

2013

annual report



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“As a 105-year-old startup organization, there is a rich history and tradition in Young Judaea as well as a youthful exuberance of new ideas and directions.” Michael Berman, President
Young Judaea Board of Directors



Letter from the President of the Board & Executive Director

Shalom Chaverim,

On behalf of Young Judaea's board and professional team, we want to thank you for supporting Young Judaea as we move to independence. Young Judaea is a 105-year-old startup organization with a rich history and tradition as well as a youthful exuberance of new ideas and directions. It is only with your help and support that we can continue to fulfill our mission.

The past few years have been a time of great transition for us. We separated from our parent organization and embraced our newfound independence, new departments, and new positions to focus on a changing Jewish landscape, updating programs and events, and much more. It is our hope that this annual report will give you insight into our work and accomplishments from the past year and an understanding of the direction in which Young Judaea is now heading.

Throughout 2013, we took stock of what it means to be truly independent. No longer do we have the luxury of reliance on a parent organization. We recruited a world-class Board of Directors and created key committees to engage alumni, friends, and partners. We restructured and recruited a first-rate senior staff. We put in place a development strategy and team of professional and lay leaders focused on fundraising and alumni engagement that brought in multi-year commitments of more than \$2.5 million, and we implemented a successful end-of-year campaign, raising more than \$210,000 while tripling the number of donors to the organization. We have built a marketing and communications department that has focused our message, improved our outreach, and refined our brand. We have continued to add new and innovative programs while updating and improving the programs we have offered for generations.

In the coming year, our strategic goals are clear. We remain committed to our mission of building active Zionists and participants in Jewish life among American-Jewish youth. Our emphasis on activism, pluralism, experiential education, and peer leadership resonates with today's teens and young adults. Our improved infrastructure will now help us connect to our vast alumni base, leverage new media, and bring our redeveloped brand to new audiences both at home in the U.S. and abroad. We expect great results in the coming year. None of this would be possible without your generous support. To all those who have participated in or supported Young Judaea programs this year, thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Berman, President
Young Judaea Board of Directors



Simon Klarfeld, Executive Director
Young Judaea

Year-Round Programs



The year 2013 marked a beginning of the reinvention and re-imagination of year-round programming at Young Judaea, eliciting an energy among our teen leaders that we have not seen for several years.

This year, Young Judaea has become a major partner and catalyst in the creation of local, regional, and national year-round programming, providing much-needed support and resources to aid in strengthening and building quality and consistent programming in local communities. As teen leaders, parents, and alumni become increasingly aware of the resources available to them from the national office, forward momentum has grown exponentially.

National Programming

On the national level, Young Judaea's presence in 2013 and the first half of 2014 was more widespread than ever. Alternative Winter Break was once again one of our most popular programs, and with 109 participants, it was our largest group to date. Drawing longtime Judaeans as well as unaffiliated teens from all over the country, Alternative Winter Break left participants with an appetite for more YJ programming.

Young Judaea's attendance at AIPAC, J-Street, and Schusterman conferences reflects the basis of our commitment to pluralism within our movement. Thanks to our youth advisors, teens continue to receive a strong educational basis for expanding their knowledge before and after these events.

LionFest National convention was Young Judaea's experiment in changing the nature of the National Midwinter Convention. Held at Camp Young Judaea Texas, we were able to increase participation from farther flung areas and were successful in creating an atmosphere that both celebrated the regional identity of the teens while increasing their commitment to the National Movement.





Local and Regional Programming

Northeast For the first time in several years, programming took place in LINYC (Long Island/NYC) and Eastern Pennsylvania. Empire (NY State) continues its programming, and New Jersey has had at least seven regional and local events. Flemington, NJ and Burlington, VT have seen the piloting of a new model that utilizes the cooperation of local synagogues and community centers in development and implementation of year-round programs.

We also successfully executed a new model this year by introducing a Teen Leadership Track at Sprout Lake's Fall Camp. This program brings together younger teens to experience leadership training in the comfort of "home." The program, which brought together children, teens, college students, and adult staff to celebrate Shabbat in a revolutionary way, was a resounding success.

Midwest This year has seen a growth in the Midwest across the board. In just one year, we have seen a 40% increase in Midwest activity, along with a 60%

increase in participation at regional convention. Together with Camp Young Judaea Midwest, we have invested greatly in both programming and extensive recruitment efforts. Enabling teen participants to run the educational components of events has given them invaluable experience and honed their leadership skills.

Southeast Programming continued in DC and returned to both Atlanta and South Florida with the help of strong parent/alumni involvement. The partnership between these parents and Young Judaea Global remains a key element of the sustained, successful program in the Southeast.

West A renewed emphasis on alumni engagement and involvement in the rebuilding of programming in Los Angeles has shown us that YJ has real potential in the West.

Camp Tel Yehudah continues to play a central role in the direction of year-round activity, fostering the development of our youth leaders by providing them with most immersive community and learning experience available within the movement today and preparing

them to lead movement programming all year long. This past summer, those 11th graders who took part in a very successful Hadracha (leadership) program began their academic year empowered with the skills, knowledge, and passion to make change both within their movement and in the world.

