



20
26

ANNUAL
REPORT





MISSION

JCFS Chicago strengthens self-sufficiency,
belonging and well-being
among individuals and families in the Jewish
and broader Chicago communities.



Photo by Nijole Shuberg

FROM OUR CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share stories that reflect our core values of community

(Kehilah), empowerment (Ha'atzamah), respect (Kavod), and integrity (Yosher)—foundational principles that build collaborative connections, welcome diversity, foster belonging, and treat every person with dignity. By equipping individuals with the tools and skills they needed to navigate life's challenges with confidence and independence, JCFS Chicago strengthened self-sufficiency and emotional well-being across Chicagoland, reaching more than 24,000 people this past fiscal year.

One example of our values in action this past year was our Family Day, which created a mindful, safe environment for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. It embodied **community** by fostering belonging and connection — whether families joined in activities together or parents bonded while their kids played.

Last year, the Knapp School & Yeshiva educated 81 students in grades K–12. Students from our transition program regularly worked at community sites like coffee shops, senior centers, libraries, and food pantries, as well as learned many life skills to build their knowledge, confidence, and independence — embodying **empowerment**.

When the government shutdown suspended SNAP benefits, leaving many families uncertain about how they would feed themselves, JCFS did not stand by. Our board approved the use of agency reserves for one-time emergency food support for almost 800 people served by JCFS whose benefits were in limbo. This values-driven response reflects our commitment to **respect** by believing all members of our community are deserving of care.

Our intake department or Access is the first point of contact for people seeking help from JCFS Chicago. **Integrity** defines every interaction our Access team has, as they meet each caller's unique needs with genuine respect for their individuality.

We remain grateful to our board of directors, our partners at the Jewish United Fund/ Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, our donors, volunteers, and staff. Your continued commitment fuels our work and strengthens our ability to create lasting change in the Jewish and broader Chicago communities with our values serving as our road map every step of the way.

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LEADERSHIP

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JCFS Chicago, a non-profit social service agency, offers expert, individualized help to support people of all ages and abilities as they strive to live successfully in their communities. Our services enhance emotional well-being for adults, children, teens, and families – regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, ability, gender, or sexual orientation.

Disability Services

- Speech-language and occupational therapy through Integrated Pediatric Therapies
- Support and assistance for community-based adult independent living
- Home-based waiver for children and adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities
- Customized employment support through the Duman Opportunity Center
- Training for janitorial and administrative services
- Respite services for families caring for children with disabilities

Behavioral Health and Emotional Support Services

- Counseling for children, adults, couples, and families
 - Therapeutic services for children and families at the Virginia Frank Child Development Center
 - Psychological testing and evaluation
- Assessment and interventions for disruptive and anxious behaviors in children
- Counseling and sexual education for youth at Response for Teens
 - K-12+ therapeutic education at the Knapp School & Yeshiva
 - Clinical support for children and families in the child welfare system
 - Support for those exposed to trauma through the Kaufman Wolf Center for Trauma & Resilience

Community Assistance Services

- Addiction resources
- Loss, illness, and spiritual support
- Adoption and infertility support
- Abuse prevention programs
- Suicide prevention and support
- Connections to counseling, education, and prevention services through community partnerships
- Refugee, immigration, and citizenship services through HIAS

Career Services and Professional Training

- Career assessment, training, and job support with JVS Career and Employment
- Internship program for social work and psychology
- Training for early childhood teachers to meet children's social and emotional needs

COMMUNITY / KEHILAH

Family Day Fosters a Sense of Belonging

At the spring Family Day event hosted by JCFS Chicago's disability services staff, children with disabilities and their siblings played with slime, built with Legos, had their faces painted, and posed in a photo booth. While the children and teens were engaged in the various sensory activities, their parents relaxed for a couple hours and made connections of their own.

"It's not typical for us to go to a place and have the ability to mingle and hang out," said Rivky, who has attended several Family Day events with her son.

Family Day is designed to put parents at ease while their children play and socialize in a safe setting.

"I hoped to provide an environment where families could bond and make memories together without worrying if their child will be accepted," said Amy Janssen, Services for People with Disabilities Respite Supervisor. "So many of our families feel like there are not many spaces designed to include everyone, but parents and siblings were engaged together and that's what it's all about."

