

the



IMPACT

2024-25





1,471 summer campers made memories

# 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**  
Chair of the Board

**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 adventures 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 and  
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.

223 Shabbat  
Stars

*"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

4,295 challot made  
by our preschoolers



## 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

74 smiles hopping off the bus —  
our biggest day ever at Sunrise!

# SUNRISE DAY CAMP



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 kehillah, 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

## Sparkling 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.**



# 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.

36,000

oranges replenished  
our light

10,000

towels kept us clean

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

51 staff have been  
at the J 10+ years

456 staff made  
the J shine

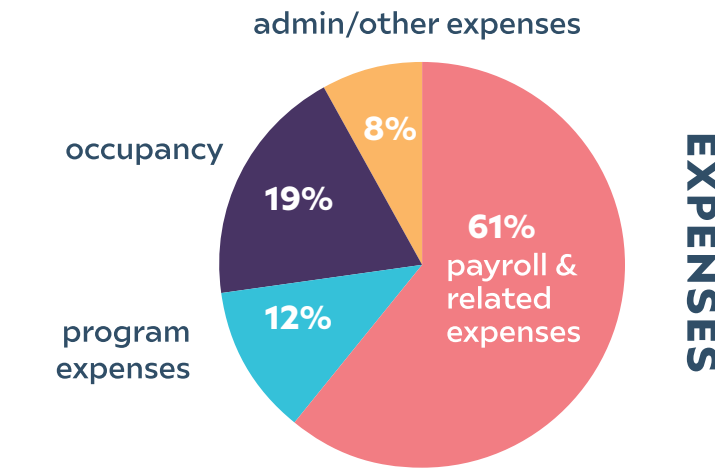
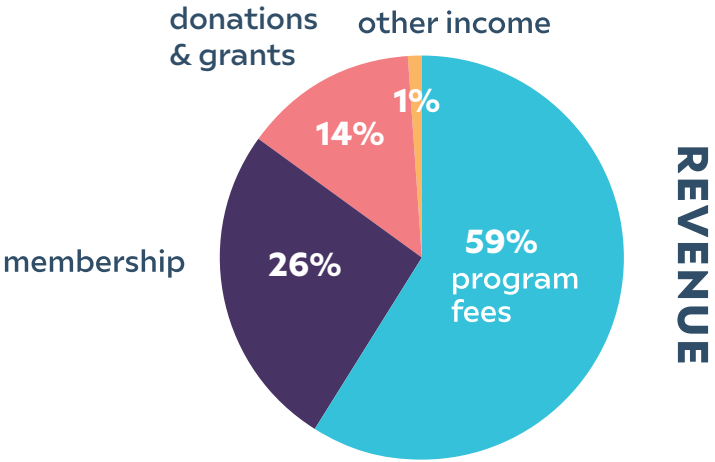
*"Thank you, Scott. Your ability to find such  
excellent people is what makes the J so  
special." – John Briggs*



# 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.



860 new members

# SCHOLARSHIPS

*"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*



## 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  
Merage 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 Rodriquez  
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 Tejawani  
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'alot  
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 combatting antisemitism." - Lindsey Spindle, 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



Mark and Dana Susson  
Scott and Muriel Ullman  
Pieter and Elizabeth van Es  
Elliot and Roz Vogelfanger  
Michael and Shari Wagschal  
Karen and Charles Weinberg  
Sheila and Jay Witzling  
Roberta Trachten Zeve





# 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

270

people learned that Benjamin Dreyfus, Orange County's first Jewish resident, created the nation's first mass-produced Kosher for Passover wine in his vineyards in Anaheim, in 1863

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 (brrr!)

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







Merage Jewish Community  
Center of Orange County

1 Federation Way  
Irvine, CA 92603

949.435.3400  
[jccoc.org](http://jccoc.org)