

the



THE
MPA
YEAR
2024-25



1,471

summer campers made memories

jccoc.org

WELCOME

Building and cultivating community at the J is not only a responsibility - it is both a joy and a mitzvah. Each day, we witness the J as a source of light, illuminating lives with connection, learning, wellness, and joy.

People visit us looking for a gym, preschool, camp, movie... they stay because we are that and more. Rooted in Jewish values, the J is a place for all ages and all stages, where friendships form, traditions are celebrated, and a deep sense of belonging shines through.

This year, our light shined beyond our walls. Our tech camp expanded south. Sunrise Camp welcomed campers from across Orange County and beyond for respite, joy, and hope. Our teen program more than quadrupled, with teens traveling globally and launching a virtual cooking exchange with Jewish teens from Ukraine (that deserves a WOW!). Our Shinshinim brought Israel here.

In moments of challenge, we leaned on one another, ensuring the J remained a safe and welcoming home. Together, we stood strong against antisemitism, offering the light of community, identity, and strength.

The stories in this 2024-2025 Impact Report reflect the many sparks: our members, board, donors, volunteers, staff, and partners - who bring their light to the J. Together, we are sharing that light widely, building community today, and illuminating a vibrant Jewish future.

We deeply appreciate your support on this journey. Together, we have accomplished so much, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead.

Hal Altman

HAL ALTMAN
Chair of the Board

Scott Braswell

SCOTT BRASWELL
CEO



60,000

people walked through
our doors each month



CAMP HAVERIM

Lighting Up, Shining Bright

Camp Haverim shines bright as the heart of summer fun and friendship for more than 700 Jkids. Each day, our campers immersed in a world filled with creativity, exploration, connection, and Jewish values, sparking memories that last a lifetime. From spirited activities, outdoor adventure and fun field trips to art, sports, dance and community celebrations, Camp Haverim empowers every child to discover their light and share it with others. Our campers don't just participate—they thrive, growing in confidence, joy, and belonging. We are proud that Camp Haverim was named **OC's Best Camp for Creative Kids in 2025**, a testament to the warmth, innovation, and imagination that define our program.

Parent OC's
Best After-School Program
in 2025

13,440 popsicles end
Camp Haverim days

ARONOFF PRESCHOOL



Lighting the Way

At the heart of the Merage JCC's Aronoff Preschool is a team of exceptional educators who embody the Jewish value of lifelong learning. This past year, our 58 teachers each completed more than 120 hours of professional development — learning from specialists, guest speakers, and peer schools — to bring best practices into our classrooms.

Our faculty not only nurture young learners, they also model philanthropy and community engagement, by living the value of *tikkun olam* - repairing the world. Partnering with the Jessie Rees Foundation and JCC Cares, the ECLC embraced **Mitzvah Month** in March, with teachers and families actively participating in meaningful service projects that benefited the wider community.

With an extraordinary 90% teacher retention rate — unparalleled in early childhood education — our dedicated educators provide the consistency, care, and excellence that ensure every child thrives.



"You have really made the preschool feel like a home away from home for us and I can't begin to thank you for all your support."
- Sarah Costanza



SUNRISE DAY CAMP

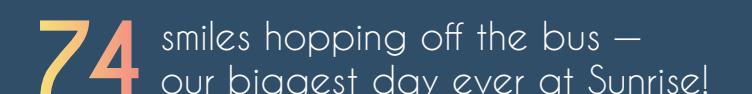
Brighter Together

This summer, Sunrise Day Camp OC, our camp for children with cancer and their siblings, shined brighter than ever. In just our second summer, **105 campers** joined us, averaging **50 campers per day**. Among them, **47 children with cancer** joined us, making this summer truly unforgettable.

The true magic of Sunrise is in the moments of connection, joy, and healing. One camper came just a week after losing a sibling and discovered friendship, fun, and hope. Another, age three, completed treatment during camp and returned the next day to proudly share his cancer-free milestone with friends.

As we look forward to a world without pediatric cancer, Sunrise will continue to bring joy, hope, and brighter days to children and families. **Together, we shine brighter.**

"The girls had an amazing time... They said it's the most awesome camp they've been to! Thank you for all you do — kids like ours lost years of childhood due to treatments and recovery." - Dana Tom



100% free of charge for children
with cancer and their siblings



CENTER FOR JEWISH LIFE

When darkness comes, choose light

Just a few years ago, antisemitic stereotypes in the United States felt more like noise than a real threat, tired myths too outdated to take seriously.

