



5 Sivan - 4 Tamuz • 5785 • June 2025

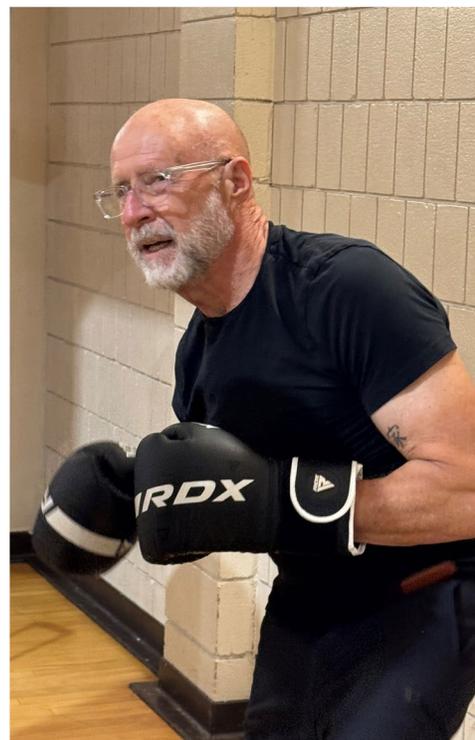
ALLIANCE NEWS

A YEAR IN Review

David A. Stein Jewish Community Alliance on the Ed Parker Jewish Community Campus

VOLUME 36

#10





Adam Chaskin

Shalom Friends,

With exciting changes happening before our eyes, I am thrilled to share more about our construction updates and incredible momentum for the future of our beloved Jewish Community Alliance.

The JCA continues to be recognized as a leader among Jewish Community Centers throughout North America – and we are only getting better. This humbling recognition from the JCC Association reflects the tireless dedication of our staff, the strength of our enriching programs, and the vibrant, welcoming community we built together.

Thanks to your unwavering support, our Building Our Future Together Campaign has surpassed \$15.1 million in commitments. This extraordinary milestone brings us closer to realizing our long-term vision to update and expand the JCA to serve our future generations. As I write, the steel frame of our new two-story building is nearing completion, marking a powerful symbol of progress in the heart of our campus.

Please pardon our progress the next time you visit the JCA. All the hammering, hallway closures, and sounds of moving steel will only allow us to better serve this remarkable community in the future. As you read through the pages of this Alliance News, I hope you enjoy the reflections on what was accomplished this year. The incredible programs our staff members curate only further bond and nurture our community.

Just days away from launching another award-winning JCamp season, multiple camp experiences for children are planned at three locations this summer. Each JCamp program is designed to deliver safe, meaningful, and joy-filled summer adventures to children of all ages. If you are still working out plans, make sure you visit jcjax.org/jcamp to register your children for summer experiences they will never forget.

Whether you are a long-time member or a new family just joining us, your continued involvement and support fuel everything we do. Together, we are not just updating and upgrading our campus, we are building a stronger, more connected future for our community.

Wishing you a safe and prosperous summer.

With gratitude,



Adam Chaskin
CEO

The JCA Alliance News and Program Guide are published by the:

Jewish Community Alliance
8505 San Jose Boulevard Jacksonville, FL 32217

For additional program information and to register,
please contact the JCA.

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[facebook.com/jcjax](https://www.facebook.com/jcjax)

Nicole Brown Board Chair
Adam Chaskin Chief Executive Officer
Lee Lemay Graphic Designer
Beth Milograno Communications & PR Specialist

JCA BUILDING HOURS

Sun..... 8am-6pm Fri..... 5:30 am - 5 pm
Mon - Thu..... 5:30 am - 9 pm Sat..... 1 - 6 pm
Independence Day
Fri, Jul 4..... 8 am - 5 pm

Kid Kare (babysitting) - (904) 730-2100

Hours:

Sun - Fri mornings, 9 am - 12 pm | Mon - Thu evenings, 5 - 8 pm

- JCA Kid Kare is available for children 3 months to 9 years old.
- Kid Kare service is for a maximum of 90 mins.
- Kid Kare is offered by reservation system via the My J app.
- Visit bit.ly/JCAKidKare for Kid Kare policies and to download My J.



FAMILY Fun Days!

Mark your calendars for our Family Fun Days on Independence Day and Labor Day this year! Join us poolside for our world-famous hot dogs, watermelon, sno-cones and plenty of fun in the sun!

11:30 am – 2:30 pm
Fri, Jul 4 and Mon, Sep 1

FREE FOR VALUED MEMBERS!

Mazel Tov, HELEN & WHITNEY!



**By Beth Milograno Berry,
Communications & PR Specialist**

An annual tradition at our Jewish Community Alliance, we are proud to announce the recipients of the Howard Korman President's Award and the JCA Special Service Award this year.

Serving on our Board of Trustees and Finance Committee, Helen Rowan received the Howard Korman President's Award, selected for her extraordinary

work implementing new long-range financial planning for our agency. An active and engaged member on campus, Helen is always striving to improve the JCA. Most recently, Helen created efficiencies for our financial model and construction spending plans that will allow us to remain a premiere destination in Jacksonville in the future.