Whether families are participating in activities together or parents are bonding while their children play, Family Day embodies **kehilah**, or community, by promoting a sense of belonging and connection.

"My son feels extremely comfortable here," said Melinda, whose teen-aged son has attended several past Family Day events. "Everyone is very kind to him."

Melinda said her son enjoys Family Day so much that he even attended when the event fell on his birthday, and while he was there, he invited a friend he knew to his house for cake later that evening.

The mindful, safe environment geared towards children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families puts parents at ease, said Frank, who attended with his wife and daughter.

"We're around other parents that understand our situation," he said. "In other places, you can't sit and relax."

His wife, Tina, agreed, saying there is a sense of community at the event.

"It's very comfortable here," she said. "We love it."

Another parent, Gulnar, said that Family Day helps alleviate isolation that families of children on the spectrum often face.

"It's so difficult to find these pockets of interactions and that's why JCFS really works," she said.

In addition to Family Day, the disability services team hosts Bingo nights twice a year, plus it offers Respite services on Sundays, which provides short-term relief for families caring for children with disabilities.

"Two sets of parents shared with me that they became friends through respite and continue to spend time together," said Director of Services for People with Disabilities Allison Rodenhouse. "We've heard this before and feel this is an important impact."





EMPOWERMENT / HA'ATZAMAH

Preparing for Life: Students Gain Real-World Skills Through Transition Program

On any given school day, Knapp School & Yeshiva students from Troye Evers' transition program classroom can be found working at a coffee shop, senior center, library or food pantry; shopping for groceries and preparing a meal together; filling out job applications; and learning to navigate bus and train schedules.

Each experience is designed to help students gain confidence, independence, and the practical tools they need for life after school, embodying **ha'atzamah**, or empowerment.

"The work Troye does to prepare our young people for life after they leave us is exceptional," said Principal Dr. Diona Lewis. "Troye has a strong background in transition and life skills programming, a perfect fit for the program we are developing."

Students aged 17-22 are eligible for the program by not accepting their high school diplomas upon completing the necessary graduation requirements, allowing them to continue their education at Knapp through its vocational postsecondary pathway. Seven students were enrolled during the 2025-26 school year.

Under Troye's direction, each day is devoted to empowering the students as they learn or practice necessary life skills.

Students write shopping lists and select food to make their own lunches while staying within a budget: they can't spend more than the set amount on their prepaid debit cards each week. They also prepare a family meal as a group and portion it into lunches for later.

Troye teaches the importance of nutrition, encourages students to try new foods, and ensures they clean up after themselves in the school's Life Skills room.

Another part of the transition curriculum introduces students to all aspects of the

workplace, from employee handbooks, paychecks and taxes to various forms of transportation to get them to and from work. As part of an ongoing partnership with Knapp, students have been working at CJE SeniorLife and Will's Place.

Troye works closely with Duman Opportunity Center staff to help students gain other work experience in the community. Students receive payment on their personal debit cards, which they use for money managing lessons and personal spending. Students also strengthen their resumes by volunteering at the Skokie Public Library, ChesedChicago and local food pantries.

Back in the classroom, they tackle practical tasks, such as completing the many forms they may encounter throughout adulthood. They also learn how to read bus maps and train schedules, as well as prepare for their driver's education course.

Troye sees evidence that his teachings are resonating with his students. For example, over Thanksgiving break he was notified that the funds from one student's debit card account had been transferred to the main account and the card had been locked. Then he received a text from the student explaining that he had lost his card. Troye said he was impressed that the student had followed the proper protocol to secure his account once he realized his card was missing.

"They keep showing me they're grasping knowledge of what they learn," he said, adding that he takes pride in knowing that everything he's teaching the students has real-world value.

"There's meaning behind everything," Troye said. "Everything is something they're going to use now and in the future."

RESPECT / KAVOD

Opening Doors to Employment

When a Duman Opportunity Center (Duman) job seeker was hired as an elevator operator at The Breakers at Edgewater Beach, a senior living facility in Chicago, it opened the door for five more individuals with disabilities to secure positions there in the following months.