Then came the “day after”, while we were 3,000 miles away from the atrocities in our homeland, we were confronted with the chilling realization that bigotry was not only alive, it was thriving.

As a J, we stood by Israel, loudly and clearly, while celebrating Judaism and our heritage. **More than 6,251 people participated in a yearlong array of Israel programs.** From the commemorations of Yom HaShoah, Yom Hazikaron, and October 7 to the celebration of Israel films, food and comedy, the J, together with our Shinshinim, and thousands of our members and supporters, immersed ourselves in Jewish and Israeli history, culture, and values. In doing so, we strengthened our collective resilience and reclaimed a narrative not about hate, but about kehilah, community—our community rooted in courage, compassion, and continuity.

The most powerful response to antisemitism is not through fear or apology, but through joy, pride, and affirmation.”
- Bari Weiss

JCC CARES

Guiding Light

On our 11th annual Dec25 more than 550 volunteers:

cooked
866
hot holiday meals

filled
800
stockings

made
350
sack lunches

collected
80
toys for kids

608 packed food boxes
for seniors

1,282 baked treats
for firefighters
and shelters



ADULT PROGRAMMING

Sparking intellect

The Merage JCC arts, culture, and social programs nourish the mind and spirit at any stage of adulthood. With **1,353 ticketholders**, the 2024 OC Jewish Arts Festival saw huge crowds with its sold-out performance by Israeli-American comedian Modi Rosenfeld. Our B'tayavon celebrity chef series brought back the amazing Chef Michael Solomonov, and Chef Alon Shaya and June Hersh joined us for a poignant demonstration of rescued recipes from the Holocaust. It was all standing ovations for the JCC's own JStage with their performances of The Sound of Music and Beauty and the Beast. Our most esteemed Prime-Time adults enjoyed a year of incredible programming including clubs and discussion groups, the Lifelong Learning Lunch series, linking Jewish history with present day with Avi Melamed and S. Ilan Troen, as well as a deep-dive into Catskills comedy from Samantha Goldstein, PhD. All of this plus a tremendously busy year for Books & Bagels, Mah-jongg, Men's Club, and News & Views... you never get bored at the JCC!



"The JCC is my second home"
- Jo Ann Anthony

4060 downward dogs
in Gentle Yoga

TEENS

Bright Futures

This year, we welcomed a rising staff star, Matan, whose deep Jewish and Israeli roots, love of teaching, and passion for food have energized our work with teens and families. Together, with our partner BBYO, and with the support of the Jewish Community Foundation Orange County and the Jewish Federation Orange County, our teen program grew from a handful of one-off successes into a vibrant calendar of nearly weekly events. In just one year, teen participation has more than quadrupled, and our program is now the place where teens want to be.

152 people attended our first teen Shabbat

"While I was not initially involved in a community of Jewish teens, JCC Maccabi Games opened the door to many fun events and meaningful relationships. Over the past year, these connections with Jewish friends from OC and even globally truly made a difference in my life." - Ben Stone



FITNESS

Shining Strong

For 15 years, the Merage JCC has been voted Best Fitness Center in the Orange County Register's Best of OC awards, and this year, we're proud to add a brand-new honor: Best Pickleball Courts!

Fitness at the J is more than a workout: it's a community. From spin to Zumba, gentle yoga to balance classes, our programs meet every age and stage. Members enjoy state-of-the-art equipment, personal training, a full Pilates studio, aquatics with a competitive swim team, and Hoop U basketball.

Wellness goes beyond exercise with our JRecovery Suite offering compression therapy and massage chairs, plus onsite massage, chiropractic care, and physical therapy. And now, our award-winning pickleball courts buzz with energy, indoors and outdoors, rain or shine.

Together, we shine. Together, we thrive.

36,000

oranges replenished
our light

10,000

towels kept us clean



51 staff have been
at the J 10+ years

*"For us, it's not just about fitness,
it's about connection, support, and building
something meaningful together."
- Eddie Priesand, Senior Director of Fitness*

456 staff made
the J shine

MERAGE JCC STAFF

Brighter Together

Hal Altman, the J's Chair of the Board, is known for saying, "If you took our staff and dropped them into a different center, that center would become the best there is. Our staff is that good!"

