

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

*a community rediscovered,
a city revitalized*



ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007



Mission Statement

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans serves as the central coordinating body for the Jewish community. Its purpose is to build and sustain a vibrant Jewish community in the Greater New Orleans area, and, in accordance with Jewish tradition, to assure the continuity of the Jewish people in America, Israel and throughout the Diaspora.

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JEWISH FEDERATION

of Greater New Orleans

Dear New Orleans Jewish Community members,

This has been an extraordinary period for all of us. Our Jewish community is well on the road to recovery. The optimism, resilience and robustness of the Jewish community of New Orleans are inspiring and they have enabled us to make great strides ahead of the general community in the city.

Most families are back in their homes or in an advanced state of rebuilding. Our synagogues and agencies are repaired and functioning well. We welcome the two new Rabbis in town, Rabbi Uri Topolosky of Beth Israel and Rabbi Julie Kozlow of the Northshore Jewish Congregation, as well as Cantor Billy Tiep of Touro Synagogue.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our brethren, the Jews all across North America. We have been showered with volunteers, support and contributions from individuals, synagogues, foundations and Federations across the continent. Special thanks and appreciation must be given to United Jewish Communities together with some of the large Federations, the Goldring Family Foundation, the Woldenberg Foundation and the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana who rallied to our cause and provided umbrella funding for two years to the whole community. It is this significant financial bridge arranged through the UJC Emergency Committee chaired by Dr. Carol Smokler that has allowed us breathing space to consider issues of survival, recovery and rebuilding as we work toward a promising future.

We have been through the phases of survival and recovery and now have entered the phase of renewal and rebuilding. This long term phase may take 5-10 years and will require much work and patience to allow us to realize our visions and dreams.

To this end, a year ago we began a strategic planning process under the able chairpersonship of Julie Wise Oreck. Five active task forces including over 150 people from across the community gave their time and inspiration. Even more joined us for a marathon planning day in March, 2007. The planning process is now coming to an end and has resulted in more than 50 proposals and recommendations. Among those already being implemented is our Newcomers' Incentive Program designed to attract Jews to New Orleans and assist in their transition. Other proposals will be taken up by the standing committees of the Federation to be implemented in the coming years.

Meanwhile, we have not ignored our own financial responsibilities. The 2007 Annual Campaign was successful beyond our expectations and capped at \$2.673 million. This amazing response is the result of the fabulous work of the campaign co-chairs, Vivian Cahn and Mike Wasserman, and to the credit and generosity of everyone who gave and worked in the campaign. The campaign too has served to underline the pivotal role of Federation as community leader and convener, and as a lighthouse for the community during times of need.

Financing the proposals of the strategic plan is a daunting task and beyond the limited resources of the Jewish community of New Orleans and its generous members. We have therefore, begun to raise funds outside the community and have turned to foundations and other sources across the country with the help of a grant writer.

The strategic plan is being aided by the first demographic community survey to be conducted in more than 20 years. LSU is doing the main quantitative survey and Tulane is running qualitative focus groups. We hope to use the survey results to guide decision making throughout the coming years.

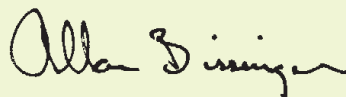
Marketing, reporting and public relations have always been important locally but now as we recruit and fundraise outside the community, it is essential to get the right word out across the Jewish world. We have been fortunate in that respect. Global Visions Israel is providing us with excellent public relations services pro bono. A number of positive stories have appeared prominently in such publications as the *LA Times*, *Times Picayune*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, *New York Sun*, and the *Jewish Week*. These have helped to portray a true and optimistic vision of what is happening here.

While we have been concentrating on our pressing local needs, we have not forgotten our brothers in Israel. We are pleased to report that the Israel Emergency Campaign raised \$365,000 in our community. We, along with our domestic partners in Birmingham, are also taking an active role in the relationship with our Partnership 2000 community, Rosh Ha'ayin.

Credit needs to be given to the wonderful volunteers and lay leaders on the Federation's Board of Trustees, committees, task forces, synagogues and agencies. It is their involvement and leadership that has enabled us to make considerable progress. They have been supported and aided by a great team of professionals in the community agencies and synagogues, as well as by the devoted and skilled staff of the Federation.

There is a new spirit in the community. We are smaller, yet stronger, and more united. Attendance at events and services is high; greater levels of involvement and engagement have been experienced. Cooperation and collaboration have become the buzzwords. Synagogues, organizations and agencies of different denominations are working together and sharing in ways never envisioned. With everyone around the table, it is our challenge and hope that we will continue in this collaborative and united fashion.

