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Summer 2026 Foundation Focus

News from the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City

A Stronger Foundation for What's Next

Growth is most meaningful when it creates greater opportunities to serve our community. At the Jewish Community Foundation, we are continuing to invest thoughtfully in the people, programs and resources that will allow us to deepen our impact for donors, nonprofit partners and the broader community. The talented new colleagues joining our team bring fresh perspectives and expanded expertise, while new initiatives are creating exciting opportunities to inspire generosity, strengthen organizations, and build resources for the future.

We are also investing behind the scenes to ensure that our internal systems are optimized to best support our work. In the coming months, we will be migrating to a modernized database platform that will create greater efficiencies, enhance our ability to serve our Foundation Family and better position JCF for continued growth. While technology itself may not be the most visible part of our work, strong systems allow our team to spend more time building relationships, developing creative philanthropic solutions, and helping charitable visions become reality.

We are energized by all that lies ahead and grateful for the trust and partnership that make this progress possible. Together with you, we are building a stronger Foundation that is better prepared to meet emerging opportunities, respond to changing needs and help our generous donors make an even greater difference.



Joseph Hiersteiner
Board Chair

Josh Stein
President & CEO

Meet Our New Team Members



KARA KAHN BUSH

This spring, Kara Kahn Bush was hired to be director of our new Bushman legacy initiative. Kara is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the new Bushman Community Endowment program, which will support and enhance the legacy giving efforts of our partner organizations and synagogues. This new position is funded by a generous grant from the Stanley J. Bushman Charitable Supporting Foundation.

“I am inspired by the value of tikkun olam (repairing the world) and how it motivates our donors beyond just our community,” said Kara. “At the Foundation, we get to help create impact across so many causes.”



MIKE GOODMAN

Mike Goodman recently joined the JCF team as our Finance & Operations Associate. In this role, Mike processes donations, assists with our database and special projects, and supports the overall accounting operations of the Foundation.

Mike said, “I am excited to work for JCF because I get to support relationships with donors that want to make a difference in our community.”



MAE TUSCHMAN

When you walk into the JCF office, you'll be greeted by a new friendly face: Mae Tuschman, our new Front Office Coordinator. Mae is responsible for providing administrative support to ensure a welcoming, efficient, and well-organized office. She is a recent graduate of UMKC and has vast customer service experience, most recently in the restaurant and performing arts industries.

"I am excited about working at JCF because I get to assist donors in making meaningful contributions to the community that positively impact so many people, all while working alongside such an amazing staff," said Mae.

In Other Staff News...



ANTOINETTE WELLS

Antoinette Wells has been promoted to Senior Administrative Services Manager. In this new position, Antoinette serves in a higher-level administrative capacity supporting the Bushman Community Endowment program, as well as continuing to support JCF's Board of Trustees and grants processes.



ELIZABETH PEDEN & KEVIN TAYLOR

In bittersweet news, Elizabeth Peden has recently retired from her role as CFO of the Foundation. We are grateful for Elizabeth's service to JCF and are especially appreciative of her nearly 25 years of dedicated work in our Jewish community. We wish her all the best in her next chapter.

We are pleased to welcome back former JCF CFO Kevin Taylor, who has returned to the role for one year as we conduct a search for our permanent CFO. Kevin's return reflects the same commitment to the Foundation that has always defined his work, and we are thankful for his continued dedication to JCF and our fundholders.



LEIBA ESTRIN

In mid-June, Leiba Estrin, our Grants Manager, began performing her job duties from Florida, where she moved to be closer to family. Thanks to the wonders of technology, Leiba now serves JCF fundholders remotely and continues to offer the same high level of personal service for which the Foundation is known.



LAUREN LEVY

We are excited to welcome Lauren Levy as our new B'nai Tzedek Program Coordinator. Lauren will oversee the management and execution of the B'nai Tzedek program, including guiding the B'nai Tzedek Youth Council as they plan and lead the B'nai Tzedek Shuk, JCF's annual teen philanthropy fair. She will also work closely with local synagogues and JCF's partner agencies to create meaningful opportunities for Youth Council members and B'nai Tzedek fundholders to engage in philanthropy, helping to inspire and develop the next generation of Jewish philanthropists and community leaders. Lauren brings a strong background in education within the Jewish community, having taught at both Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy and the Polsky Religious School at Congregation Beth Shalom.