While our reports typically highlight the accomplishments of our programs, this year we want to emphasize our staff as one of our most valuable resources. Our J is world-class because our staff is exceptional. This year, the J launched two JLeads cohorts to develop management skills, supported four directors with advanced education, and funded additional certificate programs to foster staff growth.

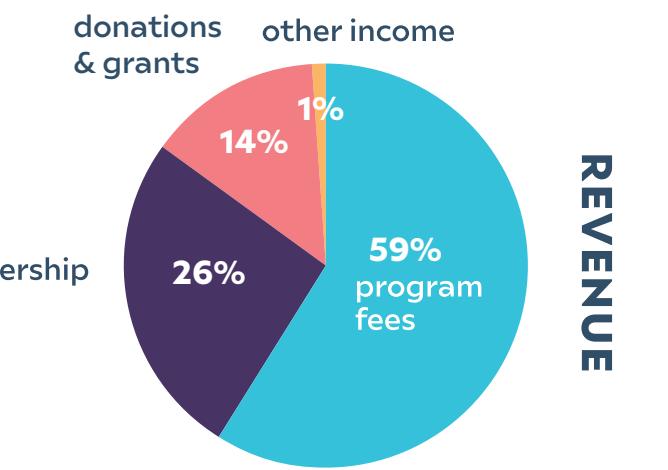
In addition, we offer education stipends to encourage staff-driven professional development. We are also proud that our donors have made the Sinai Fund available to staff experiencing medical emergencies in their families, as well as scholarships for college students of our staff.

*"Thank you, Scott. Your ability to find such
excellent people is what makes the J so
special." - John Briggs*

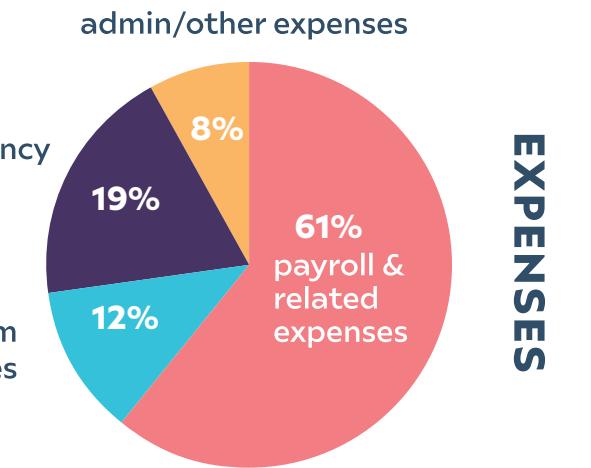
FINANCIALS

Letting the light shine through

Our community is more than a building. Your support makes a profound impact and helps us build connections and ensure continuity.



REVENUE



EXPENSES

860 new members

"The scholarship makes it possible for our family to be part of a truly special preschool with devoted educators, while also giving our children the chance to create lifelong memories and friendships that root us deeply in the Jewish community." – Sheer Best



SCHOLARSHIPS

Passing the torch

Scholarships ensure that everyone can access the J's programs and community, regardless of financial circumstances. We are proud to have supported over 160 individuals and families. Post-pandemic inflation, rising costs of living, healthcare debt, and economic uncertainty have all been reflected in our scholarship applications. We firmly believe that community, wellness, and cultural education are essential—not luxuries to be cut when times get tough. Our goal is to be a Jewish community that rises to support our families and neighbors with pride and dignity. Thanks to your generosity, the total scholarship dollars distributed increased by 112% since 2021.