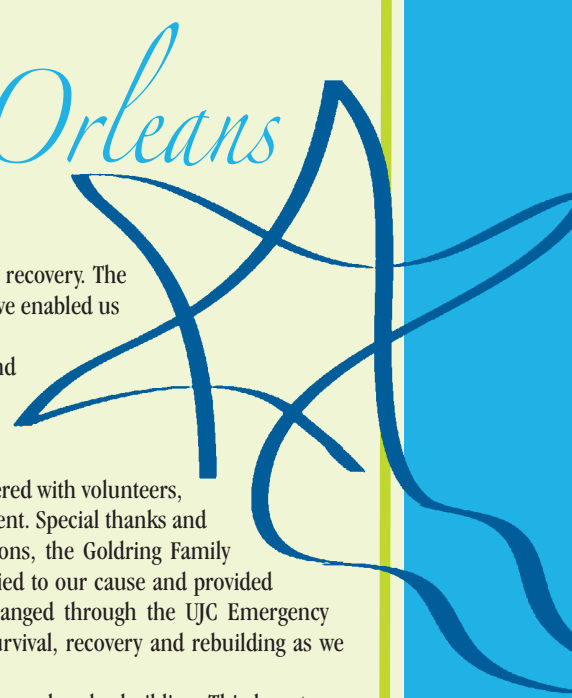
May the coming year be one of growth and successful rebuilding.



Allan Bissinger
President



Michael Weil
Executive Director



NEW ORLEANS JEWISH COMMUNITY *on the road back*

RECOVERY PROCESS UNDER WAY; CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT STILL NEEDED

On June 30, when the 2007 campaign closed with \$2.673 million in pledges, chairs Vivian Cahn and Dr. Michael Wasserman, along with the Board and staff of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans Federation were ecstatic, but remained cautiously optimistic about the future.

"It was a tremendously successful Annual Campaign for a community with 3500 fewer residents than in 2005, when the campaign raised \$2.8 million," said Sherri Tarr, Federation Campaign Director. No campaign was conducted in 2006 to allow local residents to focus on rebuilding their homes and businesses. She added, "Not only did we raise more than we expected, but we ran a campaign that really brought the community together, demonstrating their commitment to rebuild and stay unified."

We should attribute at least part of our success in 2007 to the lack of a campaign in 2006, which allowed some people to be more generous this year. In addition, the New Orleans community has been kept afloat through funding from United Jewish Communities (UJC) since the storm. As of December 31, 2007, that funding will end. Our community members know that their donations to the 2007 campaign will be used to support our community when UJC funding ends.

"The 2007 Annual Campaign raised sufficient funds to continue community services," said Michael Weil, Federation's Executive Director, "but we will need to raise a lot more money to fully rebuild the Jewish community and provide what the local community needs in the long term." The 2007 Campaign will help ensure that communal services in place before the storm are able to continue while the community

completes its strategic plan for renewal and rebuilding. However, it will not cover future costs and cannot begin to help families who lost homes, schools that lost classrooms, or community agencies and synagogues that suffered property damage.

"We have been able to rebuild and continue to provide services only because of UJC and Jews across the United States. They stood by our

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side, donating money and countless volunteer hours," said Mr. Weil. "We hope their support continues during the difficult years of continued rebuilding ahead."

Over 150 community members participated in the strategic planning process which ran concurrently with the 2007 Annual Campaign. To implement the Strategic Plan that is evolving from that process, we will need to raise close to \$50 million over the next 5-10 years. Raising these funds will not be easy, but the benefits will be substantial and a revitalized New Orleans Jewish Community will emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.

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2006-2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Rebuilding under way

The Annual Campaign is the cornerstone that supports the building of a vibrant Jewish community in Greater New Orleans, Israel, and 59 countries around the world.

Every year, our community-wide campaign raises funds that help support the vital human services and Jewish education provided by our local, national, and international agencies. These funds have a daily impact on the education of our children, strengthening of family life, providing care and comfort to our frail elderly, and sustaining our partnerships here and overseas.

The Board of Trustees of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans voted to have 90% of the money raised in the 2007 Annual Campaign remain here locally, and to have 10% of the money raised be distributed to overseas causes. In the 2008 Campaign, this division will be 80% local, 20% overseas. In the 2009 Campaign, we will return to our original 70% local, 30% overseas distribution of funds. This plan will allow for more of the campaign money to remain local in order to help our Jewish community recover from Hurricane Katrina.

