



Jewish Learning Venture™

Innovations

2014–2015 / 5775

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

EMPOWERMENT



The stories we present in this year's *Innovations* report offer insight into the nature and effectiveness of our work with thousands of people and illustrate our impact and value. I hope that by reading them you will learn about our efforts in these areas:

1. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

We cultivate and nurture networks and make authentic connections between and among individuals, families and institutions.

2. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We develop, vet and disseminate knowledge and expertise that leads to best practices and forward thinking experimentation.

3. EMPOWERMENT

We empower individuals and families to engage Jewishly and build meaningful Jewish lives, and provide tools and guidance to institutions to create and deliver compelling Jewish experiences and to meet the challenges of the 21st century Jewish community.



“Jewish Learning Venture reaches, engages, and empowers thousands strengthen their Jewish lives and to build

I am proud to share that Jewish Learning Venture has been selected by *Slingshot* for a second year in a row as one of the **most innovative Jewish organizations in North America.**

I deeply appreciate our generous donors, active and dedicated volunteers, and talented staff, whose belief in the critical importance of our work and investment in our mission have brought us to this moment.

I invite you to consider joining us in whatever ways are most meaningful and relevant to you.



Rabbi Philip Warmflash, Executive Director



Left: We build relationships with more than 3,000 families raising Jewish children in and around Philadelphia with [jkidphilly](http://jkidphilly.com) and jkidphilly.org, our Family Engagement programs and resources.

Below (left): We convene and facilitate opportunities for congregational and institutional leaders to help them create and implement contemporary Jewish engagement and learning experiences.

Below: We empower leaders from dozens of education communities by helping them to determine and implement positive changes in their institutions.



of people to
our Jewish community.”



“We love getting to know
Jewish lives



Creating Connections

Betsy first learned about our Family Engagement program, jkidphilly, which includes the PJ Library initiative, from another mom in her eldest son Jacob's playgroup.

"She told me that if I signed up online for PJ Library, every month our family would receive free books about the various Jewish holidays and traditions," recalls Betsy.

Next came attendance at a Jewish Learning Venture event—a family engagement mitzvah morning and concert—where Betsy discovered more about jkidphilly. Says Betsy, "We loved the music and crafts, and being around people who were just like us!"

Betsy started bringing Jacob to jkidphilly playdates—in informal public space gatherings organized to promote socialization and community.

Last year during Hanukkah, with the help of our Family Engagement staff, Betsy brought Jewish practices to Jacob and Max's secular preschool.

"It's important to me to educate my children and their peers about Jewish traditions," explains Betsy. She shared PJ Library books, as well as craft and cooking ideas featured on jkidphilly.org. The teachers and classmates loved it.

families and helping them to develop their in meaningful and enriching ways." – Lori Rubin

"My husband and I both were raised to have strong Jewish values. As parents of two Jewish boys, PJ Library books allow us to share reading time together and help us to teach them our traditions."

It was Betsy's first experience with jkidphilly, which offers life stage and age appropriate resources for families with young children, and to the institutions that serve them. It was certainly not her last.

Soon, she was collaborating with Jewish Learning Venture staff to plan playdates for a growing circle of friends at convenient, fun meeting spots across the area.

There were "mommy playdates" and "moms' nights out" too, where participants learned how to make hallah and play Mah Jongg, and talked about being Jewish mothers in today's world. Several families began sharing monthly Shabbat dinners, and even joined together in a mitzvah project.

"We love getting to know families and helping them to develop their Jewish lives in meaningful and enriching ways," explains Lori Rubin, Director of Family Engagement.

Betsy is now a member of our Family Engagement Task Force. "Through jkidphilly, Jewish Learning Venture provides me with the opportunity to be much more involved in the community," says Betsy. "I'm so grateful."

OUR IMPACT

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Our staff actively cultivates one-to-one relationships with hundreds of families, and stewards the creation of larger networks of families who enjoy growing Jewishly together.

With significant expertise in education, camp, psychology, inclusion and parenting, our staff understands today's Jewish families and designs programs and resources that meet them where they are.

jkidphilly.org is the premier online portal to Jewish life for families with young children in the Greater Philadelphia area. Filled with information about community programs and educational resources, a directory of institutions, and a blog featuring the voices of local parents, jkidphilly.org invites families to explore Jewish life with others publicly and in their own homes.

