



There's Something  
About This Place!

FY17

Impact Report

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017





*There is something  
about this place...*



*...that is welcoming to all.*



*...that promotes healthy  
bodies and minds.*



*...that inspires creativity.*



*...that creates meaningful  
connections.*

**The support that our generous donors provides has a direct and immediate impact on the lives of so many individuals and families in our community.**



## WELCOME

The Bender JCC embraces and welcomes the diversity of our community and encourages everyone to seek meaning and fulfillment by participating in our rich programming inspired by our Jewish heritage.

We open our doors to everyone, including people of all backgrounds, religions, abilities and sexual orientations, and interfaith couples and families.

Inclusion permeates our Center. Inclusion is belonging.

## CORE VALUES

- **Respect for one another (*Kavod Ha-briot*)**

We respect the dignity of every person.

- **One people (*Klal Yisrael*)**

We welcome all Jewish traditions and backgrounds.

- **Community (*Kehilla*)**

We connect individuals to the community and communities to each other.

- **Israel (*Eretz Y'israel*)**

We connect our community to the people, history, culture and land of Israel.

- **Working together (*B'yachad*)**

We partner with Jewish and secular organizations to build a stronger community.

- **Welcoming guests (*Hachnassat Orchim*)**

We open our doors to everyone.

- **Acts of loving kindness (*Gemilut Chasadim*)**

We help those in need through acts of loving kindness.

- **Repairing the world (*Tikkun Olam*)**

We make the world a better and more just place.

- **Preserving nature (*Shmirat Ha-teva*)**

We respect our environment.

- **Jewish learning (*Torah*)**

We promote Jewish learning and intellectual enrichment.

- **Preserving our selves (*Shmirat HaNefesh v'HaGuf*)**

We promote the well-being and fitness of every person.

- **Spirit (*Ruach*)**

We infuse spirit and fun into our activities and programs.



*Sahar Khamis, Ph.D. and Rabbi Batya Steinlauf at the Multifaith Film Fest, the first of its kind in our community.*

**“...celebrating diversity while honoring differences.”**

# *There's something about this place that is welcoming to all.*

The Bender JCC's inaugural Multifaith Film Fest was a celebration of faith featuring five award-winning films, each selected for its unique perspective on identity and discovery, common social and spiritual values, and the intersection of the human experience. More than 400 community members visited the Bender JCC to view and discuss these captivating and thought-provoking films.

The film fest was the first of its kind in this community. It was crafted to promote peace, understanding and friendship among the many faith communities in Montgomery County, celebrating diversity while honoring differences. Our goal was to promote positive relationships between neighbors and build a greater appreciation for the teachings, customs, history and practices of our community's faith traditions.

We were honored to receive the support of many organizations, including Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Islamic Center of Maryland, Islamic Community Center of Potomac, Interfaith Conference, Israeli American Council, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, The Jewish Studio, Kids4Peace and Maryland State Arts Council.

Sahar Khamis, Ph.D., associate professor of communication at the University of Maryland, commented that it is important to hold events such as the multifaith film fest. "Showing these kinds of films promotes the idea of interfaith dialogue, the idea of getting to know others and the idea of reconciliation and harmony and peace."

## **IMPACT: BEING INCLUDED**

**35,000** individuals, from the very young to the young at heart, were enriched by attending classes or programs at the Bender JCC.

**139** members age 65+ received financial aid to join the Bender JCC, allowing them opportunities for socialization, fitness and continuing education.

# *There's something about this place that promotes healthy bodies and minds.*

While recovering from an injury, Dana Ginsburg joined the Bender JCC to utilize the indoor pool for water running. Soon after, she realized it was a great place for the whole family. "My kids enjoy swimming, my teen likes the workout center, and I enjoy the classes, especially 'Women with Weights.'"

An avid runner for about five years, Dana has completed several full marathons. "Running has helped me to build confidence. The power of finishing something after months of training is awesome."

As a religiously observant Jew, Dana says that running has taught her, and helped show her children, that one can maintain a healthy and active lifestyle without compromise.

## IMPACT: ENHANCING HEALTH & WELLNESS

**50** individuals participated in Bender JCC programs, in partnership with The Edmond J. Safra National Parkinson's Wellness Initiative and Medstar Georgetown Movement Disorders Clinic, designed to maintain and enhance quality of life for those with Parkinson's.