It is through the generosity of our Jewish community that the Federation is able to provide support when needed. Your time and financial contribution enable us to fulfill the obligation of *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* means justice, and justice demands that we as Jews connect with those who are in need.

\$200,000+

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The Lion of Judah Endowment is an endowment component of the Lion of Judah Major Gifts program.

A LOJE is created by establishing a fund of \$100,000 or more in the donor's name, ensuring the perpetuation of a donor's Lion of Judah level annual campaign gift.

LOJE is a powerful statement of a donor's commitment to tzedakah, providing a legacy for herself, her family and her community. Establishing a LOJE allows women the opportunity to endow their gifts in perpetuity. We gratefully acknowledge the women who have made this commitment here in New Orleans:

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Anonymous (27)

This list represents pledges
from individuals, foundations
and businesses, as well as
declarations of intent to
contribute from donor advised
funds and foundations.

All lists are as of August 1, 2007.
We apologize for any omission
or errors.

*Deceased

Connections with Israel

Partnership 2000 Steering Committee

Richard Cahn, Co-Chair
Ann Kimball, Co-Chair

Einav Avidan
Cathy Bart
Allan Bissinger
Ann Harris
William Hess
David Kaplan, MD
Bonnie Lustig
Buddy Noel
Julie Wise Oreck
Will Samuels
Roselle Ungar
Michael Wasserman, MD
Michael Weil

Israel Emergency Campaign

Chaired by Morris Bart III, the Israel Emergency Campaign raised \$364,646.95 from 222 donors. The Campaign ran from August through December, 2006. The Campaign raised funds for Northern Israel which had been under attack and suffered damage from thousands of rockets. The north found itself in ruins, many of its people displaced, and its social services network damaged. Just as Jews across the world, including Israelis, donated millions of dollars for Katrina relief to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, it was time for us to give back and our community generously responded.

Partnership 2000 Summary

Partnership 2000 (P2K) is a joint United Jewish Communities, United Israel Appeal and Jewish Agency initiative that connects Jewish communities from across the world to a community in Israel through a sister-city relationship. P2K is a structured shared committee process that examines issues to determine projects for the mutual benefit of the partners. Along with Birmingham, Alabama, New Orleans is matched with the Israeli city of Rosh Ha'ayin and is one of 550 communities in 45 partnerships.

In October, 2006, the joint steering committee of our partnership met in Mississippi, and again in June, 2007, in Israel to discuss existing and new programs with the Birmingham and Rosh Ha'ayin delegations. Four educators from each of our partners met in Rosh Ha'ayin to develop a universal curriculum for connecting their classes and teaching diversity in the classroom. A return visit by the Israeli educators will take place in Fall 2007.

Several opportunities are planned for international travel by Israeli students. Two teenage athletes from Rosh Ha'ayin joined the New Orleans Maccabi team to compete in Houston this past summer. Plans are being formulated for the Rosh Ha'ayin girls vocal ensemble, which has performed in cities across Israel, to come to

Birmingham and New Orleans to perform during the "Israel at 60" celebrations during the coming year.

P2K promotes excellence in education through numerous programs such as its Student Leadership Program, an English Learning Center, and the newly created Jewish Lens Program. Through the Jewish Lens Program, religious school students in New Orleans, Birmingham and Rosh Ha'ayin will examine themselves by taking photographs of things which are dear to them. These photographs will be shared with religious school children of the corresponding grade in the sister city. As students learn about what is distinctly associated with the other community, they will also see the similarities among Jewish communities that transcend geographic barriers.

The partnership between New Orleans, Birmingham and Rosh Ha'ayin has made great strides this year and shows promise of bringing many more interesting joint projects to all three communities in the years ahead.



Gift of Israel

For the first summer in many years, New Orleans sent a large group of young people on summer programs in Israel. Twenty-two Jewish youth from the New Orleans area connected with their Jewish peers by joining groups headed to the Jewish homeland. All the travelers used their Edie and Paul Rosenblum Gift of Israel Accounts, which are subsidized by up to \$2,000 by the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans and up to \$400 by synagogue matching funds.