In cooperation with Tel Yehudah, Camp Judaea, Camp Young Judaea Texas, Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake, and Camp Young Judaea Midwest, Year-Round Programs has begun to implement new programs that serve as a primary driver in strengthening current Judaeans' local and regional identities.

The Future

Our goal is to maintain the sustained upward movement of Young Judaea nationwide and leverage that success in local communities. The establishment of a Year-Round Programs Task Force in 2014 will ensure the continued evaluation and re-imagining of our educational platform, allowing more children and teens to gain access to award-winning Young Judaea programming.



Camps



Young Judaea's camps have grown in camper participation, programming, and infrastructure in 2013. With the building of new facilities and the integration of cutting-edge youth programming, camps have maintained a competitive presence while continuing to provide the Young Judaeian experience.

Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake, Camp Young Judaea Midwest, Camp Young Judaea Texas, Camp Judaea, and Tel Yehudah are all thriving and producing growing numbers of participants, providing new infrastructure and programs, and maintaining a healthy relationship with their alumni and communities.

While we strongly recommend you review each camp's annual report, we are excited to share some of their highlights here:

Number of Campers on the Rise

While each individual camp has faced its own challenges in the past few years, all of our camps are experiencing growth in their applications for the Summer 2014 season. Sprout Lake has already reached a five-year high, CYJ Texas' enrollment has already surpassed last year and will hit a record of over 600 campers for Summer 2014, and Camp Judaea has surpassed last year's enrollment numbers by more than 30%. CYJ Midwest has continued to grow in its numbers from 2011, and Tel Yehudah is on its way to surpassing its numbers from last year.

New Infrastructure

(continued through following page)

Nearly all of Young Judaea's camps have expanded their facilities in the past few years and plan to continue this expansion in the coming years.





2012

Sprout Lake refurbished its office bathrooms and interior, built a nine-hole mini-golf course, and is building a gymnastics program for the Summer of 2014.

Tel Yehudah built a new Bet Gazebo.

2013

Tel Yehudah had a new maintenance shop built.

Sprout Lake received the Gendler Grapevine Project Environmental Grant, replacing all of its toilets with environmentally friendly ones.

CYJ Texas built a new health center and will add four to six new tennis courts to its facility.

CYJ Midwest, in partnership with the Amir Project, built a camp garden that yields produce for the salad bar and more than 400 pounds of produce for the local food pantry.

2014

CYJ Midwest re-surfaced its basketball and tennis courts as well as built a unit for family housing.

CJ built five new sustainable and eco-friendly camper cabins and will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of its acclaimed *Chalutzim* adventure program.

New Programming

All of Young Judaea's camps have obligated themselves to provide the most cutting-edge programming for their campers.

In Summer 2014, **Sprout Lake** will partner with an outside company to implement a new gymnastics program. Having received a grant from the UJA for a Specialty Day Camp, Sprout Lake will also pilot a day camp in Brooklyn, New York.

In Summer 2014, **CYJ Texas** will introduce advanced tennis lessons and art classes.

CJ has been helping run a YJ Kibbutz Program, a program in collaboration with YJ Puerto Rico, to bring mainland kids to Puerto Rico for programming on President Day's weekend.

CYJ Midwest has expanded and promoted its three-week leadership training program for campers in 10th and 11th grades.

“My leadership style and capability are firmly rooted from my days in Young Judaea.”

Seth Merrin
Judaeen, CEO, Liquidnet



Israel Programs



2013 marked a year of transition for Young Judaea Israel Programs. Young Judaea in Israel continues to implement cutting-edge programming and intensive learning experiences for teens, recent high-school graduates, university students, and young professionals.

Special accomplishments include:

- A total of 1,732 participants from nine different countries participated in Young Judaea Israel Short-Term Programs in 2013.
- The success of **Year Course's** Activism track, which continues to epitomize Young Judaeian values through its Tzeva Kahol (Turning Red Skies Blue) Campaign. As part of the campaign, chanichim raised funds and awareness for direct action for those most intimately affected by terrorism. Additionally, they cleaned and painted shelters, volunteered in communities affected by terrorism, and donated money raised to aid victims of terror.
- **Year Course's** Tikkun Olam trip to Rwanda, where chanichim grappled with the question, "what is my responsibility to the world around me?" Those who participated in this optional add-on program engaged in a dialogue between themselves and their surroundings regarding issues of Judaism, Zionism, leadership, and social justice.
- A brand new partnership between **Shalem** and Kibbutz Yavne, which allows us to cut program costs and charge less tuition while at the same time increasing participation numbers.
- Consistent success of **WUJS Arts**, Young Judaea's program for the 21 to 35 age group. This year, WUJS hosted its annual art exhibition along with lectures on politics and diplomacy, siyurim, and tiyulim.
- Continuing the legacy of Young Judaea as an active part of Israeli society. This year, 14 participants from Fall 2013 decided to continue living in Israel, including 5 olim and 3 who are continuing to the upcoming session of **WUJS**.