Whitney Kuvin, who serves as Secretary on our Executive Committee, was honored with the Special Service Award for her incredible leadership and commitment to everything that happens on and off our JCA campus. Whitney is truly invested in the future the JCA; she served as Chair of the Jacksonville Jewish Cultural Arts Festival Committee for three consecutive years, joined the JCA Executive Committee in 2024, and is a champion of our Jacksonville JCA Maccabi Games team.

After the loss of our dear friend and colleague, Eiffel Gilyana, Whitney worked with our Board of Trustees to establish the Eiffel Gilyana Staff Inspiration Award. Implemented to honor Eiffel's legacy of strength, enthusiasm, and empathy, the first award recipient will be announced later this month.



Helen and Whitney are amazing individuals who each bring so much value to our agency. These women support and promote our JCA daily and are truly inspirational along the way.

- Nicole Brown, Board Chair

TRIBUTES



In memory of...

- DAN YOUNG**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- GERALD CHAIT**
by Adam and Regina Chaskin
The Board and Staff of the JCA
- LINDA GRANAT**
by Lior Spring and Daniel Miller
Philip and Karen Adler
- BECKY BROMBERG**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- HOWARD WILLIAM KAUFMANN**
by Adam and Regina Chaskin
The Board and Staff of the JCA
- MARLENE BORMAN**
by The Flagler Family
The Miller Families
Adam and Regina Chaskin
The JCA Board and Staff
- EVELYN SALLAS**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- ROBERT ZANG**
by The Board and Staff of the JCA

HELENE EDWARDS

- by The Miller Families
The Flagler Family
Lior Spring and Daniel Miller
The Board and Staff of the JCA
- JOE JACK TONEY**
by Philip and Karen Adler
- MARC WEIG**
by The Miller Families
- JOAN GUREVICH**
by The Flagler Family
- ELLA ROGOZINSKI**
by Lior Spring and Daniel Miller
The Miller Families
The Board and Staff of the JCA

In honor of...

- KIMBERLY ZAVON'S BIRTHDAY**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- MATT GOTTFRIED AND HEATHER BOROCHANER'S ENGAGEMENT**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- CHRISTIE ROGERS**
by Michele Steinfeld

TOM WINE'S RETIREMENT

- by Michele and David Steinfeld
- CHRIS TURNER**
by Michele Steinfeld
- BARBARA JERROLD'S BIRTHDAY**
by Michele and David Steinfeld
- RAY FARAH'S RETIREMENT**
by The Board and Staff of the JCA
- PETER RACINE'S RETIREMENT**
by The Miller Families
- THE BIRTH OF SHALOM KAHN**
by Rochelle and David Stoddard
- MARGAUX HALLORAN'S WEDDING**
by Lior Spring and Daniel Miller
- ELIANA JAFFA'S COLLEGE GRADUATION**
by The Miller family

For a speedy recovery...

- MICHELE STEINFELD**
by Wendy Feinberg



A New Day for the JCA!

By Chris Turner, Membership Director

As Jim Rohn said, “If you don’t like how things are, change it! You’re not a tree.” The journey we are taking at our Jewish Community Alliance is about more than construction. It is about choosing to move forward, adapting, and investing in Building Our Future Together. As we begin this new chapter at our JCA, we are embracing the spirit of growth and transformation. Not just in our building, but throughout our community.

The changes happening on campus are exciting – and even more are on the horizon as the Building Our Future Together Capital Campaign continues. We officially began anticipated renovations with a groundbreaking in November, embarking as a staff and a community on this ambitious project that is designed to enhance experiences and strengthen the Jewish community in Jacksonville.



With every construction update and material delivery, we are closer to a new day at our JCA - and all of it is designed with you in mind. In the next two years, parts of our campus will transform. The new building in *The Stein Family Courtyard* will be complete, while the redesigned *J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Welcome Area* and *Chepenik, Markowitz, Movsovitz Lobby* will create a more inviting, secure, and efficient entrance.

Updated and modernized amenities will only elevate comfort and convenience for all our members - these changes are not just about aesthetics, they are about building a better JCA for everyone who comes here. The best Fitness and Wellness Center in Jacksonville will only get better with updated locations for our wellness partners, Baptist Health and Brooks Rehabilitation. *The Miller Families Fitness Center* will give you even more space and equipment to support wellness goals for every generation.

We are incredibly grateful for the support received from so many of our members and neighbors. Construction projects bring some temporary inconveniences and our members are being nothing but patient and positive as we make this transition. Your continued membership and your presence here throughout all the sawing and hammering keep us all vibrant, motivated and looking forward to all that will happen in the coming months.



Through all of the change, your favorite classes, spending time with friends, and making new memories along the way at the JCA, will never stop. Together, we are renovating a building and shaping the future of Jewish life and community in our neighborhood. It is truly an honor to serve this agency and the people who make it so magnificent.

Do you know someone who has not experienced why our JCA is more than a gym? Please invite your friends and family in for a visit and schedule a tour for them at jcjax.org/tour to see all that’s happening on campus. Remember, when your friends and family join us at the JCA, you will be rewarded with a free month of membership dues and a \$50 JCA gift card.






BUILDING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

By Kendall Sisisky Valliere, Development Director

I literally grew up at the Jewish Community Alliance. My parents were charter members in 1988. I was in an infant classroom and grew up in our school, exercised in the fitness center in high school, joined as a member after I married my husband, Sean, I work here, and both of my children attend Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten. When I look at all we are accomplishing on campus and reminisce about my family history at the JCA, I am reminded of *l'dor v'dor*, and how these Jewish values continue to guide life.