We are committed to doing even more this year—and we hope you'll join us. **Toda rabah!**

2024-2025 Scholarships

Aronoff Preschool	40
JCamps	67
JCC Maccabi Games	8
Global Teens	9
Membership	42

THANK YOU

\$100,000+

Sandy Fainbarg
Dana and Yossie Hollander
Adrienne and Rick Matros
Isidore C. and Penny W. Myers Foundation
Samueli Foundation
Jewish Community Foundation of Orange County

\$50,000 - \$100,000

Melanie and Hal Altman
Jewish Federation of Orange County
Merge Foundation

\$18,000 - \$49,999

BBYO
Nancy and Irv Chase
Harold Grinspoon Foundation
JCC Association
Zohar and Danny Prosky
Dana and Mark Susson

\$10,000 - \$17,999

Jane and Matthew Brenner
Steven N. Fainbarg z"l
Roberta Feuerstein
Rita and Ira Goldberg
Robin and Larry Kaplan
Doris and Martin Melnick
Lynda and Mark Schwartz
Sabra Health Care
The Jewish Agency for Israel

\$3,600 - \$9,999

Joanne and Michael Abel
Eyal and Yael Aronoff
Michael S. Bassirpour
Marlene and David Beach
Chelsea and Joel Block
Blaze Bernstein Teaching Kitchen Fund
Alit and Scott Braswell
Catie Chase
Dean H. Becker
Anders Eisner



THANK YOU

\$3,600 - \$9,999 cont.

Cindy and Michael Furst
Rhonda and Hal Hurwitz
Elizabeth A. Kim
Lauren and Eric Kramer
Mindy Lauerlevin and Ed Levin
Joy and Howard LePatner
Doris and Martin Melnick
Jesse Rodriguez
Dr. Abby Rozenberg and Rabbi Richard Steinberg
Myrna and Leonard Simon
Josh and Carol Speyer
Wendy and David Stark
Sue and Ralph Stern
Sam and Somer Tejwani
Mark Turkel
Roz and Elliot Vogelfanger
Shiry and Michael Williams
Sheila and Jay Witzling
Grant Yasui and Jennifer Lee

\$1,000 - \$3,599

Gary Abel
Carey and Steven Alexson
Lisa and Doron Armony
Barry J. Aronoff
Ronald P. Beard
Nina and Dr. James Berman
Paul Berman
Sharon and Mark Berman
Kenny Bernstein
Beth and Howard Bidna
Joel Calvo
Cathy Chang and Family
Lindsey Etheridge and Tiffany Chang
Albert Chen
City of Irvine
Chapman University
Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'ot
Greg Damelson
Scott Dubchansky
Cynthia and Wade Faerber

THANK YOU

\$1,000 - \$3,599 cont.

Arlene and Steven Feinberg
Sidney, Shirley and Matt Field
Debra and Jeff Garfinkle
Alan Gladstone
Lory and Harvey Goodman
Gale and Mark Friedman
Stuart Friedman
Greg Furness
Bunnie and Paul Haas
Edward Heyman
Julie Holdaway
Cory Hunter
Fletcher Jones Motorcars
Mary Kaltenbach
Lorraine Schulman Leavitt
Sarah and Max Levine
Roz Lipoff
James F. Lineback
Susan Medwied
Jeff Metzger
Miriam & Hayim Ninyo

Mark A. Perlmutter
Rachael and Alex Ripps
Brian Riff
Josh Snyder
Robert Sorosky
Julie and Steve Sherman
Melanie and Scott Silverman
Krystine and Steve Solomon
Allyson and Coby Sonenshine
Harvey I. Singer
Debbi and Brian Stern
Scott M. Slabotsky
Stephanie and Cory Sukert
Team One Management
Treussard Capital Management
Beth and Pieter van Es
Karen and Charles Weinberg



Almost **20%** of all Jewish adults participate in JCC programs



"The JCC is a magnet across all lines of difference. With even greater support, the JCC can open more doors to the financially fragile, wrap a warm hug around those who are experiencing disconnection, and continue to serve as our community's central hub for Jewish thriving and combating antisemitism." - Lindsey Spinalle, Samueli Family Philanthropies

JEWISH LEGACY

Shining Bright

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the legacy signers who have made the sacred commitment to one day add their own light to an enduring chain of generosity.

