



# ALLIANCE NEWS



## MAKING HISTORY Together Against Hate


**Adam Chaskin**

Shalom Friends,

The sun is shining across Northeast Florida, flowers are in full bloom, and spring has sprung throughout our beautiful River City. For Jewish people around the world, this time of year begins our preparations for Passover and for many of us, it is an important time to refresh and restart in celebration of the new season.

As we approach the celebration of Passover, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and reflection. Passover is not just a historical event we commemorate; it is a timeless symbol of resilience, freedom, and hope. Today, more than ever, its significance resonates profoundly with the challenges and triumphs of our lives.

The Passover season reminds us of the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. The story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt teaches us that even in the darkest of times, there is a path to liberation. It is a reminder that no barrier is insurmountable and that the human spirit can overcome great obstacles. Moreover, Passover underscores the importance of community and unity. Just as the Israelites came together to support each other during their journey to freedom, we too must stand united as a community.

Our strength lies in our solidarity, compassion, and support for one another and is why our JCA, in partnership with the First Coast YMCA, created the Together Against Hate: Promoting Unity in Our Community series. Through six programs including the first-ever Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk, we raised awareness about the issues facing diverse populations in our area. Unfortunately, the problems in Jacksonville are far greater than can be addressed in a short time and we continue to see a crucial need for this program. We have more work to do and are hopeful that through education, we can break down the barriers that cause hate and bias. Please turn to page 4 to read more reflections from Heather Terrill. On behalf of the entire Together Against Hate team, we are pleased to share that planning for our next round of speaker events and the second annual Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk is already underway!

This season, as we gather with our loved ones to celebrate, let us also take a moment to reflect on the blessings in our lives. Let us be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy and mindful of those who are still seeking liberation from oppression and injustice. We are so proud that our JCA is the place people visit to enhance body, mind and spirit in our environment of fun, harmony and friendship. I could not be more excited to lead this outstanding organization and grow with all of you. As you read through the pages of this Alliance News, I hope you are inspired to join us to find joy, renewal, and inspiration for your entire family this season.

*Chag Pesach Sameach* - Wishing you a happy and meaningful Passover season,



Adam Chaskin  
CEO

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### JCA BUILDING HOURS

Sun.....	8 am - 6 pm	Fri.....	5:30 am - 5 pm
Mon - Thu.....	5:30 am - 9 pm	Sat.....	1 - 6 pm

### Kid Kare (babysitting) - (904) 730-2100 ext. 325

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 is offered by reservation system via the My J app.
- Kid Kare service is for a maximum of 90 mins.
- Visit [bit.ly/JCAKidKare](https://bit.ly/JCAKidKare) for Kid Kare policies and to download My J.

**In memory of...**

**DALE GOSA**  
by Roz and Mark Abramson

**For a speedy recovery...**

**DANI SHER**  
by Philip and Karen Adler

**In honor of...**

**THE WEISMAN AND STEIN WEDDING**  
by Rochelle and David Stoddard

**LINDA RUBENS**  
by Helen Werking

**THE BIRTH OF DRIES ALLAN VAN SCHAIK**  
by The Miller Families

Faye Hedrick | J Experience Coordinator | (904) 730-2100 ext. 247 | **J EXPERIENCE** 



**Location, Location, Location!**

By Faye Hedrick, J Experience Coordinator

If that weren't such a schlep, I'd be there! The JCA hears you loud and clear. We are responding with J Experience, our new way of bringing some of what we offer to you!

Mark your calendars for Sunday, April 7, starting at 4 pm for Passover at the Pond, a family-friendly Pesach program. Family members from every generation are invited to join us for a scavenger hunt, crafts, and a Jewish learning opportunity at Julington Plantation Park.

Speaking of St. Johns County, our JCA is offering our first-ever off-site J-Cation Day for children in grades K - 8 at Beth El the Beaches Synagogue on Friday, April 19. As with every J-Cation Day at the JCA, children who join us at Beth El will explore, create, learn, and have FUN while they participate in a variety of sports and STEAM throughout the day. Leave your worries at the door as your child enters a safe, nurturing environment supervised by our responsible and energetic staff from the JCA.

