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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RESPONSE CENTER RECEIVES GRANT FROM THE HIGHLAND PARK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

**Response Center, a program of Jewish Child & Family Services (JCFS)** is pleased to announce it has received a grant from the Highland Park Community Foundation. These funds will allow Response to serve Highland Park teens from District 113 in its 2018 Operation Snowball Program.

“With the Foundation’s critical support, Snowball will continue empowering Highland Park teenagers to learn and grow,” says Debra Mier, Assistant Director of Response Center. “After each year’s Snowball weekend, we hear teens say how much they have grown from the experience, gained newfound confidence and friendships, and expanded their comfort zone.”

Founded in 1970 as a program of JCFS, Response Center empowers adolescents and young adults, ages 12-24, to make healthy life choices. Currently, Response provides counseling, sexual healthcare services, and outreach programming on a variety of topics in middle schools, high schools, camps, synagogues, and community centers. Response also offers parent education and support as well as leadership development opportunities for students, such as Operation Snowball.

Planned and led by teens for teens, Operation Snowball is a fun and intensive weekend retreat that gives emerging teen leaders the chance to connect with students from all over Chicagoland and hone their leadership and peer education skills in a relaxed, supported setting. With support from Response staff, teen leaders facilitate a weekend full of workshops on issues important to them, including drug and alcohol prevention, diversity, leadership, healthy relationships, social justice, and many others.

“I would not be where I am today without Snowball. There isn’t a day that goes by without thanks for the lessons that I learned, the people I met, and the confidence I gained from being a part of such an incredible program,” says Ronnie Kroell, former Snowball participant and leader. “Snowball gave me a place to be me. I didn’t have to put on a mask to hide who I was or pretend to be something that I wasn’t to be accepted. It was a safe space to learn to grow; to know that I was never alone.”

The Highland Park Community Foundation annually awards grants through a competitive application and review process. For more information, visit [www.hpcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.hpcommunityfoundation.com).

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The Highland Park Community Foundation was established in 1992 at the request of the City of Highland Park to build and maintain a permanent endowment fund. The fund serves to support and expand the services of social service, cultural, educational, and environmental agencies in Highland Park and Highwood. It is also used to nurture the early stages of new and innovative programs. The Foundation's mission is to expand opportunities for all Highland Park and Highwood residents and to support organizations and programs that "meet the unmet needs" of the community – needs that are not met by governmental or other sources. By choosing an endowment fund as its primary financial vehicle, the Foundation can serve the community in perpetuity. For more information, visit [www.hpcommunityfoundation.com](http://www.hpcommunityfoundation.com).

Response is a program of Jewish Child & Family Services, a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community. We embrace diversity. Our commitment to diversity is woven throughout our services, programs and welcoming workplace.

For more information about Response Center or Operation Snowball, visit [Response.org](http://Response.org) or call 773.516.5510.

For more information about Jewish Child & Family Services, visit [jcfs.org](http://jcfs.org) or call 855.275.5237.

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