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NEW VISIONS OF
JEWISH PHILANTHROPY



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Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation is dedicated to strengthening and transforming American Jewish Life to ensure a flourishing, sustainable community in a fully integrated free society. We seek to revitalize Jewish identity through educational, religious and cultural initiatives that are designed to reach out to all Jews, with an emphasis on those who are on the margins of Jewish life.

Photographs in this issue appear courtesy of Photos.com.

New Visions of Jewish Philanthropy

From Abraham onward, generosity has played a crucial role in the inception and evolution of Jewish values. Even today, in an age of interdenominational quarreling and competing definitions of Jewish authenticity, most Jews can agree on the primacy of *tzedakkah*. But there are varying interpretations of what *tzedakkah* entails. As Jews have integrated fully into the larger society, the focus of *tzedakkah* has expanded from uniquely Jewish arenas to the larger world. Hospitals, museums and universities, not to mention a variety of political and social justice causes, have benefitted from Jewish largesse as Jews have risen to the forefront of American philanthropy. This type of giving is often motivated by the same sense of ethical commitment and community responsibility that informs Jewishly-directed *tzedakkah*. Indeed, there are those who argue that now that the Jewish community has achieved a level of collective affluence, it is right that it directs its charity outward.

And yet, it has become clear that the Jewish community will not be revitalized without an increase in philanthropy aimed at Jewish causes. The Jewish community is wrestling with questions of how it can encourage greater giving, and what are the best methods of maximizing the impact of philanthropy. This issue of CONTACT explores new ways of ensuring that the community has the commitment as well as the resources to bring about a Jewish renaissance.

Of course, commitment and resources are inextricably linked. Many have argued that levels of Jewish giving are directly proportional to levels of commitment to Judaism. If this is even partially true, it reminds us that the work of fundraising and the work of transformative Jewish education are intertwined. Only when Jews see Judaism as an inspiring element in their lives will they become committed to take personal philanthropic responsibility for the Jewish future.

Eli Valley
Eli Valley

We at Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation were shocked and saddened to learn of the untimely passing of our friend and partner, Andrea Bronfman. Andy was dedicated to the welfare of the Jewish people, to Israel and to needy people throughout the world. The Jewish community has lost one of its greatest philanthropists, but we are comforted by the knowledge that her good works will continue to strengthen the community and that her life will be an inspiration and model for generations to come. As we consider new visions of philanthropy, we can all be guided and enlightened by her pioneering spirit.



Priming the Pump of Jewish Philanthropy

by MICHAEL H. STEINHARDT

I have a dream in which Jewish early childhood educators, who presently receive an average salary of \$9.66 per hour, can raise their own children without having to take out loans or marry rich. I have a dream in which

Michael H. Steinhardt is Chairman of Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation.

birthright israel does not have to keep tens of thousands of potential participants on waiting lists for lack of funds. I have a dream in which non-Orthodox day schools truly rival the best private schools and the Jewish socioeconomic elite clamor to enter them.

While these dreams are, alas, remote and quixotic, American Jews have

achieved levels of wealth unprecedented in our history. The problem is that we no longer give much to Jewish causes. We are donors to universities, museums, orchestras and hospitals, but when it comes to Jewish philanthropy, we fall short. Today, perhaps 20 percent or less of Jewish giving goes to Jewish causes. In the middle of the 20th century, it was

about 50 percent. Only half of the Jews surveyed in 1990 claimed to have given to a Jewish cause. Of the \$5.3 billion in mega-gifts given by America's wealthiest Jews between 1995 and 2000, a mere 6 percent went to Jewish institutions.

Among those who do give, the levels of giving are weak. Only 11 percent of Jews donate over \$1,000 to Jewish causes. Can you name a serious non-Orthodox American Jewish philanthropist below the age of 50? There may be one or two, but it would be looking for a needle in a haystack. Even those who give Jewishly give smaller amounts to Jewish charity than to secular causes. Too many ignore programs of Jewish education and culture, focusing instead on antiquated preoccupations such as the fight against anti-Semitism. In North America, the greatest threat to the Jewish people is not the external force of anti-Semitism, but the internal forces of apathy, inertia and ignorance of our own heritage.

People's giving is a mirror image of who they are. Over time, we have become meaningfully more American and less Jewish. That is reflected in our philanthropy. We have lost not only our connection to Jewish roots, but also our understanding of why Jewish identity and involvement *matter*. It's an unfortunate cycle: attenuation of identity leads to reduced philanthropic giving, which, in turn, hobbles our efforts to create programs to enrich identity.

How, then, does one revive Jewishness in an increasingly secular American world? Not easy. Too many of our needs are no longer fulfilled Jewishly. Today's synagogues and other institutions no longer appeal to the Jewish spirit the way they used to. *Tzedakkah* is an outcome, an end-product of what we care about, what we want to enhance, what we believe in, and what we want to see grow. If we were to apply these hopes to our present community, I'm not sure we would like what we see.

The community has not operated by a set of norms and standards of what constitutes appropriate *tzedakkah*. People who have amassed enormous wealth are told by "professionals" that they're

the most altruistic individuals since Robin Hood, regardless of what they give. There are few role models in the community who represent our tradition of giving 10 percent of income or assets. Historically, the rabbis of past periods anticipated neither the wealth nor the longevity of many contemporary Jews. If they had, they surely would have insisted on even higher levels of giving.

Recognizing that we are far removed from the bare-bones survival of the immigrant generation, it may be time to reconfigure what is the right level of *tzedakkah* and what we should expect from our givers. One of our philanthropic goals may be to develop an ethic of higher levels of giving in relation to net worth.

For a person with assets of \$100 million

We need to become part of a movement to change the perception of giving, to spread the notion that real meaning in life comes from selfless acts of philanthropy, and to inculcate a sense of responsibility for the fate of *clal Yisrael* among those who have achieved high levels of wealth.

