

\$12M in Grants Awarded to Increase Accessibility for Campers & Staff with Disabilities

Foundation for Jewish Camp and The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation Partner in a Groundbreaking Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative at Jewish Camps.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- 16 Jewish Camps Awarded Grants as Part of \$12M

[Yashar Initiative](#) to Increase Accessibility for Campers and Staff with Disabilities

Partnership of [Foundation for Jewish Camp](#) and The Harry and Jeanette [Weinberg Foundation](#) provides critical funding for structural improvements and training to promote participation for all



Foundation for Jewish Camp Yashar Initiative

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*Jeremy Fingerman, CEO,
Foundation for Jewish Camp*

New York, N.Y. – This April, 16 Jewish camps across North America will be the first recipients of a groundbreaking grant to increase accessibility for campers and staff with disabilities through the Yashar Initiative. The Hebrew word “Yashar” translates to both “level” and “integrity,” and like its namesake, the Yashar Initiative is intended to improve accessibility for campers and staff with disabilities on multiple levels by providing funds for capital improvements, professional development, staff training, research, and evaluation. The \$12 million Yashar Initiative, a program of Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) generously funded by The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, will enable Jewish day and overnight camps to better welcome all members of the Jewish community.

The 16 day and overnight camps awarded this FIRST round

of Yashar grants represent a diverse range of affiliations:

Beber Camp, Wisconsin
B’nai Brith Camp, Oregon
Camp Keff, California
Camp Ramah, California
Camp Ramah Poconos, Pennsylvania
Camp Simcha, New York
Camp Solomon Schechter, Washington
Camp Tawonga, California
JCC Camp Chi, Wisconsin
JCC Camp Ruach, New Jersey
JCC Camp Yachad, New Jersey

JCC Camp Z Frank Apachi, Illinois
Mid Island Y JCC Camp, New York
Ramah Darom, Georgia
Ramah Day Camp, New York
URJ Camp Harlam, Pennsylvania

"We are thrilled to champion the ambitious plans of our first round of grantees, which meaningfully reflect FJC's values and aspirations for the field," says Jeremy Fingerman, CEO of FJC. "Every moment of this process has been filled with the kind of excitement that can only be found on the brink of creating real, substantive change."

A past FJC-administered survey identified the need for greater accessibility for staff and campers with disabilities as a major barrier to participation in Jewish camps. The Yashar Initiative was designed to address the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder, as well as people with intellectual, developmental, physical, and sensory disabilities.

"Since its founding, the Weinberg Foundation has provided nearly 80 grants, totaling approximately \$6 million, to both Jewish and non-Jewish camps to improve accessibility for campers and staff with disabilities," said Paula B. Pretlow, Trustee, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. "This initiative is especially critical because it benefits not only the camps that receive direct funding, but also advances the field with best practice information regarding inclusion models and training for staff. Most important, however," Pretlow added, "Yashar ensures that all campers are able to access this foundational aspect of a Jewish upbringing."

Each of the grantees included in this first round of giving was required to independently raise 25 percent of the project's cost before applying. Each camp will receive money for both capital improvements, as well as a program grant totaling \$2.5 million for the first round of the initiative. The camps anticipate finishing their improvements by the summer of 2020.

Examples of approved projects include:

- Building or renovating bunks to be more accessible for campers and staff;
- Developing sensory gardens, splash pools, and playgrounds to enhance services of campers with disabilities;
- Improving accessibility for campers with disabilities as part of construction or renovation of communal buildings, such as dining halls and infirmaries;
- Creating new housing to serve vocational training programs that allow campers with disabilities to grow into staff roles at camp.

In keeping with the goals of the initiative to promote a greater culture of inclusion, each grant recipient has committed to increasing their total campers with disabilities to at least five percent of the total camper population.

Fingerman added, "We're buoyed by the knowledge that the best is yet to come, as The Yashar Initiative will not only enable these grant recipients to make wonderful improvements to their camps, but will inspire more camps to consider and implement greater inclusion."

The Yashar Initiative will accept grant applications again this fall, as well as in the fall of 2020.

About Foundation for Jewish Camp: Jewish camp has proven to be a highly effective vehicle for engaging children, teens, young adults and families in Jewish life. Founded in 1998, Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) is committed to bolstering excellence throughout the Jewish camp field and amplifying their success and impact by catalyzing innovation. Foundation for Jewish Camp works with over 300 day and overnight camps, serving approximately 180,000 campers and counselors across North America, providing professional development opportunities for camp leaders,

expanding access to and demand for Jewish camp, enhancing camp's Jewish impact, leading the field in staff and camper care, and developing programs to strengthen camps across the Jewish spectrum — including its signature One Happy Camper® program, which has enabled tens of thousands of young people to experience Jewish camp for the first time. For more information, please visit www.jewishcamp.org.

About The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation: The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, one of the 50 largest private charitable foundations in the United States, is dedicated to meeting the basic needs of vulnerable people and families experiencing poverty. In 2019, the Foundation will provide approximately \$125 million in grants to nonprofits that provide direct services in the areas of Housing, Health, Jobs, Education, and Community Services. The Foundation's priority communities include Baltimore, Chicago, Hawaii, Israel, New York City, Northeastern Pennsylvania, San Francisco, and Rural Communities (primarily surrounding other priority communities). The Foundation's trustees include Robert T. Kelly, Jr., Board Chair; Ambassador Fay Hartog-Levin (Ret.); Paula B. Pretlow; and Gordon Berlin. Rachel Garbow Monroe serves as President and CEO. For more information, please visit www.hjweinbergfoundation.org.

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