





2016 proved to be an exciting and eventful year for Young Judaea, with remarkable program growth and new opportunities for our *chanichim* (participants), combined with an inaugural gala and the 60th anniversary of Year Course. It was a year of both looking forward and recognizing the alumni and leadership that has made Young Judaea the life changing-movement it is today.

In September, more than 300 alumni and friends joined Young Judaea for the First Forward Together Benefit for Young Judaea in New York City’s Lower East Side. The event was an inspiring opportunity for alumni and friends – recent and not-so-recent – to reunite, show their support, and recognize the extraordinary contributions made by Judaeans Educator Mel Reisfield, and the philanthropic efforts made by Seth Merrin, Anne Heyman & the Merrin Family.

Gala attendees and sponsors helped Young Judaea raise more than half a million dollars, which allowed us to considerably expand our programming, as well as offer scholarships and stipends to hundreds of *chanichim* who would have otherwise been unable to participate.

In November, 350 alumni joined us in Tel Aviv for a reunion celebrating 60 years of Year Course. Alumni from every decade bonded over their shared experience and how the program enhanced their lives, honoring Mel Reisfield who inspired the audience with his continued passion for Young Judaea.

2016 also laid the groundwork for the future of Young Judaea, with the opening of a second day camp in Westchester,NY, impressive facilities expansion at our summer camps throughout the country, and new Israel programs added to an already rich array of offerings. We can’t wait to carry the success of this year into the next!



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**In 2016, Young Judaea worked on programming with a tremendous number of local and national organizations across a wide spectrum of missions. In the Tri-State area, participants joined in *AIDS Walk NYC* and marched in the *JCRC-NY Celebrate Israel Day Parade*. They also joined hundreds of teens from across the Northeast at the 2016 JFN Teen Summit, learning about and discussing some of Israel's most innovative projects. In California, they volunteered with the elderly and homeless on the first-ever *Alternative Winter Break* in Los Angeles.**



At a time in high school when I needed the support of friends, Young Judaea gave me that support and leadership skills. I felt connected and part of something bigger than myself.



The Young Judaea community in Los Angeles saw remarkable growth in 2016, as the budding community of teens worked with groups such as *Heal the Bay* to help protect the ocean and watershed in Los Angeles County, volunteered at *Alexandria House*, a women and children's shelter, and spent time with residents at the Israel Levin Senior Center. In addition, *Alternative Winter Break* – Young Judaea's premier service trip program – came to Los Angeles for the first time, spurred by teen leadership learned at Tel Yehudah, Young Judaea's teen leadership camp.

As in the past ten years, New Orleans was also host to an *Alternative Winter Break* trip, continuing Young Judaea's volunteer presence in the city, which has been ongoing since Hurricane Katrina. Students volunteered with *Greenlight New Orleans* and the *St. Bernard Project*, working closely with locals to help a community still rebuilding.

Several local communities had the opportunity to work with local Federations, including DC Young Judaea who participated in *Good Deeds Day* with the Federation of Greater Washington, Southeast Young Judaea who worked with the Miami Dade and Broward County Federations, and Pittsburgh Young Judaea (a new and rapidly-growing community) who collaborated with their local JCC as well as *Family House Pittsburgh*.

Significant growth was also evident in convention attendance. With the return (after an eight-year absence) of the Southeast Convention, the largest conventions in recent years in both the Midwest and nationally, and a 50% attendance increase at Northeast convention, Young Judaea's regional and national programming continued to offer an engaging and meaningful opportunity for our *chanichim* to come together.

## YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

**750  
kids**



participated in  
local and national  
programming

**15  
communities**







The Young Judaea camp experience exemplifies our mission of creating a life-long connection to Israel and the Jewish people. Through our five Young Judaea overnight and two day camps, *chanichim* gain connections to fellow participants, to Israel, and to Jewish values that last a lifetime.



At Tel Yehudah, we want everyone to appreciate themselves for who they are, and everyone to appreciate each other for their differences, for their new ideas and new perspectives.



### Camp Judaea

Camp Judaea underwent impressive growth in 2016, serving 623 campers, more than 35% of whom received some form of financial aid based on need. To accommodate a rapidly-growing camp population, CJ broke ground on a new and expanded *chadar ochel* (dining hall) at the end of the summer.

### Camp Young Judaea – Texas

In 2016, CYJ-Texas unveiled its new Experiential Learning Center building. The 7,000-square-foot multi-use activity building was built for campers to learn about Jewish and Israeli values and culture during camp season, as well as engage in a variety of arts classes. Best of all, the building was designed to demonstrate wide-reaching sustainable design ideas, engaging the site and helping to pave the way for more improvements at camps.

**CYJ-Midwest** 2016 signaled a new beginning at CYJ-Midwest, as Robin Anderson was announced as incoming Camp Director. In addition, a new playground was built, creating engaging opportunities for campers to play in the outdoors and building skills and memories that will last a lifetime.

### Sprout Lake Camps

In 2016, Sprout Lake opened its second day camp in Westchester, bringing the Sprout spirit to the Westchester Jewish community. Sprout Brooklyn, in its second year, doubled in growth from 2015 with over 100 campers each session and an average of 150 *chanichim* per week. In addition, CYJ Sprout Lake opened a brand new aquatic center featuring a water slide, and has already begun planning for a renovated basketball court.