— and there are many such people today — annual philanthropy of \$500,000 or \$1 million is not serious. Yet, the community fawns as if these individuals have given amounts that are truly selfless. At present there is little accountability between wealth and philanthropy. This must end. A person earning \$45,000 who gives \$5,000 in *tzedakkah* should be acknowledged as heroic even though he may not get his name on a building. Perhaps this is a lofty goal, but it is morally right. We need to become part of a movement to change the perception of giving, to spread the notion that real meaning in life comes from selfless acts of philanthropy, and to inculcate a sense of responsibility for the fate of *clal Yisrael* among those who have achieved high levels of wealth.

The challenge is daunting. In a community where people want their names up in lights, where we have a cadre of professionals known as "Directors of Development" whose ambition is to separate rich Jews from their money, how can we create a sense of justice, of fairness between rich and poor, and recognize true philanthropy? How can we accomplish this in a free and open society? On the one hand, we value our privacy. How many of us enjoyed the public displays when there was card-calling at events? For many of us, there is something unseemly about it. I'm not immune to the conflict. In my various philanthropic efforts, I have valued the Maimonidean principle of modesty and indeed anonymity. Yet I, too, have had my name put on some projects and buildings. I frankly feel deeply conflicted. I think it is a higher calling not to use one's name, but I haven't always been able to reach that higher level.

One of the goals of the emerging Fund for Our Jewish Future is to usher in a culture of vastly increased levels of Jewish giving. The Fund plans to raise tens of millions immediately for priority action in Jewish education. Hopefully, this will be followed by a series of focused funds to revivify Jewish commitment levels. Another goal of the Fund is to approach individual communities and offer

local philanthropists the opportunity to receive significant outside funds for projects that they are prepared to give meaningful down payments towards.

It is clear that what we need is imagination to view our Jewish future in a way that will capture the spirit of those Jews who are mostly on the sidelines today. I believe we don't have many of the needed answers. But through hard work, creativity and, again, imagination, we can begin to reach the presently unreachable. With success, the result will be a Renaissance of Jewish life in which our flourishing communal structures inspire greater Jewish involvement and commitment — which in turn inspire even greater levels of *tzedakkah*. ❁



A Big Vision for Local Giving

by HAROLD GRINSPOON

It might lack the glamour associated with building new institutions, but the efforts to increase our cadres of major philanthropists and to increase levels of individual philanthropic giving are perhaps our greatest challenges today.

When I was a boy growing up in the Boston area, anti-Semitism was as common as penny candy. Kike, Jew Boy and Christ Killer were frequently uttered by neighborhood children, many of whom were forbidden to play with me. Looking back, my Jewish identity was formed more as a reaction to these negative forces than through positive Jewish experiences. Being Jewish was an act of defiance and fortitude.

As church teachings towards Jews changed, I lived to witness a time when anti-Semitism, although not altogether eradicated, became marginal to the Jewish experience. I realized that if Judaism is to continue, it must rely on intrinsic, positive qualities rather than on antagonism from the outside. Regretfully, since I had no Jewish training at home or in school, I am not an educated Jew. However, since maturing and especially since marrying Diane Troderman, I've experienced inspiring and uplifting sides of Jewish life. I love Jews and I love being Jewish. I revel in the *hamish* sense of community — in celebrating holidays with other Jews, in sitting around campfires at Jewish camps, in witnessing the curiosity of young minds in Jewish day schools.

I have come to realize that since pro-

found, positive Jewish experiences are the key to an effective Jewish community, they should be the focus of our philanthropy. Indeed, the relatively new culture of tolerance and acceptance of Jews must bring about a change in the way the Jewish world operates philanthropically. While we must still help out our unfortunate Jewish brethren, philanthropic initiatives geared towards positive experiences are essential if Judaism is to thrive in a free society.

Thanks in part to my inherited Jewish culture and ethics, I have been fortunate to succeed as an entrepreneur. But at a certain point, after I had provided well for my family and could easily satisfy any personal material need, I felt a responsibility to give back to the society and culture that had given me so much. I was seeking a new challenge and I wanted to harness my entrepreneurial skills in a way that would contribute to the greater Jewish good. I believe that an entrepreneurial spirit in the Jewish funding and nonprofit world can allow for quick adaptation to today's changing environment, for thinking outside the box, for creating new and different modes of engagement, for treading where others have never tread before, or for treading in new ways on old paths.

Therefore, I began focusing on entrepreneurial funding that would raise the bar on the quality and quantity of Jewish programs to enrich Jewish life with positive educa-

tional experiences. As an entrepreneur, I look at such factors as bang-for-the-buck, results-oriented personnel, and accountability. Lacking a solid Jewish education myself, I have surrounded myself with sharp, Jewishly knowledgeable minds. In an age in which we can no longer rely on anti-Semitism to bind the community together, all of our programs and staffs must be of the highest caliber.

Only by supporting major nationwide initiatives can we effect sweeping changes. For this reason, I became involved in Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education and *birthright israel*. But I came to recognize that in order to effect seismic change on the national level, we need a vast increase in philanthropic resources. It might lack the glamour associated with building new institutions, but the efforts to increase our cadres

Harold Grinspoon is Founder and Chairman of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. More information about the Foundation and its programs can be found at www.hgf.org.

of major philanthropists and to increase levels of individual philanthropic giving are perhaps our greatest challenges today. With this in mind, I joined the Fund for Our Jewish Future, whose goal is to bring philanthropists and communities together for unprecedented levels of funding with an eye towards transforming the Jewish world.

At the same time, I recognize that for all our global visions of revitalizing Jewish life, it still “takes a village” for philanthropy to be effective. When I created the Harold Grinspoon Foundation more than a decade ago, I decided to focus on a particular region, Western Massachusetts, in order to give back to the community and build a sense of shared responsibility on the local level. Ideally, the programs we create in my region can serve as models that other philanthropists can easily adapt to their communities, particularly mid-sized communities.