- Thirteen students joined North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) trips. NFTY is an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism.
- Four visited Israel on a Young Judaea trip. Young Judaea is the Zionist Youth Movement sponsored by Hadassah which accepts members from diverse religious backgrounds.
- Two participated through Young Judaea's Amirim program. This program places college students and young professionals as volunteers in Israeli towns.
- Two young New Orleanians traveled to Israel on a Ramah program. Ramah is the camping arm of the Conservative movement.
- One student attended a National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY)



Jewish Overseas Leadership Training (JOLT) Program. NCSY is affiliated with the Orthodox Movement.

The Gift of Israel program is a unique opportunity for Jewish children to grow, mature and establish a strong connection to the Jewish people. As a parent of a 16 year old Israel trip participant put it, "When kids return from an Israel program, they're different. They're more centered, as if they've unearthed a new source of energy and focus."

All of these programs allow young American Jews to forge a very personal bond with Jewish history and ancestry, and accumulate memories to last a lifetime.

250 YEARS OF JEWISH NEW ORLEANS

A Worldwind Tour

JEWISH COMMUNITY PLAYS

From its earliest roots, the New Orleans Jewish community, which celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, has always been colorful and freewheeling, reflecting the city in which it lives.

Most of the Jews who settled in New Orleans soon after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 came from the Alsace region of France; they were attracted to the city because most of its residents still spoke French and followed the Napoleonic Code, not English common law.

New Orleans was a frontier town then that rewarded people who were not bound by tradition, and this applied not only to business but to all areas of life. Because it was a port city, in which people from many cultures and countries came to make their fortune, New Orleans was probably the most tolerant of any important American city. In some ways, New Orleans was a meritocracy where people were judged by their business skills and smarts. For that reason, Jews were very successful in politics – Judah Benjamin, later the Secretary of State of the Confederacy, was the first Jewish Senator, and there was a Jewish lieutenant governor and attorney general in the 1850's as well.

But the early Jewish community was not known for its religiosity. Most of the Jews who came here emigrated alone or with other men. Once here, many married Catholic women and raised their children as Catholics. Here is how a German Jewish correspondent described New Orleans after his visit here in 1842 – "although the political atmosphere is so liberal that a Jew could win unanimous election to the legislature, only four homes kept Kosher, only two followed the laws of Shabbas, and two-thirds of the boys were not circumcised."

The New Orleans Jewish community would no doubt have been an interesting relic, doomed by intermarriage and assimilation, had not Judah Touro come to town. The son of the cantor at the oldest American synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, Touro arrived in New Orleans in 1806 just as the economic boom was taking off. A shrewd investor and a skinflint as well, he soon came to own much of what is today's downtown. But Judah Touro attended services at Christ Church and his closest friends were gentile.

Fortunately, Touro became quite close to a man named Gerson Kursheedt, who had a strong Jewish identity. He convinced Touro to give money to found a new synagogue,

and that was the start of his Jewish philanthropy. When Touro died in 1843, his will was so famous that it was published in the *New York Times*. America's first philanthropist, he gave away the then-astronomical sum of \$483,000 to synagogues, schools and benevolent societies in 19 cities and even gave money to Jews in Palestine and China. In New Orleans, he supported two synagogues and founded Touro Infirmary.

Now on a firm financial footing, the Jewish community grew steadily but slowly in the second half of the 19th century. The Reform movement, which had just started in Germany, took hold and both original synagogues became Reform. Circumstances kept the Reform movement dominant in New Orleans. In the late 19th century, the city was rocked both by yellow fever epidemics and several financial reversals. As a result, the large-scale immigration from Eastern Europe of more traditional Jews bypassed New Orleans for the most part. And so what happened in most Jewish communities—where the large numbers of Eastern European Jews dwarfed the existing smaller community of German Jews—did not happen in New Orleans. However, New Orleans has always had strong



IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CITY

and thriving Conservative and Orthodox Synagogues.

Although the Jewish community has never represented more than 1% of the metropolitan area population, it has always played a very important role in the city. Consider this statistic, which measures their philanthropic prominence. A full one-third of the recipients of the *Times Picayune* Loving Cup, an award given by the newspaper each year to recognize the city's most civic-minded citizen, have been Jewish. Jews founded the art museum; the city park; Newman School, an academically elite private school; Dillard University, the first black university; two elite private schools, and one of the first television stations.

Jews have also played a leading role in the civil rights movement in New Orleans; the first African American to speak to an integrated audience, Ralph Bunche, spoke at a synagogue, and rabbis were fervent advocates of equal rights.