It all started when former Duman Assistant Director Leah Rudy saw a job post for a full-time elevator operator at The Breakers. She passed along the information to Duman Employment Specialist Sheldon Schwartz, who was working with an ideal candidate for the position. Sheldon helped the candidate, named Josh, apply for the job.

Then Business Services Representative Leslie Glazer got involved.

“I work with the businesses, but I also work with our candidates to ensure there’s a good match,” Leslie said. “I take time to understand the hiring needs of the business and the expectations.”

In this case, The Breakers needed a full-time elevator operator. Josh could only work part-time, but his compassion and desire to help others made him an ideal fit, so The Breakers adjusted the role to accommodate his schedule.

Josh has been working at The Breakers for about a year, and he not only treats the residents and other employees with kindness and respect, or **kavod**, but they do the same for him. He operates the elevator three days a week, transporting residents safely to their destinations, with the added responsibility of bringing first responders up to residents who are experiencing an emergency.

“I like this kind of work,” Josh said. “And I know people need me.”

He not only feels included, but Duman staff have heard repeatedly that Josh is one of The

Breakers’ most valued employees, Leah said.

Because Josh is so well-respected, the hiring manager contacted Duman to fill another part-time elevator operator position. The candidate they hired is passionate about working with seniors and interested in food service work. Staff from Duman and The Breakers worked together to customize her role, and now she works two days a week as an elevator operator and two in dining services.

“They’re wonderful additions to the team and they’re well-liked by both residents and employees,” said Donna Pennekamp, Business Office Manager at The Breakers. “I love that they love it here because they just make my life so much easier. I have dependable people on my staff that are doing a job, and they’re doing it well, and I appreciate that very much.”

Today, there are six employees at The Breakers who were hired through Duman. In addition to the elevator operator roles, they work in the dining room and maintenance. Josh has even referred a couple of his friends, who have since found jobs there—a testament to the respect he has earned in his workplace.

Sheldon said The Breakers has been an ideal employment partner not only for providing Duman job candidates with opportunities, but also for also fostering a respectful and inclusive environment with plenty of natural supports. While Josh is quite independent and even takes public transportation there on his own, he benefits from the supportive environment at work.

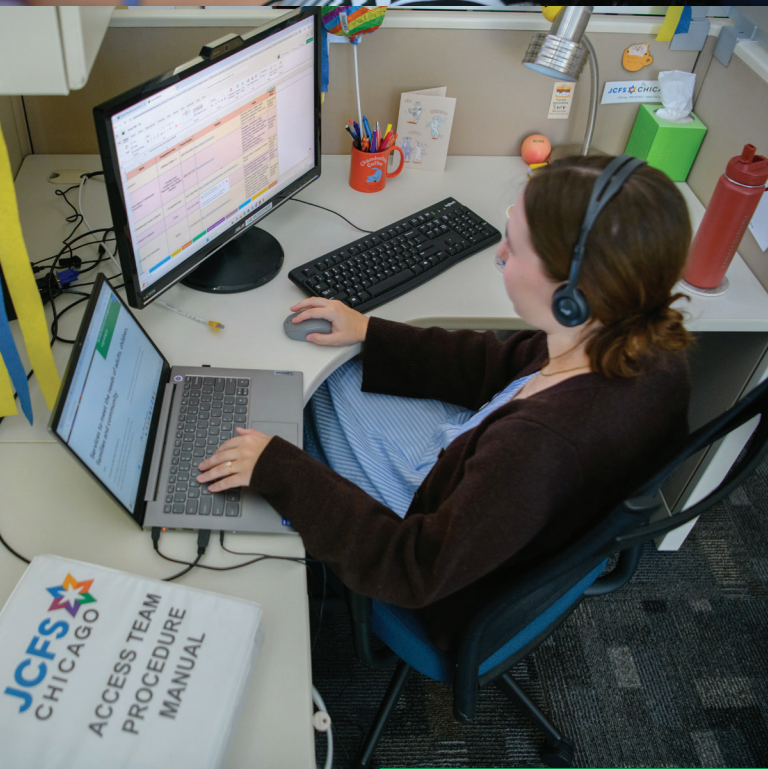
“He relies on the receptionist, the office manager and his manager,” Sheldon said. “Everyone there is very supportive.”