**40,000** square feet is the size of the Weinberg Health & Fitness Center, one of the premier fitness centers in the Greater Washington area, where thousands come each year to become or remain physically fit.



*Runner Dana Ginsburg enjoys the Bender JCC fitness classes, especially Women with Weights.*

“ ...one can maintain a healthy and active lifestyle without compromise. ”



*Barry Perlis displays his artwork that was included in the Lifetime of Perspective exhibit.*

“...a way to connect my Jewish involvements and my creative passion.”



# *There's something about this place that inspires creativity.*

"A Lifetime of Perspective" is the Bender JCC's celebration of the creative talents of our community's amateur artists age 65+.

Barry Perlis, whose work is included in this year's exhibit, is primarily a self-taught artist. He enjoys being involved in the Jewish community and has always looked to art as his creative outlet. "Participating in the Lifetime of Perspective senior art show is a way to connect my Jewish involvements and my creative passion."

This special exhibit, now in its 19th year, was created by Deena and Jerome Kaplan and their family in memory of Deena's parents, Eve and David Berliant. It is underwritten by the Kaplan family, the Bender JCC's Deena and Jerome A. Kaplan Fund for Senior Adult Programming, and the Berliant Kaplan Fund of the United Jewish Endowment Fund of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

## IMPACT: INSPIRING CREATIVITY

**163** children, teens and adults participated in Bender JCC School of Dance, expressing themselves through creative movement.

**122** Camp JCC campers participated in our programs for creative arts and theater arts, encouraging their efforts to pursue their creative passion.

# *There's something about this place that creates meaningful connections.*

Max Lasko, a student in the Bender Early Childhood Center, has spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a motor neuron disease which leads to degeneration of the muscles that help the body to move. His mind and sensory nervous system are unaffected, so Max thinks like a typical child his age.

Because respiratory infections pose a risk to children with neuromuscular weakness, Max attends the Bender JCC preschool via BEAM, a telepresence robot. Every day for up to two hours, Max "BEAMs" into class. He loves art, music, chasing friends (and being chased), and talking with his friends.

Teacher Allyson Levine says that having Max in their class has been an incredible experience. "The children went from being excited about having a robot in our class to simply being excited to have Max in our class. It's as if they don't even see the robot anymore. They are all constantly finding new ways to connect."

## **IMPACT: CREATING CONNECTIONS**

**600** children, parents and grandparents attended Shabbat Shabbang, four meaningful Shabbat experiences allowing families with young children to connect and celebrate Shabbat together.

**91** percent of adults who participate in our Selma Sweetbaum Senior Nutrition Program reported that the program has significantly improved their quality of life.



*Through use of a telepresence robot, Max interacts with classmates from his home.*

“...constantly finding new ways to connect.”

# Thank You to Our Donors

This list reflects gifts of \$500+ received during fiscal year 2016 (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016).

## \$25,000+

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Cindy and Richard Zitelman

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. We apologize for any omissions or errors. If you have any questions or correction, please contact Development Director Adam Tennen at 301.348.3815 or atennen@benderjccgw.org.

# Centennial Capital Campaign

On July 6, 2016, we announced our new name. What began as the Jewish Community Center of the District of Columbia and was renamed the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington over 50 years ago will now be named the Bender JCC of Greater Washington (Bender JCC), as the result of a \$6.25 million gift from the Sondra and Howard Bender family to name the JCC and the Early Childhood Center.

On September 29, 2016, we held a grand re-opening ceremony to celebrate our new name and to dedicate the Sondra and Howard Bender Early Childhood Center, which has been renovated.

The Bender family has a long and meaningful connection with the JCC starting in the 1940s when, as a teen living in Washington D.C., Sondra would take a bus across town to get to the JCC (then located in Washington, D.C.). That link has spanned four generations and continues today.

We thank the Bender family for their transformative gift. We also thank Janyse and Bernie Weisz, Howard Forman, Carole and Barry Forman, and Gail and Paul Chod for dedication-level gifts (\$25K or more) for spaces in the Bender ECC.

In September 2016, we also opened the new Herman Indoor Aquatic Center, the proud home

of the Isadore Morton Gudelsky Pool. Swimming has always been a critical part of JCC life. When we moved to Rockville in 1969, the Gudelsky family fulfilled the dream to continue the aquatics program in our current location.