SUPPORTING FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP: BAILEY NAKELSKY & AMY GALE

Two supporting foundations at the Jewish Community Foundation have recently welcomed new leadership. Bailey Nakelsky has been hired as Executive Director of the Stanley J. Bushman Charitable Supporting Foundation. Bailey will work together with the supporting foundation board to identify and create meaningful projects that honor the philanthropic legacy of Stan Bushman. Bailey has more than two decades of experience in Jewish communal leadership and most recently served as Chief Philanthropy Officer of The J.



Amy Gale became CEO of the Menorah Heritage Foundation this spring, succeeding Rita Cortes. Amy has more than twenty years of experience in philanthropy, education, and nonprofit management, including roles with the Kansas City Royals Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and Chicago Public Schools.

New Funds

Donor Advised Funds

- Micah & Trisha Levine Charitable Fund
- Raiche Family Charitable Fund

Restricted Funds

- Hoopes Family Student Research Travel Fund
- Sarah Milgrim Fund

Custodial Funds

- Bill Lowenstein Memorial Camp Scholarship Fund of B'nai Jehudah
- Congregation Beth Torah Amy Dennis Pierron Music Fund
- Congregation Beth Torah Board Restricted General Fund
- Congregation Beth Torah Joel's Ride for Justice Fund
- Jacob & Rose Szneler Scholarship Fund

Community Legacy Funds

- Rogovein Legacy Fund



Investing in Engagement

Supporting a strong Jewish community and offering opportunities to engage in Jewish life, learning, and the beloved tradition of tikkun olam (repairing the world) is at the heart of our work at the Jewish Community Foundation. Through strategic grantmaking, we've recently participated in several funding partnerships that enhance our community's ability to come together and connect Jewishly.

Maccabi Games

This August, Kansas City has the incredible honor of hosting the Maccabi Games, an Olympic-style sporting competition expected to bring 1,000 Jewish teen athletes from around the globe and mobilize members of our community, including 400 host families, thousands of volunteers, and 150 local athletes. Recognizing this fantastic opportunity to strengthen our community, JCF leadership has allocated \$15,000 to support engagement efforts that extend beyond the event and will encourage continued communal participation in Jewish programming. The majority of this funding was allocated by JCF's Community Legacy Fund which has prioritized awarding grants that support opportunities for individuals to participate in programs and events that foster a deeper appreciation of



Jewish life, religion, and culture and strengthen connection to the Jewish community.

“Support from the Community Legacy Fund will strengthen The J’s ability to intentionally engage teen athletes, community volunteers, and leaders far beyond the one week of the Maccabi Games,” said Bailey Nakelsky, Chief Philanthropy Officer of The J. “This investment helps build capacity as we create meaningful pathways for continued involvement, development systems to pipeline new leaders into strategic roles and connect with volunteers as they continue to seek new opportunities for involvement.”

Camp Scholarships

Funds at the Jewish Community Foundation also contributed to making the formative experience of attending Jewish summer camp more accessible. Through JCF’s support, the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City’s Rabbi Gershon Hadas Guardian Society Scholarship Fund provided a total of \$84,153 to 60 campers for the summer of 2026. Sierra Debrow, Jewish Federation’s Community Planning Specialist, said this year’s record-breaking grants and scholarships were made possible with the support of the Jewish Community Foundation, which granted \$20,000 from the Community Legacy Fund, \$10,000 from the Flo Harris Foundation, and \$54,537 from the Louis Family Memorial Fund.



“Immersive Jewish experiences, like summer camp and Israel travel programs, are some of the most impactful Jewish programs available to children,” said Debrow. “Children and teens attending Jewish overnight camps are more likely to feel that being Jewish is important to them, attend a synagogue, or regularly light candles on Shabbat.”

Purim Extravaganza

Another engaging activity supported by the Community Legacy Fund and J-LEAD, the Foundation’s young adult giving circle, is the community Purim Extravaganza. Hosted by Jewish Experiences, a collaboration of The J and Jewish Federation, this joyous community-wide celebration includes costumes, bounce houses, carnival games, face painting, and cotton candy. The Foundation is proud to support this lively effort to bring together community members of all ages to rejoice in Jewish life.



For more information about how Jewish Community Foundation funds support engagement, please contact Beatrice Fine at bfine@jcfkc.org or (913) 327-4618.

Connecting Our Giving Community

By Martha Gershun

As a Trustee of the Jewish Community Foundation (JCF) and long-time member of the Marketing Committee, I was very excited when we began the Connecting Our Giving Community program to offer fundholders opportunities to meet each other to talk about ideas and questions around charitable giving and tour area nonprofits to learn how our philanthropy is making a difference in the community. It was clearly an important expansion of our efforts to be sure our fundholders were informed and supported in their philanthropic efforts.

