Community Impact Report

Strengthening Jewish identity, celebrating Jewish culture, and building community
Celebrating Jewish culture and sharing Jewish traditions

In 2018...

1,290 people participated in swimming activities at the David Zimerman Pool

65 community elders in area residential homes participated in monthly Shabbat celebrations

221 children learned about Rosh Hashanah through music and food tasting

350 children and adults celebrated the joyous holiday of Purim at the JCC’s annual Carnival

268 participants ran or walked the JCC’s annual Jewish holiday road races

157 campers learned Hebrew songs and turned Jewish values into action at Camp Ruach day camp

_Shalom and Hilde's House are a home-away-from-home for my daughters. Their teachers are like a part of our family. Their friends and their friends' families are part of our village. And beyond this, I am constantly amazed by the depth and breadth of what they learn at "school."

- Anonymous JCC Parent_
The Asheville JCC Values

Kehilah (Community)
Metsuyanut (Excellence)
Limud (Learning)
Hachnasat Orchim (Welcoming Guests)
Tikkun Olam (Repair of the World)

Vision

The Asheville Jewish Community Center provides opportunities for everyone in Western North Carolina to connect to Jewish life and culture. We focus on ensuring that community members are supported through every life stage, with programs that enhance community life and a sense of belonging. We continuously evaluate our programs, expanding and improving them to support our vibrant, evolving community.

Barbara’s Story

My husband and I joined the JCC shortly after we moved here in 2008. What a great decision that was! On our first outing with the adult group, a hike to DuPont Falls, we met four couples who we are still friendly with to this day. I soon joined the committee that plans the monthly activities and for the last ten years I have been the Chairperson of The Adult Group, or TAG for short. It gives me great pleasure to be part of the committee who organizes our monthly activities. The TAG committee members always find things to do and places to go that I would not have known about.

The JCC is such a welcoming, inviting, and caring community of people. One is always greeted with a hello, how are you, how is your family, good to see you, and other sincere niceties. What a warm, comfortable feeling that is. Always. The JCC and the TAG group have enhanced my love for this area. I especially appreciate the close friends I have made through the years. The JCC and the TAG group, has made Asheville the place for me.

- Barbara Wasserman
More than 4,000 people are a part of our thriving JCC Community

111 adults took part in social activities and recreational outings

100% of JCC staff learned about Jewish values through professional development meetings

More than 600 children received Jewish-values based learning

38 infants reached developmental milestones under the guidance of Hilde’s House educators

89 swimmers between the ages of 6 and 16 improved their swimming skills through the JCC Gefilte Fish swim team
Samantha’s Story

Samantha has a love of the water, but she had never been taught to swim and we wanted her to be safe around water and in pools. When we were looking for someone to help us teach Samantha to swim, it was hard to find the right place and the right fit. But we finally found Wendy, the JCC Aquatics Director, through the JCC and Camp Tikvah, the JCC’s camp for children with autism. When Samantha first started swimming at the JCC, she wouldn’t do certain things – she wouldn’t put her head under water, and she wouldn’t float on her back. She would have a melt down, but Wendy gave her what she needed. Samantha would try to get out of it, but Wendy knew Samantha had potential. Wendy has not only made Samantha safe, she’s completely exceeded our expectations and made Samantha a swimmer.

At the JCC, we’ve been able to get the individual lessons for Samantha that we weren’t able to get other places. It’s been about two years now, and Samantha has a very special bond with Wendy. We’re so grateful for this!

- Ken and Janet Sawyer
Fostering cross-cultural understanding and celebrating the arts through Israeli programming

567 people saw the world through the eyes of Israeli film makers in the Israeli Film Series

108 adults discussed literary themes and cultural influences in the Israeli book club

120 children of all faiths celebrated Passover at the JCC

Seeing films set in the Middle east (not all have been solely in Israel), hearing the Hebrew language and viewing a range of ethnicities across the life span has been a rich experience. For me, the Israeli Film initiative at the JCC is pivotal in my decision to continue my membership.