On a personal level, I am filled with a sense of accomplishment knowing that I am strengthening the Jewish day schools and summer camps in my own community. There is a deep value in building the kinds of one-on-one, personal relationships that local funding entails. When philanthropists see the impact of their work on individual lives, they become even more devoted to strengthening the Jewish world. After all, *tzedakkah*

is not an abstract concept, but rather a web of interactions that has formed the basis of Jewish communities throughout our history.

With an eye towards helping others revitalize local institutions, I recently expanded the Harold Grinspoon Foundation by establishing the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy. The Institute works on the local level to help Jewish nonprofit overnight camps create high-performing boards, develop strategic plans, and raise funds for annual, capital and endowment campaigns. We chose to focus on Jewish overnight camping because it is a key arena for forging Jewish identity and affiliation among a broad spectrum of Jewish youth. However, Jewish camps are woefully underfunded and their facilities are often under-capitalized. They need attention and support — from camp alumni and from committed Jewish community members. Recently, we announced a \$2 million challenge-grant program to strengthen the camps we work with. I hope the program will inspire other philanthropists to put their money around the campfire, so to speak, to offer incentive challenges in Jewish camping and to strengthen the capacity of our camps to be first-rate institutions.

Ultimately, I feel it is crucial that there be philanthropists of first and last resort in our small and mid-sized communities. Such leaders — *tzedakkah* patriarchs or matriarchs, if

you will — can serve as role models who take responsibility for the strength and vitality of Jewish life in the entire community. While these philanthropists will undoubtedly focus on their own initiatives, they will also serve as dependable benefactors for innovative Jewish projects throughout the region. Ideally, individual communities should be able to turn to their local philanthropic leaders to support new ideas and see them through to implementation. The benefit to individual philanthropists is clear. They will create and sustain a set of personal relationships on the local level that they simply cannot get as national givers or institutional builders. It is impossible to quantify the rate of return on an investment in individual Jewish lives.

It is time to seek out philanthropists throughout the country who are willing to assume responsibility for particular communities or regions. I envision the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy taking a major role in recruiting new philanthropists, but I also see a role in this endeavor for the Fund for Our Jewish Future. If we succeed, we will have inculcated an awareness throughout the Jewish world that philanthropy involves much more than simply writing a check. It involves sustained, grass-roots involvement and personal investment in each of our multifaceted Jewish communities. 🌸

Empowering the NEXT Generation

by K'VOD WIEDER

Jewish youth philanthropy is more than an engaging and innovative program area for teenagers. It has the potential to re-envision the structures and processes of our Jewish institutions by inviting young people to share power and decision-making as valued and respected members of the community. For the individual teenager, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's Jewish Youth Philanthropy programs seek to redefine what it means to be a philanthropist — that one does not have to be wealthy to have a personal and engaged relationship to life-long giving.

These programs offer two different structures for empowering their participants. One structure gives participants their own individual endowment fund, allowing them to distribute the interest of their fund to charitable organizations of their choice. For example, a community may choose to have teens contribute \$250 at the time of their B'nai Mitzvah. This contribution is then matched \$250 by a local philanthropist to enable the teen to open his or her own endowment fund of \$500 at the local Jewish endowment foundation. Educational compo-

nents that expose the teens to Jewish values and social issues help inform where they make their annual distributions. They have the option to keep their endowment fund for a lifetime.

The other structure brings together participants to make grant allocations as a group, managing a group fund. In this model, teens experience collective decision making and are able to make total annual grants of \$2,000-\$45,000 a year. When the participants finish the year, they do not carry their philanthropic vehicle with them. In both structures, local adult philanthropists match the contributions of the teens or give them the monies to distribute. In the process, the young people gain skills and knowledge in the areas of Jewish sources on giving, financial literacy and modern philanthropy. For many participants, their lives and sense of themselves take on a new significance.

The upcoming conference of Jewish Youth Funders! is a major step in the development of a national initiative to increase the quality and quantity of Jewish Youth Philanthropy programs in North America. The conference is supported by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Rose Youth Foundation, United Jewish Communities, the Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation and others. It is also cre-



ated out of a partnership with the Jewish Funders Network and will share space at the Network's annual conference, with the teenagers participating as JFN's youngest participants. You can find registration information about the conference at www.jewishyouthfunders.org.

K'vod Wieder is Director of the B'nai Tzedek Program at Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Debunking A False Dichotomy

by JOHN S. RUSKAY

It began with a phone call. The editor of one of the largest Jewish newspapers in New York called to interview me about an innovative new program called Kol Dor. I know the program well — it brings together Jews in their 20s and 30s from Israel, North America, Europe, South America, Africa and Australia to forge a vision of the Jewish future. To date, Kol Dor has sponsored two successful conferences (May 2004 and June 2005), attracting high energy and high achievers from around the world. In addition, Kol Dor has designed and is in the process of rolling out several new projects.

The editor sought to understand, in his words, “Why establishment organizations such as UJA-Federation are embracing Kol Dor?” Interesting question. But here’s the rub: UJA-Federation was integral to developing the vision for and the launching of Kol Dor. We provided the initial seed money and recruited many of its first key leaders. In fact, the creation of Kol Dor reflected one of our major long-term strategies to introduce a series of initiatives that could strengthen the links among the next generation of global Jewish leaders.

I begin with this story because the assumption articulated by this editor —

as is common in Jewish life these days — is that the source of new ideas and creativity resides primarily outside major communal institutions. Just weeks before this call, as part of a gathering of Jewish leaders in Aspen, I listened in on a small session titled “Sustaining Innovation.” The session was also predicated on the assumption that innovation takes place outside such major institutions as UJA-Federation which are charged with sustaining a network of organizations and agencies to care for those in need, renew Jewish life, and strengthen the Jewish people.

If we are to maximize opportunities to strengthen our community, we might begin by debunking this assumption. Innovation takes place in many places and forms. As one who participated in the creation of the *havurah* movement, I appreciate the need to work both within and beyond institutional lines. Indeed, innovation needs to take place outside large institutions where entrepreneurs, artists, writers and others can create new settings to experiment with new forms of Jewish expression. However, among the most innovative periods in the early years of my professional career were my tenures at the SAJ Hebrew School and the 92nd Street Y. In both cases, innovation took place within institutions and required relatively modest infusions of

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additional cash. What was required was a readiness on the part of senior professional and volunteer leadership to recognize that change was needed; the human resources to develop content based vision and strategy; and a willingness to experiment and take risks.