Leslie agrees.

“The Breakers has been especially great,” she said. “They have given our candidates confidence.”



Photos by
Aaron Peterson



Photos by Nijole Shuberg

INTEGRITY / YOSHER

Answering the Call with Integrity

Our centralized intake department, known as Access, serves as the front door to JCFS Chicago, often marking the first point of contact people have with the agency. When someone looking for support calls 855.275.5237 or emails ASK@JCFS.org, they are greeted or responded to by a qualified and knowledgeable member of the intake team who will answer their questions and connect them with the services and resources they need.

From their first encounter with the agency, callers become aware that integrity—or **yosher**—is woven into the fabric of the organization. The Access team demonstrates this value in every conversation they have and each email they respond to, as they respect each person's individuality to meet the wide array of needs.

"We manage expectations and we really try to honor the organizational values from the first interaction that people have with the agency," said Dr. Miriam Osina, Assistant Vice President of Self-Sufficiency and Director of Access.

This can involve explaining the average wait times for appointments, helping someone connect with the right JCFS services, or offering a compassionate ear to callers who simply need someone to listen.

The seven-member Access team works together to ensure every caller receives timely, personalized support. The administrative aide and two intake specialists answer incoming calls and emails, referring callers to appropriate services, completing non-clinical intakes or connecting them with one of the team's two clinicians. The

clinicians—one a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and one a Licensed Clinical Social Worker—handle clinical calls.

Miriam also assists with intakes and clinical calls when necessary, plus there's a benefit eligibility support manager who is building a program to help people JCFS serves obtain and maintain access to SNAP and Medicaid benefits.

"Each team member brings unique strengths and expertise across the various areas of the organization, enabling us to collaborate effectively and work cohesively as a team," said one of the Access clinicians. "By leveraging our individual strengths and supporting one another, we are able to respond efficiently to each caller's needs and ensure they receive timely, attentive, and effective service."

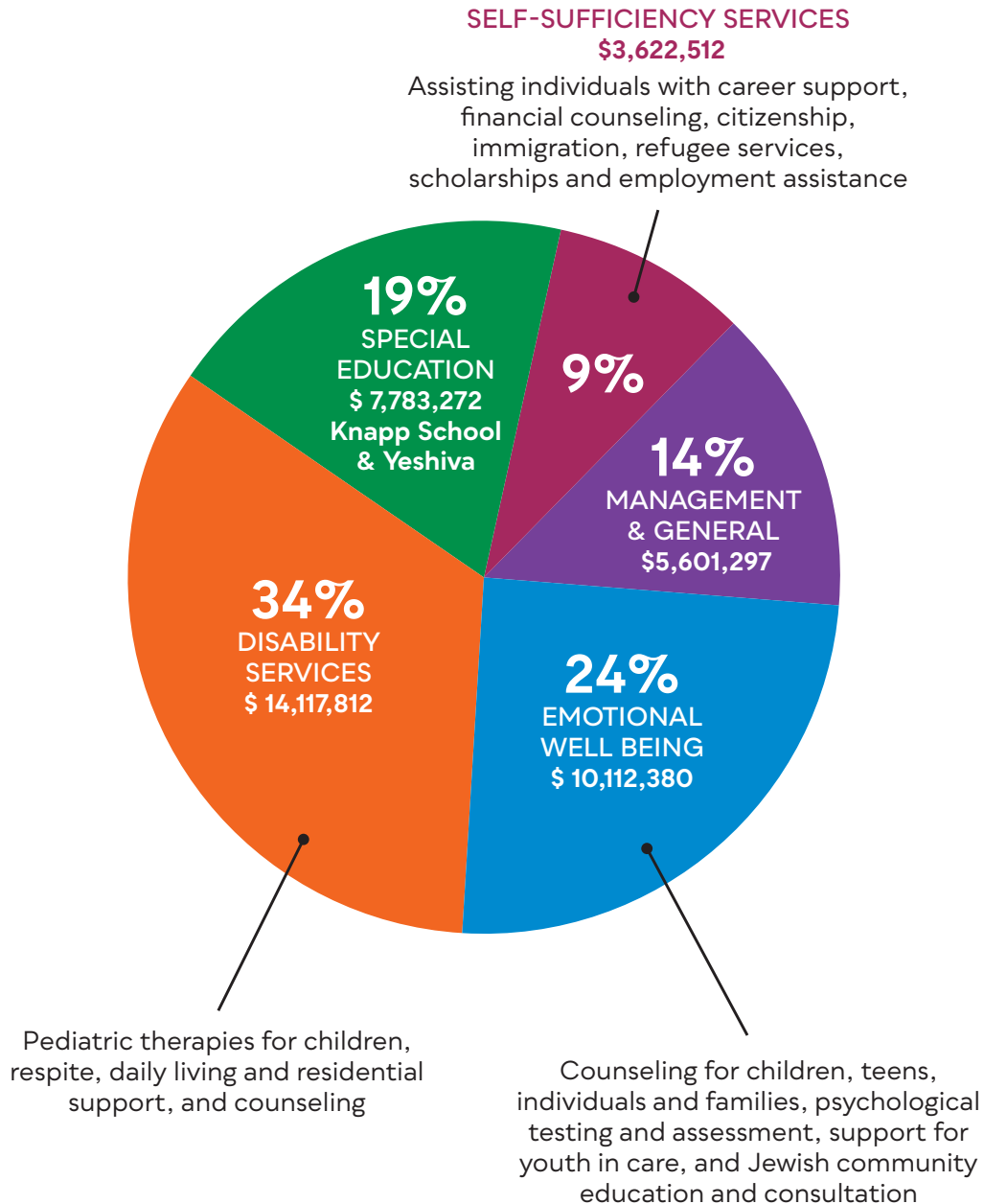
The Access team also directs people to other organizations offering helpful services that aren't available at JCFS, Miriam said. The team maintains a resource list, ensuring it remains up to date by verifying contacts, making sure programs are still funded and information is up to date.