Meaning from generation to generation, *l'dor v'dor*, exemplifies the tradition of ensuring Jewish culture and values are passed on to our children and grandchildren. This fundamental value continues today as we witness vertical construction on a new two-story building in *The Stein Family Courtyard*. The change and growth we are experiencing on campus will allow us to better serve future generations.

Built on Jewish values but open and welcoming to our neighbors from all backgrounds, our JCA is the place in the tradition of our heritage where all people come together throughout their lives to enhance body, mind, and spirit – a 36-year tradition we are incredibly proud to continue. Watching construction happen before our eyes, I know the work being done on campus will provide even more opportunities to draw a cross-section of the Jewish community together. Additionally, we continue to attract a diverse array of members who are not Jewish who come here

to improve their lives and build lasting friendships under our uniquely Jewish roof.

It is not just fun; it is a gratifying experience to walk past the windows overlooking the courtyard and watch our roof expand. Witnessing the grading of the land, the elevator shaft rising, and the giant steel beams being placed – and knowing the positive impact this will have on our members and guests, is extremely exciting.

It is a privilege to watch as my friends, who also grew up at the JCA, now send their children through programming, continuing the beautiful cycle of *l'dor v'dor*. Throughout this past year, I continued to see generous community support for the Building Our Future Together campaign. Your generosity affirms the history and future of the JCA. I am grateful to all donors who are committed to ensuring this agency will remain a distinct and dynamic town square, reflecting the rich diversity of our community, for many years to come. **Please visit jcjax.org/campaign to show your support today.**



Gigi, Dan, and Rosalie Schwartz
at the Building Our Future Together groundbreaking

Growth

By Heather Terrill, J Institute Director

When you are nearing the wrap up of a season, it is always special looking back at the little moments that made the year so amazing! Now in my ninth year at the JCA, my love and pride for this organization continues to grow stronger with every passing year. I am incredibly proud of the team I get to work with day in and day out. Our JCA's work family is what creates the foundation for the programming we share with our community.

You, the members of our community, are who keep us inspired and wanting to do more. This year was certainly no different. Growth is always of the utmost importance as we navigate life. Whether you were part of our classes that include pottery, Mah Jongg, Hebrew, Meditation & Ayurveda workshops with Michael Green, or joining us on tours at Hanna Park, The Ritz Theatre & Museum, Walter Jones Historical Park, Olive Amelia, the Brumos Collection and so much more - the opportunity for growth and knowledge is all around us at the JCA.



This year we hosted the Jacksonville Jewish Cultural Arts Festival for three weeks in November throughout the city. With Joel Chasnoff & Benji Lovitt at The Ritz Theatre & Museum bringing levity

through comedy, Sara Goodman Confino talking about her grandmother and the inspiration for stories at Happy Brew, and the Honoring Israel Film series at the WJCT Soundstage, we were reminded of how important the work we do is, and why we share Jewish culture throughout our city.

Together Against Hate, presented in partnership with the YMCA, finished its second year of programming in February 2025. The speaker series provided another powerful look at topics this year. We learned more about Understanding and Embracing Immigrants and Refugees, Civil Discourse, the Military Community and Unique Barriers and Challenges, and Jew-hatred, and we gave the community an opportunity to ask questions and have discussion in the safe spaces we created.

We were joined by the U.S. Attorney's Office to learn about how hate crimes are identified, reported, and what we can do as neighbors to prevent them. We also added a layer to our Together Against Hate series this year with Curious Conversations. Taking place at local public libraries throughout Jacksonville with coffee and a bagel, we sat together for intimate dialogue and experienced rich eye-opening moments. Finally, we wrapped up the series with the second Racing Against Hate 5k Run/Walk in February. With a new course this year, participants had an added challenge of crossing over the Acosta Bridge not once, but twice! It was really a moment of pride seeing everyone together, Racing Against Hate.



Our Berman Family JCA Concert Series, was full of delightful sounds and WOW moments. Every year it is a joy to share the talents of three young musicians with our community whose repertoire and bios could impress even the most sophisticated audience member.. This year, Oliver Neubauer, violin, who was accompanied by Zhu Wang on piano, set the tone for the season. Australian brothers, Ziggy & Miles, were a true delight and created a harmonious sound during their performance. Our 2025 Berman Family JCA Concert Series closed with a standing ovation performance for Chaeyoung Park on piano.

In April, The Spice Detective, Chef Yaniv Cohen, gave us a *Taste of Israel* with his brilliant recipes and extensive knowledge of spices.



This event was truly an immersive taste of all the vibrant flavors Israel is known for having in its arsenal. The audience had the opportunity to learn and create, while getting to sample his deconstructed

baba ghanoush, zucchini salad, and shawarma chicken. Every single person I spoke to left with a smile and a jar of seasoning mix created with Chef Cohen. Proudly, this program was supported by a *Mit-habrim* grant from the Israel Engagement Fund: A JCC Association of North America Program Accelerator in partnership with the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs in Israel.

To wrap up April, the J Institute headed to Charleston for four days to enjoy some southern charm, history, art, food, and exploration with the Globetrotters of the J. What a delightful way to wrap up the month, and further deepen the bonds and grow the relationships made over the years!