In much of the writing about philanthropy these days, we read about the distinction between sustaining philanthropy and impact philanthropy. While most would prefer to be considered in the latter category, here too, our community needs both. Take birthright israel. The so-called creative period was when a group of philanthropists took a long established Jewish educational area — Israel trips, in operation for decades — and reframed it as a free

ten-day trip for college students. This breakthrough was launched on a system that included Hillels, youth movements, the Jewish Agency for Israel and Federations. Birthright now requires enormous annual support from Federation and others to sustain it and enable it to increase participation. Similarly, the institutions providing the basis and platform for much of the creativity that will be needed to strengthen the Jewish future — community centers, Hillels, summer camps, and synagogues, among others — require ongoing resources. The health of these organizations is imperative if they are to be in a position to both respond to individual and communal crises and provide a context and platform for creativity and new efforts.

Innovative institutions and sustaining institutions are not mutually exclusive. I began with Kol Dor, but this is just one example of the host of creative initiatives undertaken by UJA-Federation in recent years. Another example is our Jewish Healing and Hospice Alliance. Until recently, New York — the largest Jewish community in the world — did not have a comprehensive Jewish end-of-life care system to help individuals and families coping with terminal illness access medical, social, psychological, and spiritual care. After careful planning and research, we established three regional home care centers operated in collaboration with our human-service agencies, and in February, we dedicated the first freestanding, eighteen-bed, Jewish residential hospice in the United States.

Our hope is that in helping to change the way members of our community face impending death, we are changing the way people live. While we are proud of our efforts thus far, we also recognize that our work in this arena is far from complete. We need to continue to enhance efforts to train rabbis and social workers to meet the specific needs of hospice patients and their families. And there is also much to be done to utilize the full resources of our entire human-service network to optimize this service. Our work, our collaboration and our innovation continues. The readiness of a few philanthropists to partner with us was also essential in bringing us to this point.

There is much philanthropists, foundations and established organizations can learn from each other. Funders can benefit from the Federation's extensive experience in research and development and our strategic planning. We can benefit from their entrepreneurial, hands-on approach. And we can all learn from those beyond the walls of our present institutions. One thing we can all agree on — this is a moment unprecedented in the history of the Jewish people. Never before have we experienced this level of affluence, freedom, acceptance and opportunity. In this context, we are limited only by our own tenacity and false assumptions.

Imagine what we can accomplish if we decide to seize this moment together. 🌸

match by YOSSI PRAGER

Supporters of Jewish causes of all kinds agree on the pressing need to expand the pool of donors who contribute within the Jewish community. The need is particularly great for the field of Jewish education, which has grown significantly in recent years and has the high ambition to both improve quality and expand enrollment. Tapping current donors for greater resources is possible to a limited extent, but greater achievements will more likely depend upon attracting new donors to the cause.

In 2004, AVI CHAI and the Jewish Funders Network (JFN) introduced MATCH, a \$1 million matching-grants program intended to attract first-time donors (or prior donors, who increase their largest previous contributions by 500 percent) to Jewish educational institutions.

Typically, matching-grant programs seek to raise funds from the general public for a specific institution selected by the philanthropist offering the matching funds. MATCH turns this idea on its head by providing an incentive for new donors to contribute to an institution of *their* choice in the field we seek to promote. The hope is that by choos-

ing their own recipients and the ways in which the funds will be used, donors will more likely become repeat givers.

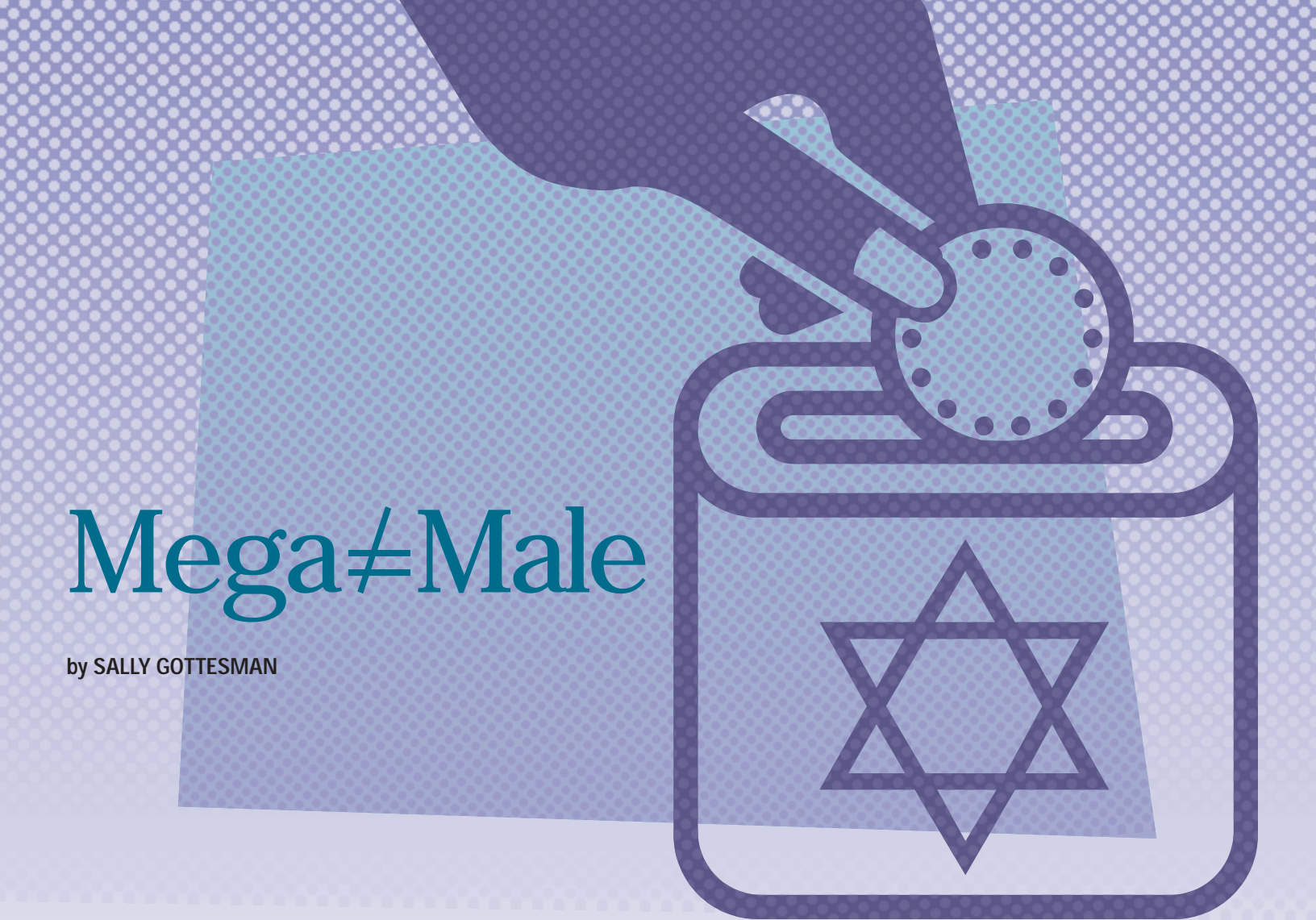
The first round of the program generated an extraordinary response and much excitement in the field. In response, AVI CHAI recruited four other philanthropists to become partners in MATCH for 2005, creating a total MATCH pool of \$5 million.