"Staying on top of resources is a big part of our work," Miriam said about her team. "People are counting on us to know what's out there and point them in the right direction without delay."

By listening carefully, asking thoughtful questions, and connecting people with the right support, the Access team helps build trust from the very first phone call or email—demonstrating that integrity is a JCFS value that is practiced every day.

FY26 OPERATING EXPENDITURES

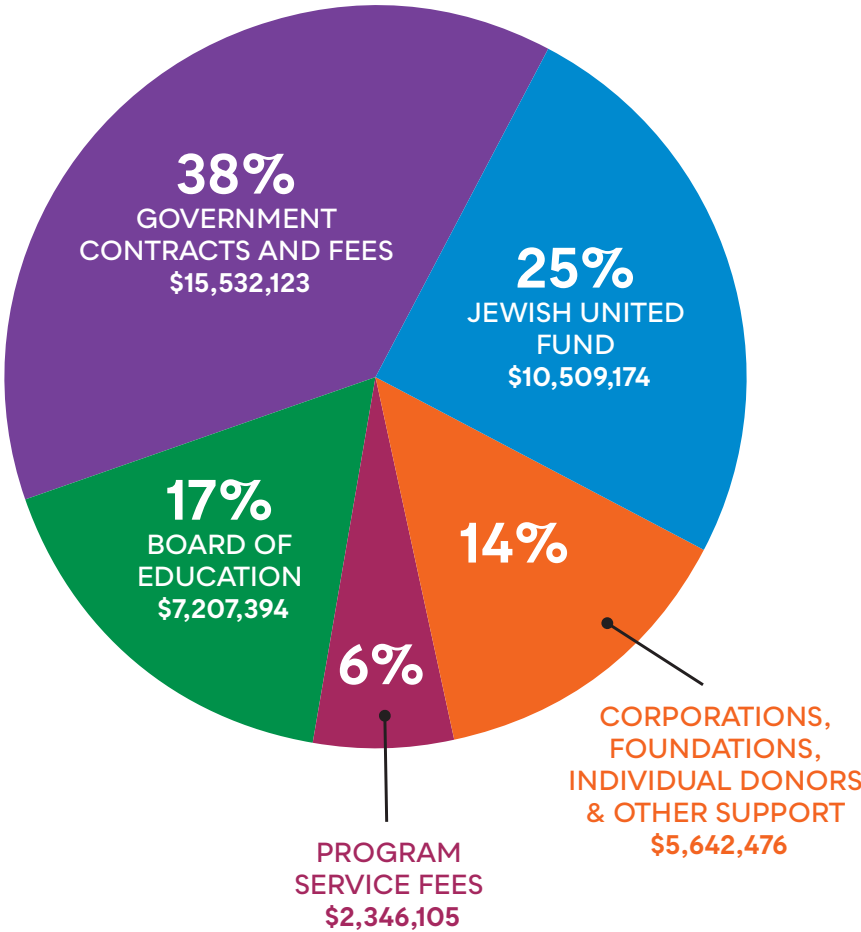
For Fiscal Year 2026, July 1, 2025- June 30, 2026