Whether at the JCA, somewhere learning together in Jacksonville, or traveling for fun we are truly blessed with the opportunity to learn and grow together. I cannot wait for more in the future! If you ever have any questions about our J Institute programs and opportunities, please email me at heather.terrill@jcjax.org.



Seders and Sufganiyot: An Incredible Year in Jewish Education!

By Rachel Sandler, J Institute Assistant Director, Jewish Education

In reflecting on the last year of our Jewish programs for kids, adults, and families, I am overwhelmed knowing how much we learned together through our unique programs focused on Jewish Education.

Every year, one of the highlights of my week is teaching Hebrew to the Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten classes in our Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten. It always amazes me to see how much the children remember, especially Mrs. Ledesma's Kindergarten class who learned the Hebrew *alefbet*, alphabet, this year.

Children were not the only ones learning Hebrew in our JCA, adults took the opportunity too. Our Hebrew courses for adults continued and we added a Beginning Conversational Hebrew class taught by Penina Weltman. Behind the scenes, I also enjoyed teaching the staff about Judaism. Through professional development for the teachers in our Early Childhood department, we played games and participated in a *Tu B'Shevat* seder to honor the New Year of the Trees. The JCA staff also joined me for a model Passover seder, to learn about the holiday and the symbolic foods on the seder plate.

Mah Jongg classes returned this fall by popular demand! All our players enjoyed their time together and that prompted us to start another program in our community – Open Game Play. The gaming time, which is free and open to the entire community, started in the winter and will continue every Thursday. So far, a steady crowd of members join us to play Mah Jongg, Bridge, and/or Rummikub.

We partnered with Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center, Sharsheret, Hadassah, Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida, and PJ Library for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. Together we provided an informative and educational conversation about breast health, and we made cancer care kits for local patients undergoing treatment.

As the winter set in, we had our sights set on *Chanukkah* and as is tradition at the JCA – it was a busy time this year! *Chanukkah* traditions continued as families painted their own *menorah* for the festival of lights this year and we were once again amazed by the creativity of our community in our annual Menorah Making Contest. This year the *menorot*, the plural of *menorah*, were crocheted, made from nuts and bolts, Legos, and even leaves and twigs. Our annual Chanukkah Extravaganza rounded out the season of events, and as always was full of crafts, games, latkes, *sufganiyot* - jelly doughnuts, and plenty of fun for our entire community!



In collaboration with our JCamp and Youth Services as well as the J Experience team, we began Teen Mitzvah Projects Around Town. It is fulfilling to see the enthusiastic teens in our community participating in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. This fall the teens joined us for Kosher Supermarket Sweep where they received a list of food to buy then donated all of it to The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS). In the winter, we took the teens clothes shopping and donated all of the items to the Fanny Landwirth Clothes Closet at The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services. The teens in our community also helped our military this spring by making keychains and decorating pillows to send to American soldiers and the Israel Defense Forces.

Our Israeli Community Shaliach Oren Pery, along with Justin Sakofs, helped lead our discussions about the book, *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Jew*, by Emmanuel Acho and Noa Tishby in March. Including a diverse group of people with interesting questions and conversations, these programs offer a different way to talk about topics that are impacting our community. I hope you will keep your eyes out for more programs that allow an open and genuine dialogue.

As with every year, our amazing partnerships with the Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida, PJ Library, and our local synagogues allow us to host Jewish family programs throughout Northeast Florida. We joined as a community to learn about bees and honey for *Rosh Hashanah*, we made hamantaschen for *Purim*, and participated in a Fire Safety Shabbat for *Lag B'Omer*.

Our Monthly Member Mitzvot made a big difference in our community once again. As part of the Together Against Hate: Promoting Unity in Our Community series, we collected personal hygiene products for the First Coast YMCA New American Welcome Center, we collected toys, school supplies, and nonperishable food items for The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services and its Max Block Food Pantry, we delivered *mishloach manot* bags to residents at River Garden Senior Services, popped aluminum can tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities in Jacksonville, gathered food and treats for K9s for Warriors, and made cards and collected food items to send to the First Coast Blue Star Mothers.

From Jewish Yoga, a Tu B'Shevat Seder and Wine Tasting Havdalah, a Model Matzah Bakery, to hosting a Jewish singles mixer at the Mudville Music Room – our year in Jewish Education was filled with so much fun - Todah Rabah – Thank you for making this year so memorable! If you ever have questions about our educational programs please email me at rachel.sandler@jcjax.org.



Here, There, and Everywhere!

By Faye Hedrick, J Experience Coordinator

J Experience officially crossed the one-year mark, so this Year in Review now carries even more meaning, and a better outlook on what this programming means to our growing community.

Our remarkable J Experience programs made guest appearances here, there, and everywhere over the past year. Our stops took the JCA to the sunny beaches of Florida, coffeehouses across town, and a variety of new spaces to share more of what we do on our campus with YOU! Every J Experience has the mission to increase awareness around the JCA's brand, expanding the reach to our wonderful programming.



With opportunities centered around Jewish heritage, current books through a Jewish lens, sound bowl meditation, yoga, overall wellness, and so much more, I am always on the lookout for new programs to connect our community. I am excited to continue planning in an effort to expand our J Experience's reach and presence.