Melanie and Hal Altman
Marlene and David Beach
Dean Becker
Beth Bernstein
Lynn and Dan Bernstein
Jeanne and Gideon Bernstein
Lily and Jim z"/l Bierig
Alit and Scott Braswell
Eleanor and Irving Burg z"/l
Joel Calvo
Melissa Carr and Arthur Kreitenberg
Ryan and Brooke Chase
Catie Chase
Irv and Nancy Chase
Samantha Cohen
Robin and Rabbi Stephen Einstein
Allan z"/l and Sandy Fainbarg
Steven Fainbarg z"/l

Sybil Flom
Aviva and Fred Forster
Stuart Friedman
Steve Heit z"/l
Julie Holdaway
Robin and Larry Kaplan
Adrienne and Rick Matros
Doris and Martin Melnick
Alice and Asher Milgrom
Shawn and Marci Miller
Diana and Jay Moss
Lynn and Sy z"/l Pearlman
Jada Robitaille
Julie Green and Christopher Rommel
Miki z"/l and Stephen Sholkoff
Wendy and David Stark
Debbi and Brian Stern
Sue and Ralph Stern



THANK YOU

Honoring the Legacy of Doris and Milton Chasin

Where Kindness Shines Brightest

The Merage Jewish Community Center was deeply honored to receive a generous gift from the late Doris Chasin and her beloved husband, Milton Chasin z"l.

Doris, who passed away on November 1, 2024, at nearly 96, and Milt, who passed away in 2009, shared a lifelong commitment to Jewish life and community. Their generosity left an indelible mark on the JCC, ensuring families in Orange County experience the richness of Jewish culture, learning, wellness, and connection.

This legacy gift is a powerful reminder of their enduring devotion. We are profoundly grateful for their legacy of love, loyalty, and generosity. May their memory forever be a blessing.



THANK YOU

Steven Fainbarg Merage JCC Reflections Endowment Fund

Eternal flame

Steven Fainbarg, a Merage JCC member before we even opened our doors in 2004, was a passionate supporter of our mission and a champion for all those who seek Jewish life in Orange County. His newest legacy to the Merage JCC is the creation of the Steven Fainbarg Merage JCC Reflections Endowment Fund, established through our friends and neighbors at Jewish Community Foundation Orange County. This endowment will support, in perpetuity, the JCC's Center for Jewish Life's annual Reflections series to commemorate the Israeli national holidays of Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron, and Yom Ha'atzmaut.

The J is grateful to Steven. He will be remembered with deep admiration amongst everyone who knew him, and honored in memory by all those to come to the JCC to learn about Jewish heritage and legacy.

CHAI LIGHTS

19
new parking spaces
and yes, they are already full

1,500
monthly
PrimeTime participants
living their best lives

1,100
filmgoers loved our
Israeli film series

2,168
hours of water and
swim safety classes

14,280
cold plunges (brr!)

521
Chef Liron
handmade challahs

JCC Waves swim team swam over
1 million laps

465
Jkids jumped
into youth sports

948
served homemade latkes
at the Community
Chanukah Celebration

601
members worked it at
the April Fitness Challenge

2,799
monthly
sweaty workouts in GroupX

15,000
volunteer hours for
six JStage musicals

Board of Directors

Officers

Hal Altman,
Chair of the Board
Irv Chase,
Immediate Past Chair
Adrienne Matros, Psy.D,
Vice Chair
Wendy Stark, Vice Chair
Dana Susson, Vice Chair
Richard Merage, Treasurer
Nancy Chase, Secretary

Doron Armony
Marlene Beach
Dean Becker
James Berman, M.D.
Jamie Evans
Mark Friedman
Cindy Furst
Dana Hollander
Hal Hurwitz
Robin Kaplan
Jeff Kaufman
Lauren Kramer
Archie Kreitenberg, M.D.
Martin Melnick
Michael Palmer
Danny Prosky
Julie Sherman
Scott Silverman
Steve Solomon
Mark Susson
Pieter van Es
Jay Witzling

Honorary Life Directors

Doris Chasin
Of Blessed Memory
Doris Chasin, z"l
Milt Chasin, z"l
Adeline Cohen, z"l

Scott Braswell,
Chief Executive Officer
Char Cavitt Williams,
Chief Marketing and
Program Officer
Zach Guller, Chief
Operating Officer and
Sunrise OC Director
Julie Holdaway,
Chief Strategy and
Learning Officer
Lee Tringali,
Chief Financial Officer

LEADERSHIP

We extend our heartfelt thanks to several dedicated board members
who are retiring from their service. Their contributions have helped
shape the JCC's growth, impact, and direction, and we are honored to
recognize their lasting legacy.

Todah Raba!

Dr. Jim Berman – Board Member since 2005
Marty Melnick – Board Member since 2016
Michael Palmer – Board Member since 2016
Jamie Evans – Board Member since 2018