The philanthropic partners and JFN recruited the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) to become an operating partner in the program and work with school professionals on how to recruit and steward new donors to become ongoing supporters. JFN will offer programming for the donors themselves. Ongoing support by the matched donors will be the true test of the success of MATCH.

Applications for the current round of MATCH were due on January 13, 2006 and yielded an oversubscription of 311 applications with requests for more than \$20 million.

In the new philanthropic environment of the 21st Century, in which donor choice and leverage are the operative principles, MATCH is establishing itself as an innovative vehicle for attracting new donors to Jewish causes.

Yossi Prager is Executive Director-North America of The AVI CHAI Foundation.

A stylized illustration in shades of purple and blue. A hand is shown dropping a coin into a tzedakah box. The box has a Star of David on its front. The background is a light purple with a white dot pattern.

Mega≠Male

by SALLY GOTTESMAN

Two years ago, walking through old Jewish graveyards in Poland and Ukraine, I was struck by the fact that women's tombstones, far more than men's, were illustrated with etchings of giving *tzedakah*. A feminine hand. A coin. A *grush* being dropped into a box. Men's graves had books and Torah scrolls and occasionally a *tzedakah* box etched onto theirs; women's graves had shabbat candlesticks and *tzedakah* boxes galore. I came to understand it this way: while women and men were both expected to perform acts of *chesed* and *tzedakah*, women did not pray regularly in shuls; nor did they generally learn Torah. Consequently, philanthropy was a woman's principal vehicle for religious expression.

Why, then, with this legacy — and after women in the USA have developed Hadasah, National Council of Jewish Women, Sisterhoods across the nation, Women's Divisions of Federations and, most recently, Jewish Women's Foundations — am I often

asked to write about “the challenge of getting more women to be philanthropists in a field that has been dominated, historically and even today, by men?”

Why? Because women are not the “mega-givers,” and the way our community works, the “mega-givers” or even “major givers” hold the most power. Even if more women are donors, these men are “The Givers.” And indeed, because of how wealth is distributed in our country — and *because* these men are generous and *because* they do care and they do give — these men do have enormous influence. Unfortunately, though, as Gary Tobin reported after studying the 200 most generous Jewish philanthropists in 2003, there are not enough women on the lists of mega-donors to warrant gender-based sampling (*Portraits of Jewish Women Philanthropists*, Joan Kaye).

Before answering “what can be done,” I have to ask what is behind this question people ask. Is it a desire to get women's money to support the community “as is”? Or is there a belief that if women were

major philanthropists something would be different? If women were present at the table, would the issues raised differ, would the creation of community-changing projects shift, would the criteria for funding be altered?

If the answer is the latter, then the prospect of change might be intimidating, both to those who are at the table and to those who are not. But they — and by this I mean we — need to internalize the idea that women must be at the mega- and major donor tables if we are to build a stronger Jewish community than we have now.

I want to first articulate why women's high-level participation is necessary, and then offer some ideas of how to get there.

First, women in today's Jewish community are the primary cultural transmitters of Judaism. This is true in family situations, in Hebrew school and day school classrooms, at Jewish camps, and increasingly in synagogues, Hillels, and JCCs. Thus, the absence of women in sufficient numbers at the tables where funding ideas are dreamed

Sally Gottesman is the Chair of Moving Traditions.

If women were present at the table, would the issues raised differ, would the creation of community-changing projects shift, would the criteria for funding be altered?

up and decided upon is a huge loss to the Jewish community.

Second, women and men don't behave exactly the same inside the Jewish community. Their reactions, questions and concerns are different in significant enough ways to warrant both women and men at the table.

One small example regarding the *impact* of donors' dollars. Over the past decade, mega-donors enthusiastically sponsored Israel programs for young adults. In their study, *Being A Jewish Teenager in America: Trying to Make It*, Charles Kadushin, Shaul Kelner and Leonard Saxe asked teenagers how much their connection to Judaism was enhanced as a result of their experience on an Israel trip. Two of every five boys said "A little" or "Not at all," compared to one out of five girls. And when asked whether their connection to Judaism had been enhanced by visiting Israel, far fewer boys — 32 percent — claimed "Very much" or "To a great extent," whereas 46 percent of girls cited significant change. Thus if

the impact of mega-donors' philanthropy can be quite different for boys than for girls, it is also very likely true that if women were at the funder's table with men, the giving would be different.

