions, mark ideas which you want to explore more deeply.) You can use the discussion questions at the end of each chapter to help expand your conversation.
- ★ With a larger group, break into smaller groups. Here are two ways to do this: Break into groups of two. Groups learn one chapter together, and then the full group re-convenes for a larger discussion. Use the discussion questions to enhance and guide the discussion. Break into small groups of 2-4 people. Each group learns a different chapter, using the chapter’s discussion questions to enhance its conversation. The full group re-convenes and each group reports back to the larger group what their group discussed, allowing time for questions.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- ★ **Book-club style:** Invite 10-15 funders to take part in a discussion group. Limiting these meetings to about 15 will allow for a participatory conversation and will encourage everyone to take part. Decide to address one or two chapters together. Ask everyone to read the chosen chapter(s) before the meeting along with the introduction and conclusion. Use the chapter's discussion questions to spark the discussion. You can also invite a speaker to address your group (e.g., a camp director). Helpful suggestions: Sit in a circle, in a living room or around a table. One person acts as moderator, to ensure all voices are heard and to facilitate the conversation. If you do not think people will read beforehand, you can do this chavruta style (see above).
- ★ **Board meetings:** Use this book as a learning tool with your board. Set aside time to discuss one chapter at each meeting. Ask members to review the chapter before meeting, and use the allotted time to discuss the ideas in the chapter and how they connect to your local community.

## HELPFUL TIPS

- ★ **Suggested guidelines:** Listen actively. Respect others when they are talking. The goal is not necessarily to agree but to gain a deeper understanding together. Do not be afraid to challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks: focus on ideas. If this is a funders-only conversation, clarify that it is "off-the-record."

# Acknowledgements

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I am grateful to the many people who played important roles in the development of this Greenbook. Without their guidance, assistance, and support, I could not have gathered the information contained in this volume.

The publication was blessed with a dedicated Advisory Committee, members of the Jewish Funders Network who drew on their deep experience with the field to guide the shape and content of this work. They read carefully, and made innumerable wise and important suggestions. **Elisa Spungen Bildner, Michael Bohnen, Jim Heeger, Lauren K. Merkin, and Jeffrey Solomon** were important partners in this work.

Several people willingly submitted to research interviews in the development of this project, and I am grateful for their input, knowledge, and generosity with their time and expertise. These include **Jeremy Fingerman**, CEO of the Foundation for Jewish Camp; **Mark Gold**, Director of JCamp180 at the Harold Grinspoon Foundation; **Joel Einleger**, Senior Program Officer and Director of Strategy for Camp Programs at The AVI CHAI Foundation; **Dan Perla**, Vice President for Program and Strategy, **Rebecca Kahn**, Director of Community Initiatives and **Julie Finkelstein**, Senior Program Manager at the Foundation for Jewish Camp; **Ari Vared**, Director of Advancement and Year Round Programs at URJ Camp Newman; **Jim Heeger**, Capital Campaign Chair at URJ Camp Newman; Rodney Freeman, founder of Tour de Summer Camps; **Yuval Koren**, Director of Camp USA; and **Sara Zebovitz, Mazkirah Klalit** (National Director) of Habonim Dror North America.

I am grateful to colleagues who responded to fact-checking requests for up-to-date information. In addition to those listed above, they include David Ackerman, Director of the Mandel Center for Jewish Education at the JCC Association; Rabbi Mitchell Cohen, Director of the Ramah National Commission; Helene Drobenare, Executive Director of Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake; Rabbi Menachem Hecht, Executive Director, Camp Moshava California; Simon Klarfeld, Executive Director of Young Judaea; Paul Reichenbach, Director of Camp and Israel Programs at the Union for Reform Judaism; Steve Weinberg, Director of the Habonim Dror Camp Association; and Harrell Wittenstein, Executive Director of the Association of Independent Jewish Camps.

**Ruthie Rotenberg**, an exceptionally able partner, gently and capably shepherded this project on behalf of the Jewish Funders Network. I am very grateful for her prodding, her guidance, and her support.

It has been nearly five decades since my first experience at Jewish camp: in 1967 I had the extraordinary good fortune to land a job as a junior song-leader at URJ Eisner Camp. It didn't pay much—my gross salary for the summer was \$100—but it was one of the most important experiences of my life: changing my life's direction personally, professionally, and spiritually. As



a bonus, that summer I met an enchanting young lady, talented and extraordinary in innumerable ways, and I am blessed that we have walked the path of life together as husband and wife for more than 42 years. I lovingly dedicate this book to my wife, **Merri Lovinger Arian**.

–*Ramie Arian*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ramie Arian** is a consultant who works with Jewish camps, youth movements and others concerned with building Jewish identity and commitment in young people and adults. Current and recent clients include the Foundation for Jewish Camp, the Jewish Agency for Israel North American Section, Young Judaea Global, the National Ramah Commission, NEXT: A division of Birthright Israel Foundation, the Jewish Community Center Association, the iCenter, the Jewish Education Project, Synagogue 3000 and Jewish Helping Hands, among others.

Throughout his 40-year career, Arian has worked with Jewish education, mainly in experiential settings. He was founding Executive Director of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, and has served as National Director of Young Judaea and as Vice President of the Wexner Heritage Foundation. He served for 15 years with the Youth Division of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), and enjoyed 22 summers at URJ camps.

A graduate of Brown University, Arian holds an MA, rabbinic ordination, and a Doctorate of Divinity (honoris causa) from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

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