TOTAL: \$41,237,272

FY26 OPERATING REVENUE

For Fiscal Year 2026, July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026



TOTAL: \$41,237,272



OUR ANNUAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

JCFS Chicago is grateful to the many donors who made it possible to provide much-needed services throughout our community.

These lists include all our donors who made a gift between 7/1/25 - 6/30/26. All gifts are needed and appreciated. Our apologies for any errors or omissions and our thanks to those whose support we received after going to print.

A special thank you to Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago/Jewish United Fund for their continued support.

This year JCFS Chicago launched our new Giving Communities: The Hineni Leadership Circle and the 1859 Legacy Society. The Hineni Leadership Circle recognizes donors who make annual gifts of at least \$10,000, or whose lifetime giving exceeds \$100,000. It is also for Honorary Directors and those who have served on the Board for over 12 years. In this year's annual report, the donors listed in the following categories – Sustainer, Ambassador, Founder and Patron – are all members of the Hineni Leadership Circle.

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The JCFS Chicago Endowment Foundation was created in partnership with Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago's Agency Endowment Program, which was established to ensure that JCFS and our sister agencies have the necessary resources to meet the community needs. All commitments to Agency Endowment Foundations are recognized as gifts to the Jewish Federation's Centennial Campaign. We are grateful for all donations. Endowment gifts received this year, and legacy gifts of \$10,000 or more are listed.

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In fiscal year 2026, JCFS impacted **24,245 people** with **2,546 individuals served.**

Access, the JCFS intake department, handled **1,532 inquiries** for service.

83% of eligible people helped by the Duman Opportunity Center maintained employment at the 90-day mark with **51% still employed after one year.**

Response for Teens reached **2,899 teens, parents, and community participants.**

The Knapp School & Yeshiva educated **81 students** in grades K – 12.

Jewish Community Services partnered with **63 organizations**
to reach 7,758 participants through their various programs.

Respite Services provided a supportive, fun and social afternoon to **75 individuals**, while providing a well-deserved break for parents.

626 community participants benefitted from Services for People with Disabilities consultations, community education programming, and recreational events.

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JCFS CHICAGO

FY2026 Advocacy Summary

IN FISCAL YEAR 2026, JCFS Chicago staff engaged directly with policymakers in both Springfield and Washington, D.C through meetings with state and federal legislators. We advanced our policy priorities on early childhood education, immigrant and refugee support, early intervention resources, and services for people with disabilities. Beyond legislative meetings, JCFS Chicago staff took our advocacy directly to the community by speaking out at public forums, attending community meetings, and participating in rallies. We also expanded our outreach to municipal leaders across the Chicagoland. This increased engagement strengthened collaboration with suburban municipalities, opening new avenues for partnership on service delivery and expanding our ability to advocate for community needs at the local level.

This year's advocacy took on new urgency with the passage of HR1, a turning point in how the well-being of people with disabilities, seniors, families, and children is prioritized. The bill enables long-term Medicaid cuts and new limits on therapy, psychiatric care, and crisis services, reducing access to vital care and mental health support. It also restricted SNAP eligibility in Illinois by expanding work requirements and eliminating eligibility for certain legally present immigrants, and introduced stricter immigration policies that add new hurdles for the families we serve.