So back to the question at hand. What can be done?

We can ask the women in the families of mega-donors to come to the table. We can scout for Jewish women in the top 1 percent or, better, .01 percent of wealth who are not currently involved and ask them — and not the men in their families — to come to the table.

We can decide that even if we can't get these women to the table — because they aren't interested, or because they have felt uninvited for so long — we will get the largest women donors we can to the table in numbers equal to that of the men, even if their gift size is smaller than the men's. The essential value is to have both women and men thinking about philanthropy and the future of the Jewish community rather than everyone having the same size wallet

or pocketbook.

Women philanthropists resemble venture capitalists in their giving patterns, according to Joan Kaye in her outstanding study of a pool of Jewish women donors who give between \$100,000 and \$20 million per year. As she describes these donors, "They are entrepreneurial, engaged, collaborative, and focus on results. The most significant factor in terms of Jewish giving is that they all give large gifts within the Jewish community, regardless of their personal Jewish commitments or their giving level outside of the Jewish community." (*Portraits of Jewish Women Philanthropists*, Joan Kaye) And we can value women's tendencies to create long-term funding relationships rather than participate in "three-years-and-out" funding.

We can stop giving *kavod* to women (and to men) whose contributions are, frankly, too small for the wealth they have. We can ask women for larger contributions. (Many women I have spoken with say, "My husband gets asked for \$25,000. I get asked for \$5,000. Guess who gets invited to the table?")

Women can start writing larger checks, whether they are asked to or not, and they can make their voices heard when they do give. They can also refuse to write checks to organizations that don't have women in leadership and let the "powers that be" know this is why they are not contributing.

We can start valuing the organizations that support women and girls, and not consider them (or their donors) to be marginal. This would mean that when I ask a professional at a mega-donor's foundation whose primary commitment is to Jewish education about the possibility of funding *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*, a Jewish experiential education project for girls grades 7-12, I won't get the answer: "He just isn't interested in that type of thing."

Jewish Women's Foundations can try to exert more control over communal funding decisions. Twenty-six such foundations exist. They can also create higher giving categories than they have and not say "It will happen in time." The time needs to be now.

All too soon, future generations will search graveyards, looking for hints of our everyday lives. Let us do our part to make women and men the major philanthropists they discover. 🌸

FOUNDATION SERVICES by MARK CHARENDOFF

Increasingly, Jewish philanthropists are becoming more entrepreneurial in their funding, pursuing their work through their own efforts, either by creating their own foundations or simply engaging in individual philanthropy. The Jewish Funders Network (JFN) was created fifteen years ago to capture that entrepreneurial spirit and to advance the quality and growth of philanthropy rooted in Jewish values. As an international organization of family foundations, public philanthropies, and individual funders, JFN fosters a unique community that seeks to transform the nature of Jewish giving in both thought and action.

As the number of Jewish foundations and individual funders has grown — more than doubling in total assets over the past seven years to approximately \$30 billion in the United States alone — so has the need for a dynamic international network of philanthropic leaders. Even the most entrepreneurial philanthropist benefits when he or she draws on the accumulated knowledge of both programmatic work and the funding interests of others to extend the reach of their own giving.

Recently, JFN introduced a new program that provides an extra step towards helping funders become more strategic in their grantmaking. JFN's Foundation Services program offers philanthropists who don't have a large grantmaking infrastructure the ability to leverage their money, collaborate with other funders, and enhance their investment, with JFN acting as the program staff. This new service offers philanthropists the opportunity to excel in their particular fields of interest while receiving individualized, professional advice. In addition, due to JFN's expertise and knowledge in areas of interest to Jewish philanthropists, an individual funder can draw on this knowledge to come together with other like-minded philanthropists to expand his or her philanthropic reach. Each funder is treated with the utmost of discretion, but the synergy created by connecting to the JFN community in this way can be incredibly beneficial to someone who aims to grow his or her own philanthropy.

In the next period, JFN expects to expand the Foundation Services program to accommodate new philanthropists. We're excited about this opportunity to assist individuals in their giving journey.

Mark Charendoff is President of The Jewish Funders Network.



Through partnerships, collaborations and venture philanthropy projects, philanthropists have attempted to reinvent the very structure of the Jewish world.

The One-Sided Table

by RICHARD A. MARKER

This is a story about the shapes that define the philanthropy community table.

The two-sided table. The first communal table at which I sat had two sides. It had space for those who needed money and space for those who had it. The side of the table representing or coordinating those who had money was typically reserved for the Federation system. For many years my primary concern was the other side: reserved for advocates for enhanced support for undercapitalized, underfunded and under-recognized institutions and priorities.

The early 1990s were heady days for those of us in the Jewish educational/identity world. Many of us got our start in the late 1960s, but our message was only fully recognized in the early 1990s. The endorsement of the indispensability of Jewish education and Hillel and other “continuity” programs led to increases in funding and a new focus. The much ballyhooed, sobering 1990 *National Jewish Population Study* was one impetus, but it was also a confluence of other factors as well. Optimism about Israel, a booming economy, the end of the cold war and its focus on Soviet Jewry, perceived diminution of anti-Semitism and generational changes, among other factors, all allowed issues of the Jewish future to take center stage. Over time, the Fed-

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The community may be better off with a room containing various shaped tables rather than one containing only a single shape or size.

eration system gradually changed from being the central convener to a more monopolistic or controlling system. It was Federation dollars and those affluent philanthropists who were brought to the table which made it possible for programs committed to Jewish identity and education to move from institutional poverty to bourgeois credibility.