Top (left): During jkidphilly "Little Hands Make a Big Difference" programs, families throughout Greater Philadelphia participated in a variety of hands-on social action projects. Far left: Through PJ Library Philadelphia, we seeded and grew home-based Jewish literacy among 5,000 children, ages 6 months to 8 years, with more than 40,000 books and CDs.

Inspiring Change

For many young parents, the idea of synagogue membership can be clouded by less than positive childhood memories about religious school. Motivated to create a paradigm where students and families truly want to participate, and ultimately regard synagogue involvement as central to their daily lives, the professional and volunteer leaders at Congregation Beth El in Yardley reached out to our staff.

“We had been talking about experiential education for years,” says Karen Lewin, Director of Education and Youth at Beth El. “The ongoing support we received from Jewish Learning Venture enabled us to redirect our program and infuse our students’ learning with authenticity.”

We are committed to enhancing the capacity of professional and volunteer leaders, allowing them to become more effective in building dynamic 21st century institutions. By staying attuned to the challenges faced by our constituents, we are able to design relevant initiatives that encourage new and innovative learning models that strengthen Jewish community.

With expert guidance, Beth El began to frame its curriculum around Jewish values, as opposed to history or holidays. “This shift has been incredibly powerful, lending itself to ‘real world’ situations, not just rote facts,” explains Karen.

Congregation leaders also realized that the atmosphere they create is just as important as the content of the lessons. “We’ve transformed the hallways of our school to reflect a learning culture,” said Karen. “And we’ve built relationships with our families in ways we never imagined.”



“Jewish Learning Venture encourages and inspires to think differently, to think out of the

OUR IMPACT

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Our staff diligently researches and surfaces trends in American and Jewish life, and incorporates best practices and next practices into every program.

We lead community-wide webinars, workshops and *Yemei Limmud*—“days of learning”—for professional and volunteer leaders, focusing on contemporary issues and modalities in education, technology, leadership and management. And we convene Reshet—“network”—workshops to help leaders across different congregations confront the common challenges of synagogue life.

Our staff spearheads cross-boundary networks among Jewish institutions to galvanize leaders, lessen real and perceived communal boundaries, and promote collaboration.

Left: More than 750 educators from dozens of educational communities learned and implemented new skills that keep them at the forefront of their fields.

Karen reports that the students particularly like the new interactive aspects, the flexible learning model and the revised schedule. Says Karen, “Parents tell us that their children are happier and more engaged, which is priceless.

“Jewish Learning Venture encourages and inspires congregations to think differently, to think out of the box. The support and encouragement we’ve received, along with numerous brainstorming sessions about new ways to approach difficult situations, have allowed us to reach our goals. Jewish Learning Venture has opened our minds to the possibilities of what Jewish education in our community can be.”

Left: Four congregations participated in LeV: Getting to the Heart of Jewish Education, our two-year project that transforms congregational education for elementary school age children and their families.



congregations
box.” – Karen Lewin

Building Capacity

Ohev Shalom of Bucks County was embarking on a mission to ensure that every member would have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in spiritual, educational, celebratory and life event activities, regardless of any challenges one might face. Seeking expert guidance, the congregation looked to us for assistance.

Our Whole Community Inclusion initiative offers an integrated set of programs designed to effect holistic change, allowing individuals with special needs and their families to feel welcome and able to engage more fully in authentic Jewish life experiences. Led by a team of staff members, consultants and volunteers who apply the “whole community”

Says Suzanne Gold, Special Needs Coordinator at Ohev Shalom, “Being part of a larger community convened by Jewish Learning Venture matters, and energizes us to find new ways to integrate children and adults with challenges into the Jewish community.”

“The training sessions and meetings we attend allow us to network with

OUR IMPACT

EMPOWERMENT

We equip people to break down barriers, and to advocate for and include people with special needs and their families.

Through workshops, training sessions and consultations, **we encourage educational leaders** to incorporate inclusion practices into their pedagogic skills and to foster inclusive classroom environments.

“Jewish Learning Venture provides a springboard to see what’s possible in unlocking doors for those with observable and invisible challenges.” – Suzanne Gold

lens, we advocate for inclusion to be a matter of high priority throughout the Jewish community.