The tolerance that marked New Orleans as a frontier town still holds today, and the Jewish community is held in great respect by their non-Jewish neighbors. This is what Ben Toledano, who ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1971, had to say about the Jewish community: "In what other city do the men sit down and plan costumes, themes, color schemes and plumage [he was referring to Mardi Gras]? We in New Orleans do not clutter our minds with information; we are not an intellectual city. If you would look for intellectual activity you would have to look for it in the Jewish community."

In the post-Katrina recovery, the Jewish community is again leading the way; its strategic planning effort and initiatives to welcome newcomers were featured recently in a front-page article in the local newspaper. No doubt, the Jewish community will continue to play a major role in New Orleans life in the next 250 years.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Revitalizing

The Jewish community, led by the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, has recently completed a comprehensive strategic planning process to define its future goals and the steps needed to reach those goals. Among other aspirations, the community seeks to retain its existing infrastructure and increase the Jewish population to, at the very least, its pre-Katrina size. Strategic planning is an essential bridge needed to close the gap between where New Orleans was the day after Hurricane Katrina and the community's ultimate aspirations and vision for the future. The Federation formulated its strategic plan through a high degree of community involvement, and a highly developed structure. The process was separated into two distinct stages: the planning stage and the implementation stage.

The community has gone through 3 distinct phases. The initial phase, which extended over about 3 months, was survival. Assistance during this phase included the aid of UJC and Jewish communities across the country. The second phase is recovery, allowing families, synagogues and institutions to get back on their feet and begin functioning again. The recovery phase should be completed by the end of 2007. The third phase is long term, including renewal and rebuilding over the next 5-10 years.

The planning stage began with a thorough self-examination of the community in the Spring of 2005. Allan Bissinger, Eric Stillman (Federation's former Executive Director), Roselle Ungar, then JFGNO's Assistant Executive Director, with the facilitation of Michael Novick, a consultant from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, established a Recovery Cabinet of thirty professionals and lay leaders representing the boards of the synagogues, Jewish organizations and agencies across the city. The Recovery Cabinet's mission was to determine a vision statement for the community. In October, 2006, the Recovery Cabinet created the task force process to further explore the facets of its vision. Five task forces were formed which included 150 members of the lay and professional community. Each task force addressed issues within one of the following 5 areas:

1. Community and People
2. Geography and Services
3. Finance and Fundraising
4. Agencies and Organizations
5. Public Relations, Marketing and Media

Each task force, together with the Steering Committee and the professional staff, met numerous times between October 2006 and June 2007 to develop a list of strategic priorities.

In March, 2007, the Federation held a special Community Marathon Planning Event in order to hear the thoughts and hopes of the community at large. As hoped, the Community Marathon Planning Event was well attended by task force members as well as many who had not been involved in the process prior to the event. The Marathon familiarized the community with the strategic planning process and it provided the planners with needed data concerning the general perception of the current state of the community. Following the Community Marathon Planning Event, a list of core issues was identified which would be used as strategic impetus.

The planning process neared completion in July, 2007 with each task force making its recommendations for action. The implementation phase will act on those recommendations in the years ahead. Implementation will begin by folding the task forces into the Federation's standing committees. Those committees address the following four areas:

- Planning and Allocations
- Education and Culture
- Outreach and Community Relations
- Public Relations and Communications

It is hoped that the implementation phase will be aided by data collected through a community demographic survey. The survey, which was co-sponsored by the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana and the Estelle Friedman Gervis Foundation, is the first systematic New Orleans Jewish community demographic survey since 1984. The Community Demographic Study, along with surveyed focus groups, is intended to gather quantitative and

qualitative results that are important to the Jewish community by providing a statistically reliable, demographic and attitudinal picture of our local community. By incorporating the results of the survey into the implementation phase of the planning process, the standing committees will be better equipped to fulfill the Federation mission to build and sustain a vibrant Jewish community in the Greater New Orleans area.

The following are some of the recommendations from each of the task forces. Some of the proposals will be implemented immediately, but many will require substantial long range planning and even considerable fundraising in and out of the community before being realized.

COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE

- Newcomers incentive program
- Newcomers party and welcome package
- Weekend missions to New Orleans
- Business and job networking
- New Orleans Jewish Business Council
- More intensive work with college student engagement
- Expanding student internships
- Intermarriage outreach initiative
- Counseling for post Katrina trauma
- Focused work with volunteers

GEOGRAPHY AND SERVICES

- Community Jewish Day School tuition assistance
- Effective plan for supplementary Jewish education and scholarships
- Modern Orthodox Kollel
- New Hillel building
- Community mikveh
- Satellite services to Northshore

FUNDRAISING AND FINANCE

- Community grant writer
- Community wide planned giving
- Planned giving by those who have left
- Community fundraiser event
- Involving more local businesses in giving
- Corporate sponsorships

THE REALISTIC VISION

To transform the New Orleans Jewish community into the most successful, vibrant and rich intermediate size Jewish community in North America, attractive to young Jewish families.

- Focused external fundraising
- Fundraising to sustain agencies and synagogues

- Community-wide events and coordination of cultural activities

AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Possible collaboration of the two Jewish Day Schools
- Collaboration between the Reform synagogues' programming, Hebrew and religious schools, family programs
- Collaboration in senior services
- Coordinated youth activities
- Unified adult education

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

- New publicity package
- Hiring a public relations firm
- Preparing and placing good news stories
- Jewish web portal
- New community film
- Press releases



Task Force #1: Population, Community, and Demographics

Joan Berenson, Chair

Benay Bernstein
Allan Bissinger
Brenda Brasher
Sandra Carp
Mary Collins
Jay Corenswet
Inge Elsas
Sylvia Finger
Joshua Force
Diane Franco
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Help from our Extended



Echoing the slogan of the Zionist pioneers who created the State of Israel – "Livnot v'lehibanot," to build and to be built, Jewish volunteers from across the country, both young and old, both students and professionals not just helped transform New Orleans, but also transformed themselves.

Filling the vacuum left by government agencies, Jewish synagogues, Hillel groups, high-school classes, and families gutted houses, built playgrounds, cleaned yards, and distributed food to the hungry in flood-ravaged neighborhoods. An estimated 1,000 Jewish volunteers and an additional 1,500 college students from Hillels across the country helped rebuild New Orleans in the past year.

In addition, several national Jewish organizations, including the Jewish Community Center Association, B'nai B'rith International, the Association of Jewish Aging Professionals, and Jewish Funds for Justice held their meetings in New Orleans as signs of support for the city.

But the real story was the impact that helping others, on a one-to-one basis, had on both the volunteers and on New Orleanians in need. The experience of the Krivitzky family of New Jersey – Jerry and Trudi and their children, Stephanie and Aaron – as they chose to spend the winter holidays rebuilding a damaged home as part of the Reform Mitzvah Corps was typical of countless volunteers. "There are only so many beaches and piña coladas you can take," said Jerry, who described himself as a "recovering lawyer." Turning serious, he explained why the family chose to spend its vacation putting up sheetrock and installing flooring: "Because we can. And because we can, we should."

In those few words, he offered an eloquent explanation of what *tikkun olam* is all about!

Members of the United Jewish Communities Young Leadership Cabinet from New Orleans