The three-sided table. In the 1990s, the table developed a different shape. By this time, I was exclusively on the side of the funders. I discovered that there are funders who did not have any interest in seeing the Federation system serve as a conduit or vetting agency for their philanthropic dollars. They viewed the consensus and deliberative process valued by the Federation system to be incrementalist. If it was true that the community was fast eroding, a marginal re-adjustment of funding priorities would not solve the problem. The very word “continuity” as used by the Feder-

ations became a symbol of a system that didn’t deliver the goods. These funders began to sit at the table on their own, next to the Federations and across from the grantees, and to direct their own funds to the causes and institutions they felt reflected their own priorities.

The one-sided table. The three-sided approach was of limited satisfaction to independent funders. By the mid-90s, philanthropists began to bring new, fertile and challenging approaches to their funding of Jewish futures. Free-standing partnerships, collaborations and venture philanthropy projects emerged in rapid succession. With some degree of lip service to the Federation role, mega- and not-so-mega-funders began to do their own things. Some of their projects are well known: birthright israel, PEJE, Foundation for Jewish Camping, the Israel Project, The Curriculum Initiative, The Joshua Venture and DeLeT, to mention just a few. While each of these

efforts has had its own history, strengths and weaknesses, goals and challenges, destiny and destination, all of them have been characterized by several factors that challenged communal norms:

1. they were sufficiently well-funded to make noise;
2. they had enough clout for that noise to be listened to;
3. they were about impacting masses of people;
4. they were about doing so in record time;
5. they were self-funded by philanthropists and governed by boards comprised of the funders or their staff representatives.

Through partnerships, collaborations and venture philanthropy projects, philanthropists have attempted to reinvent the very structure of the Jewish world. Nothing less than a radical transforma-

tion would stand a chance with the millions of Jews who found that the Jewish enterprise had become soporific, self-absorbed, irrelevant and alienating. As Bono, the newly coronated world philosopher, recently put it, "It has to feel like history; incrementalism puts the audience in a snooze." He might well have been sitting at a one-sided table with these philanthropists.

The outside of the table. Recently, I have been a part of the world not typically present at the philanthropic tables. I have been teaching philanthropists and foundation professionals from all facets of American life and advising families and foundations outside the Jewish world. I have thereby gained a new perspective on these developments. After all, the Jewish community did not invent philanthropy. We did not invent partnerships, venture projects, or the goal of using funds to change communal behaviors. There are lessons to be learned on how to do it right.

What have I learned from the world beyond our many-sided tables? I have learned that venture projects without exit strategies from the beginning often doom well-meaning and promising projects; that disaster funding (perhaps a metaphor for the perceived state of the Jewish world) without plans for long-term, systemic change is self-indulgent and often disappointing; that there are fads in philanthropy, and "new" is often exciting, but the new may or may not be better than that which was tested over time; that partnerships can allow a creative leveraging of limited resources, but they can also be safe, prestigious ways of avoiding the hard questions of risk; that the community may be better off with a room containing various shaped tables rather than one containing only a single shape or size.

I have also learned that real change comes from learning, and learning comes from humility — an all too elusive commodity. Making a difference implies meaningful change, and change carries with it the risk of failure. Only those funders willing to risk — whether in types of funding or in scope of grantees — and to learn from those risks, will precipitate the transformational, adaptable, agile, vibrant and robust 21st century Jewish community that they hope will define their legacies. ❁

Mitzvah Heroes

by DANNY SIEGEL

Giving *tzedakkah* is a sacred trust. It must be done carefully and with a sense of *mitzvah* — that it is a high human act that ties the giver not only to the recipient but also to Jewish history, life, and the essence of meaning.

The recent trend of givers taking "ownership" of their *tzedakkah* money is encouraging. Givers want to know how their philanthropy will be used and whether they will get the maximum "bang for the *mitzvah* buck." Whether they are aware of it or not, these givers are following Maimonides's third level of *tzedakkah*, "...One should not contribute to a *tzedakkah* fund unless he or she knows that the person in charge of the collections is trustworthy and wise and knows how to manage the money properly...."

In addition, I believe there exist, above and beyond reliable people, certain individuals whom I have designated as "Mitzvah Heroes." I became so taken with these giants of *tikkun olam* that they became the very foundation of the Ziv Tzedakah Fund's work. Mitzvah Heroes are all ages; they include geniuses and those with average or below-average IQs, from every socio-economic

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class, and "classy" dressers to jeans and old t-shirts types. What they have in common is that they are inspired and inspiring, selfless and absolutely devoted to the well-being of others, humble, 100 percent honest, *menschen* of the first order — and having seen something wrong in this world, they set out to fix it, with little fanfare or bureaucracy. They are life-givers *par excellence*. You would trust your life to them, so you would most certainly entrust your *tzedakkah* to them. They are the ultimate in reliability, they are the best teachers of *tikkun olam*, and they are a delight to be with and to work with. Knowing them provides donors with a superb way to personalize their giving. "Organization" is an impersonal word. Some organizations can be impersonal. By meeting Mitzvah Heroes, givers are always reminded of the human element of *Tzedakah*.

Mitzvah Heroes are everywhere, and they are easy to find. I found them when I started out 30 years ago by simply asking people, "Who is doing good things for other people?" The last Annual Report of Ziv Tzedakah Fund, which I founded in 1981, lists more than 100 Mitzvah Heroes and describes their work in Israel, the United States and other parts of the world. Find them, be with them, be inspired by them, and join them in your own *tikkun olam* work. *L'chaim!*





Young Philanthropists On Their Own Terms

by FELICIA HERMAN

Each year, Natan members choose the funding areas that interest them, thereby creating an organization that expressly reflects the philanthropic interests of the group.

A little over three years ago, four young hedge fund managers — Michael Steinberg, David Steinhardt, Evan Behrens, and Sender Cohen — began an experiment in Jewish philanthropy.

On paper at least, their goal was simple: to create a new generation of Jewish philanthropists who would buck the traditional ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish giving, reserving a majority of their philanthropic dollars for Jewish causes.