- Libby Libner
I consider myself privileged to be part of the JCC and the opportunities I have been given to experience Jewish culture professionally through my work with Shalom Children’s Center. I was nominated and then was accepted into a 3-year fellowship with the Sheva Center Leadership Institute for Early Childhood professionals, with the goal of growing Jewish early childhood education. In 2018, I participated in a 10-day study tour of Israel, during which I was given the opportunity to witness firsthand how innovation, technology, history, and identity intersect to form the foundation for a uniquely Israeli early childhood approach. Here in the States, with the guidance and mentorship of the Sheva Center Faculty, we translate these early learning concepts and concepts about Jewish identity and culture through the Seven Core Elements and the Seven Jewish Lenses. The Core Elements help us structure our approach to include family engagement, intentionality in our curriculum and environments, professionalism among our educators, and reveal Israel as a source and resource for learning Jewish concepts in accessible, everyday ways. Through the Sheva Lenses, the diverse teaching faculty, families, and students of Shalom are provided opportunities to access Jewish values, beliefs, and traditions in ways that are most relevant and meaningful to them. Our “masa,” or journey together as a school, is amplified and celebrated as the journey of those who came before us, in many times and many places, yet we strive to never lose focus on the present time and needs of our little Asheville community.

- Tiffany Hagemeyer, Early Childhood Program Coordinator
More than **50** at risk children learned to swim through the JCC’s partnership with Children First

**88** school age children received homework help, played outdoors, and participated in weekly Shabbat celebrations in JCC’s after school program

**58** teens developed job skills in JCC’s teen leadership development programs

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**Dorian’s Story**

*When I first started coming and volunteering at the JCC, I started to learn with kids about the Hebrew language, which to me was very cool. Then, the following summer I became a Leader in Training, and I learned that kids are taught about life differently here. And when we all come together to the J, we are like a family, full of different people who are peaceful and loving, all from different backgrounds. The fact that I was an LIT helped me make connections with many people I never would have met without the JCC. Throughout my time at the JCC, the individuals that I work with have slowly become my family. This is what the J is to me, and it’s why I love it.*  

- Dorian Johnson
Our son Koby has been in childcare at the JCC since he was eight months old, and it has been a wonderful part of our family's life since he started there. My husband Yonton grew up in Israel and speaks Hebrew with his family and with Koby at home, so when we learned that – in addition to being an excellent program – Koby would be able to have extra Hebrew exposure at Hilde’s House we were very excited.

We are always especially excited when he learns new Hebrew words, like the day my husband picked him up and he pointed out the “dag” in the classroom, the aquarium! Many of Koby’s first words were in Hebrew and it was great to have teachers who could understand and encourage him.

One of the most significant impacts on Koby has been the love of music he’s developed. He began to learn and sing the Tot Shabbat songs that the song leader, Penny, sings to the kids every week early on, and we would often hear him singing “I am happy, I am good” to himself on the monitor as he went to sleep in his crib at night.

His love of music became a huge part of our lives when he discovered the toy ukulele at Hilde’s House and began playing it at every opportunity. At home he would pretend other toys were ukuleles and “strum” them while he sang Penny’s songs.

Eventually we got Koby his own “home ukulele” and more recently a small guitar, and now we are frequently treated to entire set lists of Penny songs. Koby announces “I’m Penny, I’m at the JCC!” and then strums his guitar as he sings “Bim Bam,” “Dinosaur Knocking on my Door,” “My Roots Go Down,” and lots of holiday songs (we are still singing about hamentaschen and trees blowing in the wind!). He always ends his performances by saying “Shabbat Shalom you guys!”

- Molly Maynard

When your kids are home for the summer, it’s tough being away from them. When your kids are enrolled in the Camp Ruach program, all those worries melt away! It’s the most interactive, engaging and fulfilling camp around! Our kiddos always want it to last longer!

- Molly Mesibov