Since we began the program in 2024, activities have included Connecting Conversations about “Making Lasting Impact in a Changing Nonprofit,” hosted by Rita Cortes, fundholder and former CEO of the Menorah Heritage Foundation; “Creating a Fund with a Vision,” hosted by Lynn and Bill Intrater and other fundholders; “A Family That Gives Together Grows Together,” hosted by the Krigel family; and “Building Bridges Through Philanthropy in Israel,” hosted by Debbie Sosland-Edelman and Alan Edelman.

We also organized site visits to Wayside Waifs, The J, the Truman Library Institute’s White House Decision Center, Kansas City Kosher Meals on Wheels, the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, KU Hillel and Chabad of KU, Kanbe’s Markets, and a tour of Kansas City’s theaters, among others.



Most exciting for me has been the opportunity to host our fundholders and JCF staff for site visits at two nonprofits where I am a passionate volunteer and supporter — Jackson County CASA, which advocates for the best interests of youth in the child welfare system until they are placed in a safe and permanent home, and SAVE, Inc., which provides housing and support for vulnerable adults and families in Kansas City, including those with HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and substance abuse disorders, as well as LGBTQ+ youth ages 18-24. I was honored to share the great work of these two long-time area organizations with so many interested and committed members of our Foundation family.

We have a number of great activities coming up, including site visits with Kansas City Hospice and Village Shalom, and a Connecting Conversation on “The Next Chapter of Generosity: Giving in Your 70s & Beyond,” hosted by Gail and Gary Weinberg. For details, please reach out to Suzanne Dicken at sdicken@jcfkc.org.

Please join us for whichever programs catch your eye. I promise you will be delighted to meet JCF fundholders and members of the JCF staff, as they engage in important and intentional conversations about philanthropy, and be inspired by the great work we are doing together with a diverse array of area nonprofits to enrich and support the Kansas City community. I look forward to seeing you there!

Empowering Teen Philanthropy at the B'nai Tzedek Shuk

On April 14th, the Jewish Community Foundation welcomed teens and their families to our youth philanthropy fair, the B'nai Tzedek Shuk. This annual event is a highlight of the Foundation's philanthropic programming which connects teens with Jewish communal organizations for an evening of learning, engagement, and fun. The theme of the event was the "Philanthropy World Cup," based on the excitement and energy surrounding Kansas City hosting the FIFA World Cup and Maccabi Games. The theme reinforces the core Jewish value of collective responsibility and empowers teens to take an active role in repairing the world. B'nai Tzedek participants donated more than \$3,000 to communal organizations at the Shuk.

The event took place in the Jewish Community Campus Social Hall where teens met with representatives from Jewish organizations and learned about each nonprofit's meaningful work. To maximize engagement, the fundholders participated in a fun trivia challenge to discover interesting facts about each organization represented. Representatives from 20 local nonprofits participated in the event.

The Foundation's B'nai Tzedek program introduces bar and bat mitzvah-age youth to the joys of tzedakah by inviting them to establish their own personal charitable giving accounts at the Jewish Community Foundation. B'nai Tzedek funds may be opened with a \$125 tax-deductible contribution, which the Foundation triple matches with a \$375 contribution. Each teen fundholder begins their philanthropic journey with a \$500 fund balance, and every year they may donate 10% of their fund to a Jewish charity, either locally or in Israel.

"It's incredibly meaningful to spend time with the next generation of philanthropists at the Shuk," said Melanie Hayden, Chief Advancement Officer of Jewish Family Services. "Hearing what young people care



about and having the chance to share how Jewish Family Services is supporting individuals and families in our community through counseling, food security, and social services makes these conversations so powerful for all of us.”

After visiting the organizations’ booths, attendees enjoyed a lively reception with teen-approved menu items such as mac ‘n cheese, quesadillas, and Dippin’ Dots. The evening concluded with members of the Youth Council sharing personal insights about their positive experiences participating in the B’nai Tzedek program. Since the program began in 2001, nearly 700 teens have opened funds and almost \$500,000 has been donated to Jewish nonprofits.

For more information, contact our B’nai Tzedek program coordinator at bt@jcfkc.org or call (913) 327-8245.



“The Shuk is always one of the most meaningful events of the year. The ability to talk directly with various Jewish organizations in one place helps me make a confident choice of where to make my annual B’nai Tzedek grant.”