On Wed, Jun 25, we head back under the stars in the Bryan-Gooding Planetarium at MOSH for our final Full Moon Rosh Chodesh Yoga session. Practicing yoga during a full moon provides an opportunity to refresh, rejuvenate, and release built up tension and stress. During the session, one of our expert JCA yogis will help guide us through the upcoming Hebrew calendar month, promoting a feeling of grounding and fulfillment.



J Experiences are guaranteed to be *Ah bruch uf dein kup!* A blessing on your head! Be on the lookout for more information and make plans to join us all over the First Coast for day trips, lunch bunches, and meet-ups.

Call your favorite *bubbelah*, someone you love, and invite them to join you for our next Joys of Yiddish in the fall, or call your favorite teen to let them know about the next Volunteer Teen Mitzvah Day.

Email me, faye.hedrick@jcjax.org, with any of your thoughts or questions, or where our JCA can head your way in the future. You will see our JCA's presence anywhere from a party shop to a park. For more information about upcoming programs, to register or to purchase tickets, please visit jcjax.org.





Fostering Culture, Innovation, and Creativity

By Natalia Fisher, Early Childhood Director

It fills me with pride to share more about the remarkable year of growth we experienced in our Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten. In both culture and community, there were many milestones that reflect our commitment to professional development, to our partnerships with families, and to fostering a culture of innovation, creativity, and dialogue with our children.

For the first time, I traveled with a group of teachers to Italy for a weeklong study cohort in Reggio Emilia. A village that has perfected an inspiring approach to learning since it began in the mid-nineteenth century, the journey to Italy was a great success in learning and inspiring our teachers to bring the Reggio Emilia philosophy back to Jacksonville. I am thrilled to see renewed enthusiasm and inspiration among all our teachers as we reflect on the experiences in Italy with each other and the families who come here. We learned this year that by investing in our teachers' professional development we are nurturing the most important people in our school - the children.

Among the many traditions we keep, sharing our educational values with the greater community in Jacksonville ranks high on our list. This year, we welcomed colleagues from the Florida Association for the Education of Young Children - FLAEYC, the Jewish Educational Alliance in Savannah, Georgia, and The Preschool at the University of North Florida, to learn about our practices and how our teachers infuse Reggio Emilia values in their classrooms. By collaborating with professionals in the early education field, exchanging ideas, and learning from each other - we are enhancing the educational experience for all children in our community.

Our Family Community Council that began last year saw significant growth this school year. The partnership between parents and educators in our school continues to develop as the Family Community Council becomes a stronger presence at our JCA and provides a platform for parents to actively

contribute to the educational experience of their children. I would be remiss not to mention how grateful we are to Lior Spring. A fantastic mother and leader in our community, Lior graciously led the Family Community Council with her passion for our school. We are continually grateful for Lior's time and contributions to the Family Community Council. Since the council began, parents are volunteering more in our classrooms, organizing events outside of the classroom and sharing their hobbies with children - some even linger in the school library to further connect with their children and the other families.

While this sense of unity continues to develop between our educators, parents, and students, as administrators we already see a tangible difference in our school's atmosphere. The culture of participation has become stronger, and we are excited to see it continue to grow. Thanks to a generous donation from Emily Gonzales, with the support of Amanda McKnight, the students in our classrooms watched a hydroponic garden tower grow this year. Cultivated by the Kindergarten students, the garden became a symbol of innovation and wonder! It is incredible to see the children planting, planning, and eager to harvest their crops from the hydroponic garden.

While we experienced changes this year with ongoing renovations, rather than seeing construction as a disruption our school embraced it as an opportunity. It is inspiring to hear the children processing the change as they find ways to bring beauty into the reality of renovations. They reflect and create using their imagination - with new passageways and giant machines, our children are turning the challenges of construction into moments of creativity and reflection. Their actions are a testament to their resilience and watching them deepens our respect and love at these stages of childhood.

Looking back on all that we have accomplished, it is important to acknowledge that these successes are not just the result of individual efforts, but the effort of our entire school community. We watched growth happen in every aspect of our school, from professional development to parent engagement and student learning. Our accomplishments are result of what happens when we come together with a shared vision and a commitment to supporting each other - it is an honor to see.

If you have questions about our Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten, email ganyeladim@jcajax.org to schedule a tour and learn more about all we do to nurture and enrich children.





We Are Soaring!

Neal Buchholz, JCamp and Youth Services Director

I am excited to share the unbelievable strides our team took in the last 12 months and proud to be part of an incredibly bright future at the JCA. From uprooting our department for construction to restructuring responsibilities and growing the award-winning programs our JCA is known for, our team stretched our wings with every challenge and soared!

This year our JCA's Youth Services team became the JCamp and Youth Services Department and welcomed me, as the leader. Evan McInnis remains an incredible Associate Director, inspiring children who come here at every turn.

The positive changes and growth you see on our team also allows us to handle every JCamp program, JCAtion Day, Winter and Spring JCamp, and our traditional After School and Teen Connection programs.



Although our Youth Services wing on campus is still under construction, nothing seems to slow us down. Thanks to a generous grant from Johnson & Johnson® for S.T.E.M. programming, we purchased microscopes, chemistry kits, programmable robots, a 3D printer, and snap circuits for electrical engineering that allow the children who come here to explore the wonders of science, technology, and engineering.