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Serena Pollack

2004-2007 Lemann-Stern Young Leadership Class

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Family

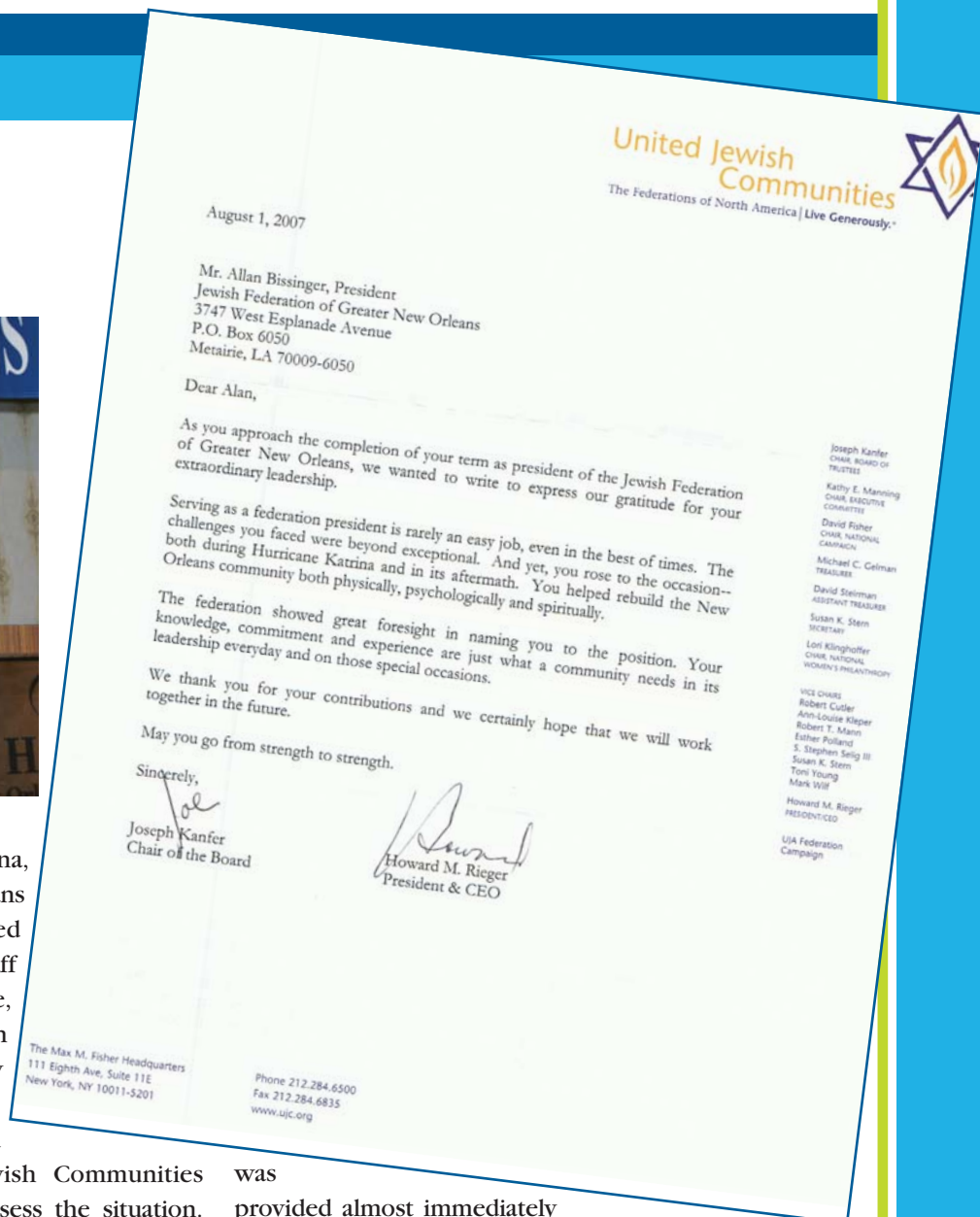


In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the population of New Orleans was spread across the United States. Many of the Federation staff found themselves in Houston where, with the aid of the Houston Federation, they began the recovery task of pulling our community back together. Only days after the storm representatives from United Jewish Communities (UJC) went to Baton Rouge to assess the situation. Their report to UJC precipitated a visit later that week from Howard Feinberg. Thus began the flow of support from around the country that was organized and administered by UJC, ensuring that a generous network of help reached those in need, saving lives, and rebuilding and strengthening our community.

UJC raised \$28,000,000 in the Jewish and general communities. Unlike the response of many state and federal agencies, the UJC money was provided for Hurricane Katrina relief where needed, quickly and efficiently. Within a matter of days, UJC dollars made possible the provision of emergency aid and shelter, food and counseling for our community. A grant of \$1,500,000 administered by Jewish Family Service provided immediate direct needs-based assistance. (grants of \$700 per individual). Over \$10,000,000 flowed through the New Orleans Federation to ensure the survival and stabilization of 19 organizations and synagogues over a 2 year period. A \$1,000,000 grant

was provided almost immediately after the storm to set up and administer the Jewish Community Partnership between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. A total of over \$13,500,000 was generously provided by UJC and other Federations, and another \$2,500,000 was given by the Goldring Family Foundation, Woldenberg Foundation and Jewish Endowment Foundation in direct aid to the New Orleans Jewish community. Other groups such as the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA), the national Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA), the Jewish Funds for Justice, Nechama, and the national religious movements contributed additional funding.

These funds were administered by the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans through a process that included all agencies, organizations and synagogues. The spirit of cooperation and community was experienced throughout this process, and has set the tone for future collaboration.



New Orleans Agencies

Reflecting New Orleans, in which Creoles and Cajuns, black and white, mix together to create a rich culture of music and food, the Jewish community is a gumbo, in which many different flavors blend together to create a whole much greater than the sum of its parts.

Since Katrina, although those parts have grown smaller by about a third, the resulting whole is much stronger as members of the Jewish community have come together even more closely than before. The gumbo is more flavorful than ever!