- This year, **Taglit-Birthright Israel: Young Judaea** was once again ranked one of the top programs in terms of participant experience and education by Taglit-Birthright Israel's external and internal evaluations. We were also named the top-rated organizer in terms of safety and security.
- **Amirim** feedback and success rates reached close to 90% this year.
- **Teen Summer Programs** hosted 571 participants in Israel this past summer.

More and more, we are operating in a context of increased questioning of not only identity but specifically of people who identify as Jewish, among our key target demographics. This has led to ongoing re-examination and re-evaluation of our program models and structures as well as specific educational elements of our programs.

This year, we established a thorough Year Course review process and have started to apply discussions and efforts to rethinking our other Israel programs.

Some takeaways from this year's challenges are:

- An examination of our "specialty track" system for **Year Course**. While many components are well-engaged, others that we deem core parts of Year Course appeal less to today's participants. We have begun to evaluate how to best incorporate these core values into the program as a whole, allowing us to eliminate them as "tracks" without losing the value they offer.
- While the relationship between **Shalem** and Yavne has grown, we are considering starting the program in Jerusalem instead of Yavne due to participant request.
- While Young Judaea continues to provide top Israel programming, we are re-evaluating our programs in an effort to better meet the needs and wants of the new generations of Judaeans and Young Judaea program participants.

Our challenges for 2014 remain clear. We will continue to provide the high-quality programming that is expected of Young Judaea while also adapting programs to address the changing attitudes and opinions of our current and potential participants. At the same time, we will continue our effort to integrate Young Judaea Israel programming with our programming in the United States as we focus on creating a continuity of experience in the movement. In addition, we will continue to use our data-gathering from past years to cultivate a passionate group of alumni recruiters for all of our Israel programs.

"Young Judaea made me the leader I am today."

Deborah Kuker Kenny
Judaeans Founder,
Harlem Village Academies



Development & Alumni Relations



Development and Alumni Relations

Young Judaea teaches the value of taking personal responsibility and giving back—to our families, to our communities, to the Jewish people, and to the world. While Young Judaeans have always taken this commitment seriously, Judaeans alumni, friends, and families are stepping up in record numbers to help support our own Young Judaea “family” following its independence from Hadassah.

Young Judaea’s inaugural Board of Directors has guided the organization with a steady hand, actively participating in finance, development, marketing, governance, and program review activities while contributing more than \$1.1 million to our *Atzmaut* Independence Campaign.

In 2013, alumni gave their time and support by hosting alumni gatherings and recruitment events for YJ camps and Israel programs, organizing reunions, promoting Young Judaea in their communities, and hosting educational programs in their homes. Members of the board and executive staff met with small groups in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and New York to engage in conversations about the future of Young Judaea. Alumni, friends, and family donors tripled their participation rates over the last year by responding to a bold \$100,000 year-end challenge grant for general funds, and many more stepped up throughout the year to fund scholarships that allow more young people to participate in Young Judaea camps, Year Course, and year-round activities.

Local alumni outreach groups have taken shape in several cities, and we are beginning to explore the best model for broad-based alumni outreach and engagement. Our goal in the coming year is to expand these alumni groups to include more communities as we reach out more broadly to Young Judaea’s 50,000+ alumni, family, and friends in the United States and around the world.

Special appreciation goes to the Development & Alumni Relations Committee for their wisdom and support: Betsy Gold, Vally Kovary, Amy Rosenblatt-Lui, Steve Berman, and Randy Gorod. Additional thanks to Roni Schwartz and Melanie Topper for initiating the first alumni outreach groups.

To all those who supported Young Judaea this year, thank you.

For more information on how to get involved, please contact Jeffrey Cahn at

Jeffrey.Cahn@youngjudaea.org or (646) 292-2394

Young Judaea's *Atzmaut* Independence Campaign

In 2013, Young Judaea launched the quiet phase of its *Atzmaut* Independence Campaign, conquering the first major hurdle in building its capacity as a newly independent organization. With the goal of doubling the organization's impact over the next decade, we are investing heavily in six key strategic areas:

- 1 Refining and expanding Young Judaea's life-changing Israel experiences
- 2 Expanding our leadership, activism, and educational platform
- 3 Growing the impact of our camp network
- 4 Re-envisioning year-round programming
- 5 Engaging multiple generations of Young Judaeans alumni, family, and friends
- 6 Building state-of-the-art service and operational systems

With multi-year commitments from Hadassah, Young Judaea Board Members, and dozens of passionate alumni, along with a \$1 million lead gift from a generous Judaeans family, we have secured nearly \$9.5 million of the \$14 million needed to achieve our ambitious goals.

To all of those who supported the *Atzmaut* Independence Campaign with multi-year commitments, thank you.

We invite all YJ parents and families and friends of Young Judaea to join us in creating our movement's future by investing in Young Judaea's *Atzmaut* Independence Campaign.



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SPECIAL THANK YOU TO HADASSAH

THANK YOU HADASSAH for your support, passion, guidance, and love for so many years. We are forever grateful. We look forward to working with you hand in hand to realize our collective Zionist dreams.