With our new tech on campus, we also started new enrichment classes this year. Crack the Code taught your kids just that, how to crack codes, solve puzzles, and think critically. Tomorrow's Technology was so fun for all of us! Using 3D printers, robotics and other gadgets, we brought S.T.E.M. to the JCA and the children loved it.

Tikkun Olam! We worked to repair the world this year. Our continuation of our Monthly Mitzvah program in collaboration with our J Experience and J Institute departments was made possible by the National Jewish Day of Service Grant.

During our first program, teens worked together to purchase clothing and donated the apparel to the Fanny Landwirth Clothes Closet at The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services. We also created care packages and goods for military members serving overseas during our Teen Mitzvah Project Around Town. It was rewarding to be together and to watch the next generation work toward a better tomorrow during these programs.

For those of you who already know how awesome it is for children at the JCA, I am sure we will see you at JCamp. Parents and guardians can find more details about JCamp and the programs we have planned this summer on our website, jcjax.org/jcamp.

If your children have not experienced our award-winning JCamp programs, After School, Teen Connection, and unique enrichment classes, please do not hesitate to email me at neal.buchholz@jcjax.org. I love sharing more about our safe and friendly environment, the JCA is the perfect place for your children to grow, learn, and thrive!



Bravo, What A Year!

By Shelly Higgins Hughes, Theatre Director

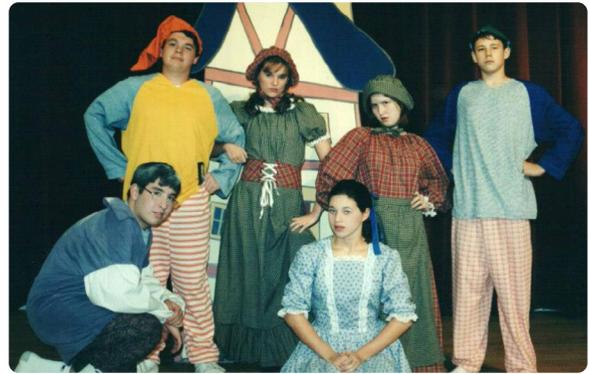
The JCA Theatre Department had another record-breaking year with our Magic Wardrobe series, JCA Theatre of Youth programs and Zoe's World classes! Thanks to an extremely generous grant from VyStar Credit Union, we have the privilege of introducing thousands of young people to the magical world of theatre in the past year.

For some of the children who come through our doors, it is their first time experiencing live theatre. Our hope is to captivate their minds and imaginations and be the spark that ignites an interest in the performing arts and divergent thinking that they carry throughout their lives.

Our JCA Theatre of Youth programs and Zoe's World enrichment classes saw record numbers in participants in the last year. With so many art programs being cut in schools, the theatre programs we offer at the JCA are even more critical for the next generation. Theatre plays an important role in a child's development by boosting confidence and self-esteem, while our classes and programs teach time management skills, collaborative skills, and patience. Being part of a theatre group also leads our children toward more engaged and creative thinking.

Unlike the realism of television or movies, theatre requires a different kind of resourcefulness and flexibility. Using creativity our children learn how to solve problems, work with little or no resources, and can look at situations or issues from different perspectives. Creativity also gives us the courage to try and fail while we find the perfect solution.

As Josh Groban once so eloquently said, "Hire a theatre kid, I don't care what your business is, it will go better if you hire a theatre kid. You need somebody that can work on a deadline, you hire a theatre kid. If you need somebody who can take over a job in a pinch and act like they've been doing it the whole time and do it on almost zero budget, you hire a theatre kid!"



From *Beauty and the Beast* circa 2000!

Do you recognize Matt Flagler and Alexandra Demetree Cohlma in the front, and Katy Bilderback Barry and Sam Fisher in the back right?

Being a theatre kid...

Gave me my voice, both literally and figuratively. Through theatre, I found great friends, exemplary mentors, and the thing I love to do best - bring stories to life through acting and song.

- Alexandra Demetree Cohlma

Was instrumental in helping me build confidence (especially in public speaking) and provided a creative outlet to try new things, take chances, and learn to become the best version of myself."

- Matt Flagler

Helped to build my self-esteem. Growing up I was very reserved and being a part of theatre, I became more outgoing and confident speaking in public. I am so happy I had theatre growing up and I love seeing the joy my child has when he is participating in our afternoon theatre classes."

- Katy Bilderback Barry

Taught me compassion. Through my participation in theatre I learned that everyone has their own unique perspective and story to tell. This has helped me go through life and interact with others with kindness, understanding and patience."

- Sam Fisher



I am so proud to have shared another year at the JCA inspiring the children who come here. With every program and production, I know we are making an incredible difference in our community!
If you have questions about our Theatre programs at the JCA, email me at shelly.hughes@jcjax.org.



Strength, Support, and Sparkle!

By Karen Cataldo, Fitness, Recreation & Wellness Director

The next time you work out in our award-winning Fitness Center, I hope you notice our new sparkle! We added brand-new treadmills and ellipticals in the last several months that are all decked out with personal televisions and cutting-edge technology.