Its diverse ingredients of Jews ranging from Chabad to the unaffiliated belonging to four Reform, one Conservative, two Orthodox, and two Chabad synagogues mix well. Beth Israel, the flooded Modern Orthodox synagogue, now davens weekly in the chapel of the Reform Congregation Gates of Prayer. The rabbis across the spectrum work closely together on community-wide programs; as one example, a Conservative, Reform, Modern Orthodox, and Chabad synagogue co-sponsored a scholar-in-residence weekend last spring featuring Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. Members of every synagogue, as well as unaffiliated Jews (a minority in New Orleans), sit on the Federation board as well.

Though every synagogue has lost members who have become part of the New Orleans Diaspora, synagogue attendance remains strong. Living with the knowledge that one's entire world can be turned upside down in a day makes religion so much more important. Coming together with friends who have experienced the same losses has more meaning, and praying in a synagogue that you helped play a part in reopening is just so sweet.

A spirit of cooperation and cohesion informs the work of the communal agencies as well. Hillel, the Jewish Community Center, and Jewish Family

Service collaborate on community-wide programs, and all are deeply involved in the recovery effort, as is the Jewish Endowment Foundation.

In many ways the Jewish community is infused with the ambience and culture of New Orleans.

New Orleanians value religion and religious expression and are quick to give respect to all those for whom religion is important. The Jewish and Christian faith communities work closely on many civic issues, Loyola University co-sponsors a large interfaith seder, and many church groups learn more about Israel by viewing the room-sized land map of the Jewish state that is owned by the Federation.

Over the past decade the Jewish community has itself become more committed to Jewish observance and study.

Reflecting national trends, the New Orleans Reform temples have incorporated more Hebrew and rituals into their worship services, and every synagogue has a full program of adult Jewish education. The Federation sponsors the New Orleans Jewish Day School and the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, from which 14 people



graduated this June.

In another convergence of the Jewish community and New Orleans culture, Mardi Gras is not just for Catholics anymore.

Few people outside New Orleans know about the intertwining of Mardi Gras with high society. Debutantes serve as the queens of the parades, subdebs serve as their maids, and 10-year-old boys bedecked in tights and wigs are pages.

So, although the first King of Carnival in the 1870s was Jewish, until recently Mardi Gras krewes, which stage each parade, were closed to Jews. Now many Jewish professionals and business people are krewe members, throwing tchotchkes to cheering throngs.

Agencies and Synagogues

AFFILIATED AGENCY:

Jewish Endowment Foundation

CONSTITUENT AGENCIES:

Hillel Foundation of New Orleans
 Jewish Community Center-Uptown and Metairie
 Jewish Family Service
 New Orleans Jewish Day School

BENEFICIARY AGENCIES:

Anti-Defamation League
 Birthright Israel
 Jewish Children's Regional Service
 Torah Academy
 Touro Infirmary
 WillowWood at Woldenberg Village

SYNAGOGUES:

Anshe Sfarid
 Congregation Beth Israel
 Chabad Center-Uptown and Metairie
 Congregation Gates of Prayer
 Northshore Jewish Congregation
 Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation
 Temple Sinai
 Touro Synagogue

There are even two Jewish krewes who march or rather horah through the French Quarter to kick off the Mardi Gras season, flaunting refined sensitivities of Jew and non-Jew alike. These Krewes have a more serious side as well. Many of their members, who are a bit quirky and offbeat, are not affiliated with the Jewish community, and the Krewes serve as their avenue into the community, sponsoring holiday celebrations and Shabbat dinners throughout the year.

In one important way, the Jewish community is an anomaly in New Orleans. While New Orleans sometimes seems more like a Caribbean island than an American city focused more on partying than on work and certainly not a slave to efficiency, the Jewish community is quite well organized. For a community of its size there are a plethora of organizations, and they go about their business in a decidedly professional way.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the two years since Katrina, when the Jewish recovery effort was a model for the city in its efficient use of resources and ability to get things done.

A theologian once defined spirituality as living in the more. Given that, living in New Orleans today is a very spiritual experience. Fixing up your home, helping others salvage their belongings, eating out in a restaurant, even buying tchotchkes in the French Market all that makes a difference. Dozens of idealistic young Jews are flocking to New Orleans to make that difference, enlivening the Jewish community in the process.

That feeling of living for something bigger than yourself is a heady one.

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Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans

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ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

**A COMMUNITY REDISCOVERED
A CITY REVITALIZED**