Leaders from Ohev Shalom began attending our Whole Community Inclusion training sessions, where they continually learn best practices to implement within their congregation. Their school also benefits from the involvement of teen volunteers—graduates of our Reta Emerson Fellowship/Teen Assistant Program—who work with younger, students with special needs at the congregation.

other Jewish organizations, and gain more support for families within the Ohev Shalom community.

Jewish Learning Venture provides a springboard to see what’s possible in unlocking doors for those with observable and invisible challenges.”

At right: We furthered conversations and actions towards including people with special needs and their families in many congregations and in Jewish communal life. **Inset:** Our Reta Emerson Fellows are high school students who become valued supplementary school aides to students with special needs and communal ambassadors for inclusion.

We facilitate the Jewish Community Special Needs Consortium—a Philadelphia-based network of representatives from agencies serving the special needs community. Beyond intergroup collaboration, the Consortium hosts “Opening the Gates of Torah,” an annual symposium that educates and provides resources for communal professionals, volunteer leaders, community members, and families of individuals with special needs.





At Jewish Learning Venture, we believe that engaging individuals and families in Jewish life, and empowering institutions that can partner with us in that process, requires a healthy respect for tradition and an openness to change.

Our talented and agile staff strikes that balance using their expertise to develop and implement programs that are rooted in Jewish texts and values and reflect 21st century realities. We place innovation at the heart of our work, surfacing trends in American and in Jewish life and applying what we learn to our programs. We reflect, question, research, and design contemporary Jewish initiatives that encourage and prepare people to become involved with, and to build, Jewish community in Philadelphia and across the country.

VISION

Jewish Learning Venture envisions individuals and families engaged in dynamic, connected, Jewish life in Greater Philadelphia and beyond.

MISSION

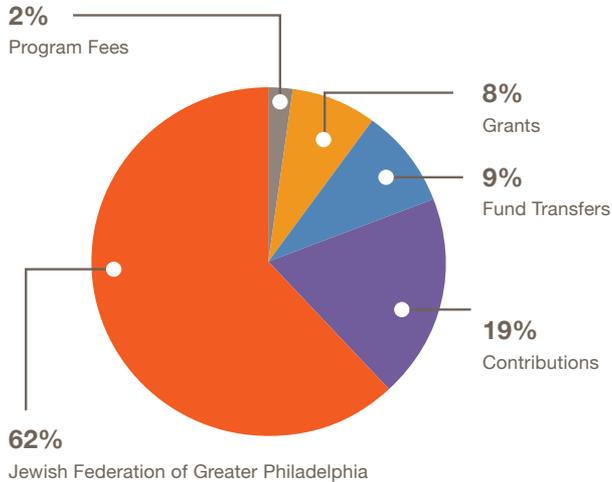
Jewish Learning Venture inspires and empowers people to make Jewish life, learning and community relevant and meaningful.

OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES

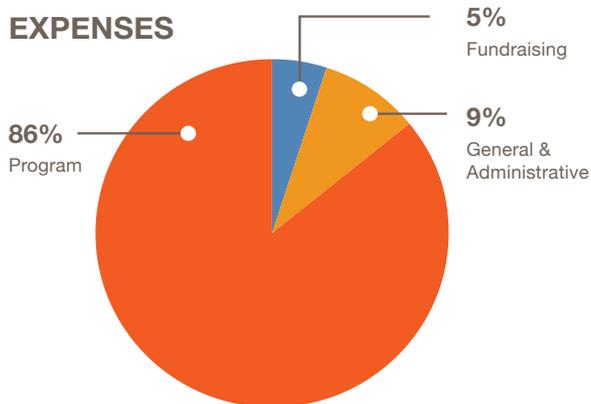
September 1, 2013-August 31, 2014 based on unaudited figures as of December 31, 2014

Revenue of \$1,626,350

REVENUE



EXPENSES



LEADERSHIP

2014-2015 / 5775

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Honored to be selected for a second year by *Slingshot* as one of the most **innovative** Jewish organizations in North America for “enabling people to find meaning in Jewish life and be part of Jewish community.”



Jewish Learning Venture™

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Partnering with:



**Jewish Federation of
Greater Philadelphia**
One People ■ One Community ■ One Federation™