— Ruby Sokol, B’nai Tzedek Youth Council member

Shuk Snapshots





JCF Celebrates 20 Years of J-LEAD Giving Circle

On June 4, the Jewish Community Foundation welcomed current and former members of our J-LEAD giving circle to a special 20th anniversary celebration at Chicken N Pickle in Overland Park. At the event, members reflected on J-LEAD's meaningful impact on the community and noted that since the program's inception, more than \$575,000 has been granted to support communal organizations and programs. The recipients of 2026 J-LEAD grants were also invited to attend and share how J-LEAD support will positively affect their organizations.

By pooling together resources and collectively making grant decisions, J-LEAD (Jewish Leadership Education Action and Development) members are able to achieve a greater good than any one member could alone. Membership is open to young adults in their 20s, 30s, and 40s who may join for a \$500 charitable contribution. For a limited time, the Foundation is running a special promotion for new members, who may join for only \$250.

The program was conceived in 2006 when Lauren Hoopes, then-executive director of the Jewish Community Foundation, approached Gregory Wolf about starting a giving circle for young professionals in the Kansas

City Jewish community. Since that time, more than 250 community members have participated in J-LEAD, many of whom have served on the J-LEAD steering committee and helped guide the program and grow its philanthropic impact.

“I wanted to provide opportunities for young professionals to engage with other young professionals in a setting where they could make an impact,” said Wolf. “J-LEAD was a mechanism to do that in the Jewish community. It warms my heart to see something that I spent so much time and effort on continue to grow.”

In addition to increasing the impact of their philanthropy, J-LEAD empowers members to forge meaningful connections within the Jewish community. Through collective decision-making and volunteer and social activities, J-LEAD members engage with peers who share their passion for making a difference. The program also offers educational resources and opportunities for members to deepen their understanding of philanthropy, Jewish values, and community needs. After their participation, many members have gone on to hold prominent leadership positions in the community and have become more thoughtful and strategic philanthropists.

Abby Lane, current co-chair of J-LEAD, said of her experience, “J-LEAD has made me want to figure out ways to give more, both with my time, but especially with my money, and also has helped facilitate conversations between my husband and I about our values, what causes speak to us, and how we can help create a legacy of giving.”

Co-chair Becky Barnett agreed. “It’s been powerful to start conversations with my husband and our two boys about what it means to contribute to your community and what needs there might be that you weren’t aware of,” she said. “It’s really special to let people know what’s going on in the community and how we can have a bigger impact than we thought possible.”

J-LEAD’s grantmaking capacity is enhanced by long-time support from the Jewish Community Foundation’s Community Legacy Fund, which has added \$10,000 to J-LEAD’s grantable balance since the program graduated from its pilot phase. This generous investment empowers the next generation to make an even larger impact on the Jewish community.

For more information about the J-LEAD program, please contact Suzanne Galblum Dicken at sdicken@jcfkc.org or (913) 327-8286.

2026 J-LEAD Grants: \$26,026

- Jewish Community Center: Community Purim Carnival - \$3,000
- Jewish Family Services (JFS): Care Management & Support for Holocaust Survivors - \$5,000
- JCRB|AJC: Student 2 Student Program - \$5,000
- Jewish Vocational Service (JVS): Refugee Youth Summer Enrichment Program - \$4,226
- Mitzvah Garden: Pro-Semitism Capacity Building - \$5,000
- Village Shalom: Sensory Room for Weissman Skilled Nursing Memory Support - \$3,800



Save the Date for Foundation For Our Future

Foundation for our Future brings our community together to recognize the individuals and families whose planned gifts help secure a vibrant Jewish future.

If you have made a planned gift to a local Jewish agency or synagogue, we'd like to celebrate you at our community-wide celebration of planned giving on Thursday, September 24. The event will feature keynote speaker Bret Stephens, an award-winning journalist and thought leader in world Jewry; the Endowment Book of Life signing ceremony; and a first look at the new Bushman Community Endowment program.

For more information, contact Kara Kahn Bush at (913) 327-8120 or kbush@jcfkc.org





Join us in Celebrating DAF Day on October 8!

DAF Day is the national giving day for Donor Advised Funds — the fastest-growing form of philanthropy in the country. Recognized on the second Thursday in October, DAF Day brings together donors, nonprofits, and DAF providers to inspire DAF giving for the causes that they care about most.

A JCF Donor Advised Fund is a tax-wise personal charitable giving account that enables you to support your favorite charities — Jewish and secular.

If you've been thinking of opening a fund, DAF Day is the perfect time! Take advantage of valuable new fund incentives offered by the Foundation.

If you already enjoy the benefits of a Donor Advised Fund, join the DAF Day fun by making a grant or contributing to your fund on October 8.

More information to come! If you have questions, please contact Suzanne Galblum Dicken at sdicken@jcfkc.org or (913) 327-8286.