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Sally Steffen – in memory of Fred Steffen

VIRGINIA FRANK CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Leah Olfson

Our signature fundraising event, Elevate, was a huge success.

With more than 400 people in attendance, along with an incredible community behind us, we raised over \$550,000—surpassing our goal.



Event Co-chair Stephanie Gray, What's Possible Award honoree Marci Friedman, JCFS CEO Stacey Shor, Irving B. Harris Leadership Award honoree Howard J. Swibel, Event Co-chair Pamela Levy

Photo by Nijole Shuberg



DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

Thank you to our donors who have included JCFS in their estate plans with a written Declaration of Intent.

The 1859 Legacy Society honors donors who have committed legacy gifts to JCFS through their estate plans, and those who have made special gifts to our Endowment or Capital Campaigns.

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Steven and Dr. Pamela Adelman
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Milton and Michelle Zimmerman

CAPITAL PROJECT DONORS

Our thanks to all our supporters who invested in our building projects. We are pleased to list those donors who gave \$25,000 or more.

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Seigle Family
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Bruce, Beth, and Jen Crane



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 Joanie Stone “In loving memory of Alan Stone”
 Howard Suskin
 Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
 The Otto and Hilda Wolf Family

ABE AND IDA COOPER CENTER PROJECT ENDOWMENT FUND

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JOY FAITH KNAPP CHILDREN’S CENTER PROJECT ENDOWMENT FUND

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 A gift of the Joseph L. and Emily K. Gidwitz Memorial
 Foundation and their grandchildren: Julie Gidwitz,
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GOLDIE BACHMANN LUFTIG

Goldie Bachmann
Estate of Goldie Bachmann Luftig

IN-KIND DONORS

Thank you to all our in-kind donors who so generously gave goods or services in support of JCFS Chicago this year.

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Elana Abraham
Marcey Barichello
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HINENI
LEADERSHIP CIRCLE



1859
LEGACY SOCIETY

JCFS CHICAGO

A CIRCLE OF CONNECTION: HONORING OUR MOST DEDICATED PARTNERS

JCFS Chicago proudly honors the leadership and generosity of our closest partners through new Giving Communities: The Hineni Leadership Circle and the 1859 Legacy Society.

The Hineni Leadership Circle is for donors who make annual gifts of at least \$10,000, or whose lifetime giving exceeds \$100,000. It also is for Honorary Directors and those who have served on the Board for over 12 years.

The 1859 Legacy Society honors donors who have committed legacy gifts to JCFS through their estate plans, and those who have made special gifts to our Endowment or Capital Campaigns.

Members of these groups are invited to special programs and events that foster community, deepen connections to JCFS, and celebrate our shared accomplishments.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

JCFS Chicago is grateful to the many volunteers who make it possible to provide much-needed services throughout our community, including the hundreds of volunteers who supported us this past year.

JCFS VOLUNTEERS

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Laurie Borden
Joel Brown
Gary Cohen
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Emma Conklin
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Since 1919, North Shore Auxiliary (NSA) has supported JCFS Chicago's family of services. NSA's dedicated volunteers take pride in funding programs that enable individuals, children, and families to grow, develop and thrive throughout their lives. These programs include supporting Response for Teens, providing mental health services in the community, and all school celebrations, including graduation at the Knapp School.

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Barbara Gaffen
Amy Goldman
Wendy Kleper
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Each year we celebrate the people and programs who exemplify excellence in service, leadership, and lasting impact across JCFS Chicago. Below are this year's honorees, whose dedication continues to shape who we are.

Congratulations to the special recognition award recipients and all staff celebrating milestone anniversaries.

Howard Sitron Distinguished Service Award

Mimi Stern, *IT Services*

Ken Jacobson Professional Excellence Award

Dr. Diona Lewis, *Knapp School & Yeshiva*

Elaine Schwartz Impact Award

Residential Supports

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Lauren May, *Marketing*

Wahedullah Niazi, *HIAS Immigration & Citizenship*

Leslie Glazer, *Duman Opportunity Center*

Benjie Weiss, *Development*



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JCFS Chicago is a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community. We welcome people of all backgrounds. Our commitment to belonging is woven throughout our services, programs and welcoming workplace.

