

2023



Looking back



As we start the new year, we find ourselves filled with gratitude for the incredible journey we've shared as a community. It has been a year of resilience, growth, and the kind of unity that defines the YJ experience.

First and foremost, we want to express our heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering support. Your commitment to YJ has been the cornerstone of our success, particularly during times that demanded adaptability and strength.

Reflecting on the summer, we are bursting with pride at the accomplishments we achieved collectively. We provided a safe, nurturing, and joyous environment for our campers. The laughter, camaraderie, relationships and memories created at camp are a testament to the extraordinary staff and power of the YJ community.

Jewish values and our connection to Israel have always been the foundation of YJ, and the past few months have underscored the profound significance of Jewish camp experiences. In a world filled with challenges, the importance of fostering a robust Jewish identity and strong Jewish community has become more apparent than ever. Our camp serves as a unique space for children to explore their heritage, build lifelong friendships, and cultivate the resilience needed to navigate the complexities of the world around them.

As we look forward to the coming year, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. The increased importance of Jewish camp experiences has inspired us to reaffirm our commitment to the core values of YJ. We are pleased to announce the approval and implementation of our newly crafted Strategic Plan, which will guide our efforts in providing transformative experiences for our campers.

The Strategic Plan focuses on enhancing the camper experience, reinvigorating our camp facility, and ensuring the long-term

sustainability of YJ. We believe that these strategic initiatives will not only elevate the impact of our camp but also strengthen the YJ community as a whole.

We are excited to announce that we've officially changed our name to Camp YJ! The name YJ reflects the way that most of our camp families already refer to us. It also allows us to highlight the three core pillars of the camp experience: *Your Joy, Your Journey, Your Judaism*. This name also makes it easy for new families to quickly learn more about our amazing camp.

Thank you for being an integral part of the YJ family. Your support, passion, and dedication to our community propel us forward. We are excited about the journey ahead, marked by growth, joy, and the enduring spirit of YJ.

Onward!

Erica Abate Recht

Chair, Board of Directors

Jon Spack

Executive Director



Strategic Plan Pillars



Your Joy

YJ's essence lies in our spirit (*ruach*), offering joy and discovery merging familiar and new activities, and embracing 'Joyful Judaism' with music, dancing, food, fun, and a capstone program in Israel.



Your Journey

Camp at YJ is a choice that grows with each summer, blending tradition with adaptability to nurture diverse interests and support each campers' and counselors' growth and development.



Your Judaism

As an independent Jewish camp deeply connected to Israel, we celebrate and welcome diverse expressions of Judaism, fostering a pluralistic approach and community.

"For many of us, YJ is our most important and impactful Jewish life experience. Embracing the critical role Jewish camp plays so that future generations can have the same transformational experience is what this strategic plan is all about: l'dor v'dor."

**Jay Rosenthal D'89,
Strategic Plan Committee Member**

Our Priorities

Invest in Flexible Spaces

YJ recognizes the evolving nature of its needs and commits to creating forward-thinking, functional, and eco-friendly physical spaces throughout the camp. Focused improvements will target Boys' Area ("The Neighborhood"), Ulam Levine, and the Old Dining Hall, including Arts & Crafts, ensuring the camp's adaptability for both current and future requirements.

Elevate Leadership and Skills Development

Recognizing the pivotal role of counselors and staff in shaping the camper experience, YJ commits to investing in the professional development and training of summer staff, particularly those aged 17-22. This strategic focus aims to enhance the overall summer experience for campers and foster a stronger sense of community within the camp.

Lead with Jewish Values

YJ commits to leading with Jewish values to instill joy and meaning in being Jewish, ensuring that everyone at YJ feels safe, welcome, respected, valued, and celebrated. This initiative places a strong emphasis on inclusion for the diverse community of campers, staff, and families, guided by the core values of *Respect (Kavod)*, *Community (Kehilah)*, *Spirit (Ruach)*, *Kindness (Gimilut Chasadim)*, and *Being Present (Hineini)*.

Foster a Culture of Wellness

YJ aims to redefine wellness by extending beyond medication distribution and physical care. The initiative emphasizes supporting campers and staff with compassion and nurturing their diverse interests. The holistic approach addresses emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, fostering a culture of wellness that goes beyond traditional health care.

One Community "Living 12 for 12"

YJ envisions expanding its impact beyond the traditional summer camp experience, living "10 for 2," to a year-round engagement. This involves establishing a formal alumni association, organizing nationwide gatherings and events for families and alumni, and offering more opportunities to visit YJ both in-season and off-season. The goal is to create a lasting and impactful connection throughout the entire year.

"In crafting our strategic plan, I'm so proud that we've woven together the threads of what makes YJ truly special, creating a guiding framework that propels our community toward growth and sustainability moving forward."

**Kim Buckley D'91,
Strategic Plan Committee Member**

Summer Highlights



Opening Day



Shabbat as a Community



Israeli Dancing



Maccabiah

"The friendships that I have built here at YJ are the driving force that makes me want to come back every summer."

Zach Arkin D'23



Building Friendships



Enjoying the New Aquapark



Gadna



Trip Day and Night Out



Thank You to Our Donors

We would like to express our gratitude to all our Deep in the Hills Annual Fund donors for their philanthropic support in 2023.

We are thrilled that the positive momentum of our fundraising efforts continues to sustain our beloved Camp YJ, as well as provide necessary resources to enhance our facilities, professional development, and financial aid.

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