### Tel Yehudah

This year at Tel Yehudah, 515 *chanichim* took part in an incredibly diverse international Jewish community. More global than ever, TY had *chanichim* from across the United States, Italy and Germany, and tzevet (staff) from Russia, Poland, Argentina, Canada, and Ukraine. The TY partnership with Camp Kimama brought Israeli participants to TY and gave the community an opportunity to live with Israeli peers. The brand new Havurah Plus initiative designed for graduates of the TY program for Jewish Russian-speaking teens brought participants back as staff in a junior role. Camp Gesher, TY's partnership program on the West Coast for Jewish children from Russian-speaking families, had 99 *chanichim* aged 6-9 in 2016.

## SUMMER CAMPS BY THE NUMBERS

>2500 campers



at YJ camps in 2016





**Young Judaea's Israel programming continues to inspire participants by helping them discover Judaism and Israel for themselves. Living and learning in Israel gives participants the opportunity to gain first-hand exposure to different ideas, cultures, and viewpoints, many of which are often quite different from those they bring from home.**

“

Year Course was the best time of my life. It opened my eyes to so many new perspectives and strengthened my love for Israel. I came out a better, more mature individual ready to take on life with immense confidence.

”

2016 marked 60 years of Year Course, and 350 alumni, many of whom live in Israel, joined *chanichim* in Tel Aviv to celebrate both the incredible milestone as well as Judaeen educator and leader Mel Reisfield. Attendees from every single Year Course in the past six decades came together in celebration of a program that, in many of their own words, led them to establish themselves as leaders and change-makers in Israel.

Participants in the WUJS Internship program took advantage of their Tel Aviv location to engage in a diverse array immersive professional experiences and internships in 2016, including one participant who left New York City to try her luck as a stand-up

comedian and is currently emerging as a popular video blogger, a lawyer who came to intern in a legal office and was hired as a legal assistant, and set design intern at the Israeli Opera who started her own production company.

Short Term Programs participation saw tremendous growth in 2016, with nearly 115 participants in Onward Israel (double from the previous year). In addition, Young Judaea led programming and logistics on a new trip for AUJS, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, in which nearly 100 students took part in volunteering, experiencing the IDF, and exploring Israeli politics.

## ISRAEL PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

**total number of participants by age**



**Ages 16-17**

**480**



**Ages 18-21**

**320**



**Ages 22-35**

**102\***





In addition to creating exciting new opportunities for future chanichim,

Young Judaea stays firmly connected to the alumni that make this growth possible. On Sunday, September 18, 2016 over 300 Young Judaeans alumni, family and friends took part in Young Judaea's inaugural fundraising event. The event title, **Forward Together: A Benefit for Young Judaea** is taken from a beloved movement song, "... Forward together we're building Young Judaea!"

This perfectly outlined the goal of the evening – expanding Young Judaea's projects and programs for the next generation, while celebrating Young Judaea's storied history and amazing alumni.

The evening's honorees, Seth Merrin, Anne Heyman and the Merrin Family were celebrated for their outstanding efforts on behalf of YJ and their eternal commitment to *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). During the event, a very special "Im Tirtzu" award was presented to legendary Judaeans educator, Mel Reisfield, beloved by generations of Judaeans and credited with inspiring thousands of alumni to connect with Israel and the Jewish people during his decades as Merakez at Camp Tel Yehudah and educator on Year Course.

Held at Angel Orensanz Foundation, a beautiful event space which is also the location of the oldest and longest-continuously operating synagogue in New York City, To have our first such event on the Lower East Side was made more meaningful as it is the location in which the very first Young Judaea club meeting took place in 1904. Judaeans were elated to reconnect with each other, celebrate, sing, and dance just as they've always done!

The festivities continued in Tel Aviv, where on November 17, 2016 over 350 Year Course alumni came together at the Israel Music Conservatory in Tel Aviv-Yafo to celebrate 60 years of Year Course. Year Course participants from every decade shared their Year Course stories and reminisced. The evening was profoundly moving – it was remarkable to see just how many lives were so positively impacted by Young Judaea and Year Course over the past 60 years, and we look forward to doing the same for decades to come!





## Young Judaea Mission Statement: To inspire American Jews' life-long engagement with Israel and the Jewish People.

Through immersive informal and experiential education, Young Judaea fosters a sense of value and love for Jewish tradition and ritual, as well as pride in the Jewish people, Israel and being Jewish. Our life-changing camp, year-round and Israel experiences provide an open and pluralistic environment that encourages mutual respect and understanding between diverse groups of Jews, and empowers our *chanichim* by imbuing them with the self-confidence, independence, problem-solving skills, knowledge, and other tools they need to make informed choices for themselves and the communities they will help to shape.

- Young Judaea is a Zionist youth movement that embraces the diversity of the Jewish people.
- We inspire Jews to connect with their Jewish identity and to the Jewish people – past, present and future.
- We are committed to supporting the centrality of Israel in Jewish life.
- We empower our participants to imagine and bring about positive change in Israel and the world at large.
- We grow insightful, educated and creative leaders through powerful and life-changing experiences.
- We plant the seeds for a lifetime of commitment to Young Judaea's values, vision and work.