Whether you're looking to watch your favorite show while sweating it out, or like to track your fitness activity, these machines put it all at your fingertips. Participants can create an account on the machines, keep track of their progress as well as connect to a variety of apps to make the workout more personalized and fun.

We turned up the heat in the JCA during our new Hot Yoga offering in May and participants left with their own sparkle and glow after class with our Yogi Berta Pono. Unlocking a deeper level of flexibility, strength and relaxation in the heated environment, everyone left feeling completely rejuvenated, and a little more prepared for Florida's summer sizzle!

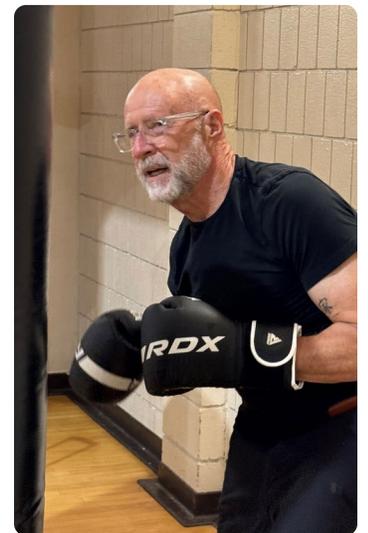


If the fancy new equipment and heated yoga has you feeling unsure about the next steps in your next fitness journey, don't sweat it! We added some fantastic personal trainers to our outstanding team to assist you this year, and they are ready to help you meet your goals.



Willie Branch, a former ROTC leader, is a new trainer on staff who brings a wealth of knowledge and specializes in challenging muscles. Willie's experience and specialties in the gym are already helping members see positive changes in their health. Another face you may recognize on the gym floor is Melanie Setzer, a long-time member. Melanie is available for support in the fitness center, and she is our new Aqua Aerobics instructor. You can join Melanie all summer long on Thursdays at 11 am or 7 pm for a fun and challenging class in the pool.

Have you noticed our Fight Fit program buzzing with energy on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings? According to the Parkinson's Foundation, about 1 million people in the United States are living with the disease that takes a physical and emotional toll on patients and their caregivers. Eiffel Gilyana, of blessed memory, brought this program to our JCA and since its inception the exercise class created its own support group to foster a deeper sense of community and a space to share experiences. The group meets on the third Wednesday of every month. Please contact me for more details or if you have any questions about Fight Fit at the JCA.



The future is bright! If you did not visit our side of the building in the last year, I hope you will make plans to improve your mind, body and spirit with us soon. Remember, any step you take is the right step toward a healthier you!

For information about personal training packages at the JCA or any of our upcoming fitness and wellness workshops, please email me at karen.cataldo@jcjax.org.



Sports at the JCA are the Best!

By Alex Minardi, Recreation Assistant Director

We celebrated so many exciting moments in our Sports and Recreation department this year that it is hard to just pick a few to mention – it was an incredible year for our JCA’s youngest athletes.

We had many returning volunteer coaches assist in our programs this year and we had even more new coaches on hand. In total, 36 coaches became the backbone of our sports leagues this year, and it was thrilling to watch them work with your children. Without our volunteer coaches, we would not be able to provide one of the best sporting leagues in Jacksonville.



For the first time this year, we incorporated a girl’s division in our soccer and basketball leagues – and it was quite an experience. Brian Sherman, Judy Henig, and Rio Robinson coached this season and each gave our budding female athletes a wonderful team experience. I am so thankful for their support and dedication to our community – these coaches are each Maccabees in their own right. As they lead the way on the field or down the court, it is obvious to see how much they mean to the children who come here.



Our fencing program grew exponentially this year thanks to the excellent work of our coaches Bill Becker and Lindsay Stapleton. On Wednesday evenings, our JCA fencers take up half of the Joe and Sophie Witten Gymnasium. Many fencers who take part in our program also compete in state, regional, and national tournaments – and in nearly every tournament, at least one, and usually more, earn top prize for their respective age group.

The newest sport in the gym, our floor hockey clinic headed by Coach Mike Lasry, took off this year. On Thursday evenings Coach Mike teaches the fundamentals of Floor Hockey to children ages 5 - 10. They have a lot of fun out on the gym floor and Mike brings a bit of Canada with him at every session - the kids love it!



As we look to the year ahead, the love, empathy, inclusivity, and compassion we provide to children in our Sports and Recreation programs will only continue. Whether in our preschool classes or youth clinics, it is a pleasure watching children grow and thrive. Thank you for allowing our JCA to be part of your children’s memories. If you want to know more about our programs please email me at alex.minardi@jcajax.org.



Swimming Success by the Numbers

By Dustin Rulien, Aquatics Director

Our pools are where people of all ages and walks of life can come to improve their mind, body, and spirit. Even with construction in different corners of the JCA changing our routes across campus, our swimmers both young and experienced continued to find their way to the water.

In the last 12 months, 419 adults swam more than 8,700 times in our pools - and that number doesn't include folks who forgot to reserve their lanes. Of course, swimming is not just limited to adults; learning to swim is a vital life skill for people of all ages. Our Water Safety Instructors taught 3,722 swimming lessons to 456 participants, ranging in age from 6 months to 75 years old, since June 2024 and we are incredibly proud of that.