They had other goals in mind as well: to build an attractive, cutting-edge philanthropic vehicle that spoke to the interests of their generation; to provide a small, hands-on alternative to the large, mainstream Jewish philanthropic organi-

zations that leave many young philanthropists uninspired; to design a Jewish alternative to the non-Jewish charitable organizations that attract so much of the attention and contributions of the Wall Street community; and to educate grant-makers so that they would make philanthropic decisions in an informed way and so that the mega-givers of tomorrow would be Jewishly knowledgeable.

In other words, the founders wanted to build a new philanthropic model that would attract successful young Jews and engage them in the project of Jewish philanthropy on their own terms.

As they worked to develop this model, the founders sought the advice of established philanthropists and their professional staffs. Along with Rabbi David Gedzelman, then Director of Makor, JJ

Felicia Herman is Executive Director of Natan.

Greenberg, z"l, the founding director of Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, was one of the earliest supporters and most influential shapers of the idea. Therefore, after JJ's tragic death in October 2002, the founders decided to name their new organization after him. JJ's Hebrew name was Natan Yosef, and "natan" means "to give" in Hebrew. Thus The Natan Fund (usually shortened to just Natan) was born in November 2002. Natan's creators held a kickoff event at Makor in New York City for dozens of their peers, headlined by philanthropists Michael Steinhardt and George Rohr debating their respective approaches to Jewish philanthropy.

In its first two years, Natan was incubated at the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, where it was ably administered by ACBP and generously supported by the 21/64 philanthropic partnership (ACBP, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Samberg Family Foundation and an anonymous foundation). The model was further developed through the establishment of different levels of membership: people could be invited to join the board, which the founders had already decided would be responsible for Natan's operating expenses as well as serving as a grant-making body; they could join as members of the grant committees, where they would participate in and be in control of the entire grantmaking process; or they could become "social network" members, where they would be invited to all Natan events. Because the board and a handful of supporting foundations pay all of Natan's expenses, all other member contributions go directly to Natan's grantees.

Three years later, the experiment seems to be working. About 50 young Jews, all under the age of 45, have signed on as Natan members, each contributing between \$3,600 and \$75,000 a year. In 2005, Natan awarded over \$750,000 in grants; that number will hopefully increase to close to a million dollars in 2006.

Part of Natan's appeal is that it gives

its members complete control over their contributions. Each year, Natan members choose the funding areas that interest them, thereby creating an organization that expressly reflects the philanthropic interests of the group. Today, Natan has three grant committees that make grants to non-profit organizations in North America and Israel. All three committees make grants only to organizations with annual budgets of \$1.5 million or less — a reflection of members' high tolerance for risk and their desire to support organizations that are often overlooked by traditional funders.

The Economic Development in Israel committee makes grants to Israeli organizations that work to break the cycle of poverty for Israelis living below the poverty line, funding innovative approaches to strengthening Israel's economy and enabling its most disadvantaged residents to find economic stability and opportunity. The committee's grants reflect a variety of approaches to this problem: from Tech-Careers' intensive, individualized, 24/7 approach to training young Ethiopian Israelis for careers in Israel's high-tech industry; to the Kedma School's comprehensive educational program for young Mizrahi Jews in one of Jerusalem's poorest neighborhoods; to Start-Up Jerusalem's wholesale efforts to revitalize major segments of Jerusalem's economy.

The Natan Campus Initiative awards grants to organizations that are encouraging Jews on university campuses to reflect on and deepen their relationship with Israel in new ways — especially people who feel alienated, confused or frustrated by current on-campus Israel activities. After a year of study of the field, the committee decided to help Philadelphia's Jewish Dialogue Group to create a new pilot program that will teach mediation and dialogue skills to Jews on several area campuses, using Israel as a vehicle. The goal is to find young Jews who might not be attracted to current Israel programming and to teach them valuable resume-building skills while engaging them in discussions about Israel.

Finally, and perhaps most prominently, Natan's Jewish Identity in North America grant committee supports some of the most cutting-edge, innovative

approaches to engaging young Jews in Jewish life. Over the past three years, the committee has supported many of the organizations that make up the new Jewish "movement" that is forcing the Jewish community to rethink its approach to young Jews: JDub Records (whose first artist, Matisyahu, is now practically a household name for young Americans, not just young Jews); Storahtelling, the revolutionary and multifaceted Jewish performance art and ritual theater troupe; the provocative and highly influential Heeb Magazine and its Storytelling series; and a host of other organizations created and run by young Jews, such as Brooklyn Jews, Hazon, IKAR, Nashuva, and *The Tribe: An Unorthodox Film and Discussion Program*.

In addition to the regular grant committee process, Natan's board makes its own discretionary grants out of the portion of its contributions that is not used for Natan's operating expenses. Board members nominate organizations in North America and Israel about which they feel especially passionate, including organizations that have exceeded the three-year limit for funding at the grant committee level. Board grants support a variety of projects, including the development of a community service program for veterans of Israel's elite Sayeret Matkal unit; Shavei Israel's efforts to bring the descendants of the world's most historic Jewish communities back to Judaism and even to Israel; the American Jewish-Muslim dialogue and conflict resolution projects of Abraham's Vision; JConnect Seattle's multifaceted programs for 20- and 30-something Jews in Seattle; and the creation of a teacher's manual for Keshet's documentary film, "*Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School*."

Natan works because it can be many things to many people. It offers an excellent professional and social network and many opportunities to interact with other Natan members through high-quality events and a substantive, thought-provoking grantmaking process. It provides much-needed resources to startup initiatives that are often overlooked by larger philanthropic organizations and by the established community. Perhaps most important, Natan actively nurtures and engages young philanthropists, paving the way for a sustained involvement of the next generation in Jewish culture and life. ❁



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It is clear that what we need is imagination to view our Jewish future in a way that will capture the spirit of those Jews who are mostly on the sidelines today. I believe we don't have many of the needed answers. But through hard work, creativity, and again, imagination, we can begin to reach the presently unreachable. With success, the result will be a Renaissance of Jewish life in which our flourishing communal structures inspire greater Jewish involvement and commitment — which in turn inspire even greater levels of *tzedakah*.

—MICHAEL H. STEINHARDT