Thanks to an extraordinary gift from Sheila and Sy Herman, we undertook an extensive renovation of this nearly 50-year-old pool. The Hermans have been members since the building opened in 1969, and aquatics has been a big part of their life.

We also acknowledge the sustained investment by the Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Family Foundation over the years by generously contributing to the pool renovation and maintaining the Gudelsky Exceptional Swim Program. The program allows children, teens and adults with orthopedic-related disabilities the opportunity to have an aquatic experience.

We also renovated the adult locker rooms. We thank the following donors who made dedication-level gifts for the renovation of the locker rooms: Linda and James Cafritz, the Sanford and Doris Slavin Foundation, and Mark Levitt and Kay Klass. Thanks to the support of the Wagner-Braunberg Family Foundation we were able to refresh the family locker rooms, which served as a temporary home for our adult fitness users during the past renovation.



*Scott Cohen, Centennial Campaign Co-Chair and Past President, and Lisie Gottdenker, current Board Chair, hold the ribbon at the entrance to the Bender Early Childhood Center for Julie Bender Silver, assisted by granddaughter Sienna.*



*Julie Bender Silver and David Bender with Michael Feinstein (left) at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.*



*Sy and Sheila Herman at the opening of the Herman Indoor Aquatic Center, home of the Isadore Morton Gudelsky Pool.*

# We sincerely thank those who have committed to being a part of the Centennial Capital Campaign\*.

\*As of November 30, 2017

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# Children of All Abilities Benefit from Capital Campaign Funds



As part of our capital renovation, we completed two outdoor play areas in FY17: an inclusive playground that enables full accessibility and inclusion for children of all physical abilities, and a natural playscape.

The renovated inclusive playground adheres to the following philosophy: 1) provide social justice by being equitable and usable by children of all abilities so they can enjoy their right to play; 2) support the participation of individuals with diverse abilities in social and physical activities for inclusive, multiage-group play; 3) be easy to understand, allowing individuals to be successful and gain confidence through play; 4) allow children to effectively explore and participate in play at their own level; 5) address current safety standards while providing developmental opportunities needed for exploration and challenge; 6) support various degrees of physical and social participation in play while minimizing unnecessary fatigue; 7) be usable for individuals with sensory needs, diverse body size, posture, mobility and motor control. The space is used by the Bender JCC day camp, preschool, and after-school programs; members; on-site program participants and the local community.

The Bender Early Childhood Center's natural outdoor playscape came about based on the latest research and our goals for educating children. Much has been written about the children of this generation being nature deprived. Video games and indoor play have taken the place of the backyards and woods many of us played in when we were young. Outdoor play leads to discovery and imaginative play. It is open ended and encourages exploration.

Last year, Bender JCC staff members met with a landscape architect and parents to discuss what the space should include. Conversations also took place with the children, asking them what they thought the new playground should look like; many of the elements they suggested have been incorporated.

In place of metal structures are a fallen tree and a hill to climb, and a large sand pit with a stream that runs into it from a child-sized pump. A path of different textures encircles the hill for tricycles, and two picnic tables are available for picnic lunches and small group work. "Loose parts," circles from logs and other wooden shapes, invite children to build and imagine. The "mud kitchen" is a source for experiments and dramatic play.



# Thank You

We thank all those who supported the Bender JCC during fiscal year 2017. Photos from some of our major events are found below.



*Dr. Stuart Lessans and Dr. Ellen Lessans at the Lessans Family Annual Book Festival*



*Tracy Bloom Schwartz and Susan Wegner, Lessans Family Annual Book Festival chairs*



*Corey Migdal and Nelson Migdal, Dinner of Champions co-chairs*



*Meredith & Adam Polsky, Dinner of Champions co-chairs (rlstevensphotography.com)*



*Hyman M. and Phillip D. Perlo Award recipients, Dinner of Champions (rlstevensphotography.com)*



*Jillian Copeland, Irene and Abe Pollin Humanitarian Award winner at the Dinner of Champions (rlstevensphotography.com)*



*Sports Hall of Fame inductees and JCC Maccabi Legacy Award recipient (rlstevensphotography.com)*



*Robin London and Jeffrey Slavin, chairs of IMAGINE: A Night Supporting Scholarships at the J*



*Bruce Lane, Benjamin Ourisman Award for Civic Achievement recipient, and Bruce Pascal (rlstevensphotography.com)*



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