With every action there is a reaction, which in this case means as more children graduated from our Learn to Swim program, the Makos Swim Team grew! Sixty-six children participated in our school year swim team, and 125 swimmers competed on the summer team in 2024. Looking back at the team photo - we barely fit in the frame; our team was 25% bigger than ever before and the Makos really took to the water last summer!

JCA swimmers won countless ribbons and medals, broke many team records, and took fourth place last summer in our city-wide league. Many of our swimmers went on to the JCC Maccabi Games® in August 2024 and dominated the competition. Not only did our team perform well, three of our swimmers received invitations to the international Maccabi Games, and one will represent the JCA and Jacksonville at the Maccabi Games in Israel this summer.

Swimming isn't just about competition. As a Licensed Training Provider for the American Red Cross, we have a strong commitment to safety in and around water. We certified 24 new lifeguards, seven new Water Safety Instructors (WSI), and taught 109 people who received CPR certifications in the last year.

Thanks to the generosity of the Stephen and Jackie Goldman Family - CPR Save-A-Life Fund, these classes are now offered at no cost to our valued JCA members and at a discounted price of \$60 for guests. Additionally, the JCA partners with The Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida to teach free swim lessons for children who would not otherwise have access to learn. The grant covered the cost of five children's swim lessons, but thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to teach water safety and swimming skills to 18 kids and the experience was extremely rewarding!

All of these accolades and numbers wouldn't be possible without our fantastic Aquatics team. This year, our lifeguards provided a safe environment to families who come here for 9,337 hours, our water safety instructors taught for 1,862 hours, and our swim team coaches perfected strokes with their students for 1,128 hours.

It isn't all just swimming laps and staying in your lane at our pools. Our safe environment with experienced lifeguards and an incredible team of leaders allows us to have more fun! In the last year, we hosted around 400 summer camp children and taught swimming lessons nearly every weekday, we organized and hosted three swim meets for the River City Swim League, served 2,400+ hot dogs and countless snow cones at poolside events, and made priceless friendships - all while burning through 3,000 gallons of chlorine.



I hope to see you at the pool this summer. If you ever have any questions about our facility or what is available to help you be safer in the water, please email me at dustin.rulien@jcjax.org. Do not forget to reserve your swim lanes on the My J app.





SERVING UP WINS SINCE DAY ONE

By Lucas Ramos Campos, Tennis Pro

What a wonderful year we had at our tennis courts! The JCA tennis community keeps growing, and it is exciting to see our members having fun during the different programs that we offer throughout the year. Our tennis clinics and classes were full of energy and joy, which I do not see slowing down any time soon. As a coach, it is very rewarding to see players getting better each week and continuing to learn.

Players who were new to the game had the opportunity to develop their skills during our Tennis 101 clinics. Cardio Tennis continues to be one of our most popular clinics and a great way to start your day, providing full body exercise in an energetic environment. JCA young tennis players also had a great season, with fun clinics and private lessons. Pee Wee and Junior Quick Start clinics saw many new participants, which is encouraging and exciting when we see new talent take on this sport. Our mixer events keep filling the courts with excitement and great tennis on specific Thursdays each month. It's awesome to see our members connecting with each other and having a great time playing the game that we love.

As we all know, competition is a big part of tennis, and our JCA teams all progressed on our HarTru clay courts this year. The ladies from the A, B and C teams, as well as the Working Women's B1 and the Men's B2 had a great season, full of improvement, competitiveness, and learning experiences.

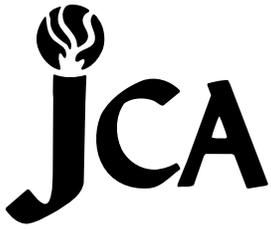
Every player's commitment and hard work during our clinics keep translating to matches and it showed during the 24-25 season. Special thank you to our Captains Susan Chiang,

Jyothi Berman, Patti Price, Tina Biggers, and Jarred Shaw, for their commitment and help during the season. I would also like to thank Coach Morrill Hay who is a pleasure to work with. Coach Morrill's experience and love for the game continues to add value to the growth of our tennis community.

The biggest news and addition to our racquet sports at the JCA was the construction of four Pickleball courts. Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the country, and our new courts attracted a lot of new and experienced players. We now offer pickleball lessons and clinics, so please stay tuned for even more opportunities to play. Pickleball court reservations can be made on the My J app.

If you are interested in joining our tennis program or picking up a pickleball paddle, please send me an email at lucas.ramoscampos@jcajax.org. We have opportunities for all ages and skill levels.





David A. Stein
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*on the Ed Parker Jewish
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Affiliated with the Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida and the Jewish Community Centers of North America.



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) strengthens Jewish life, serves as a common meeting ground and enhances the quality of life of the entire community.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to provide the place in the tradition of our heritage where all people come together throughout their lives to enhance body, mind and spirit, in an environment of fun, harmony and friendship.

After School & Teen Connection

Mon - Fri | 2:30 - 6 pm

Have your children end their day at the JCA. After School (grades K - 5) and Teen Connection (grades 6 - 8) programs nurture and encourage children at all ages.

Through a variety of activities and a positive environment children socialize, exercise, and thrive in our safe environment after school.

For availability and to register for the 2025-26 school year, call (904) 730-2100 ext. 228.

Scan or visit
bit.ly/JCA-AfterSchool
 to learn more!



Free transportation from select schools with minimum enrollment.