Save these dates; we are bringing the JCA your way!



**Yiddish by the Sea**

Wed, Apr 3 | 11 am  
Tue, May 21 | 11 am  
Ponte Vedra Library  
101 Library Blvd, Ponte Vedra Beach  
Free to the community

**Family Mezuzah Making**

Fri, Apr 5 | 5:30 pm  
Beth El The Beaches Synagogue  
288 Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach  
Free to the community

**Passover at the Pond**

Sun, Apr 7 | 4 pm  
Julington Plantation Park  
875 Davis Pond Boulevard, St. Johns  
Free to the community

**J-Cation in Ponte Vedra**

Grades K - 8  
Fri, Apr 19 | 9 am - 4 pm  
Beth El The Beaches Synagogue  
288 Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach  
\$60 | Valued member \$40

**Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Shmuli Novack**

Tue, Jun 4 | 12 pm  
Ahava Cafe, 11271 Alumni Way, Jacksonville

**Stroller Fit at the Beaches**

Birth - 3 yrs  
Sun | 10 am  
Jun 9 and Aug 18 | Beth El The Beaches Synagogue  
288 Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach  
Free to the community

**Full Moon Yoga for Tu B'Av**

Sun, Aug 18 | 7 pm  
Location TBD  
Free to the community



Scan the QR code to register for any of our upcoming J Experiences!

Location information and updates about J Experience classes will be published on [jcjax.org](http://jcjax.org). If you have questions or have an idea about how the JCA could come your way, send me an email at [faye.hedrick@jcjax.org](mailto:faye.hedrick@jcjax.org).



## MAKING HISTORY Together Against Hate

By Heather Terrill, J Institute Director

Here I am, celebrating my eighth year at the JCA. Every year I have the pleasure of working with an amazing team and creating programming for our community. Each year I think to myself, how in the world are we going to do better or push further because what we accomplished was such a success? Every single year I am in awe watching all the planning for these events unfold and come to life. I can say that the Racing Against Hate event topped my list!

Wow! I am absolutely blown away by the amazing support of our JCA team and our members. February 25, 2024, marked the final event of the inaugural Together Against Hate series - and what a way to wrap it up!

When we set out to put our first-ever Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk together, we had what we thought was a healthy goal of 300 people. The Together Against Hate team all felt

that number would make the race a huge success in its first year. I'm thrilled to share that we ended up with 582 participants for our first race, and of those registered, 460 participants completed the 5K.

I cannot thank all of you enough for helping make our first Racing Against Hate event a success. It was wonderful to hear the enthusiasm that buzzed through everyone, and the pride displayed in being a part of the event.

Our race, presented by the JCA and First Coast YMCA, was truly a visual representation of what is possible when we come together. This little idea that two local CEOs, our JCA's Adam Chaskin and the First Coast YMCA's Eric Mann, has grown into a true partnership between the JCA and the YMCA. I am so excited to start working with the team to plan our 2024-25 Together Against Hate series and Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk. To all of you who support our vision, thank you. We look forward to seeing you out there next year!!!



We gathered in love, peace, and friendship at the first-ever Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk. On race day, many of us honored our beloved Fitness and Wellness Director Eiffel Gilyana by wearing our purple Eiffel Strong shirts. Some racers even wore sardine socks as a tribute to Eiffel's favorite food.



## Shaping the Future

**By Natalia Fisher, Early Childhood Director**

Inside our Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten, we desire to continually elevate knowledge among all children and adults in our community. As a school, we are truly committed to an ethic of excellence. Achieving this through our educator book club and planning meetings, we are engaged in a process of design thinking known as *progettazione*. Defined as planning and designing teaching and learning activities, educational environments, and opportunities without applying predefined curricula, *progettazione* helps us shape our culture of inquiry, research, belonging, and quality.



Additionally, by using lab classrooms in our school, our teachers can collaborate and learn from each other as they continue their professional development. Through this work, we improve school readiness, test scores, and all the basic skills that are highly valued in our society. To support the development of an investigative attitude towards teaching, learning and life, we are focusing on building this practice with our teachers so that they can create this culture within their classrooms.

Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten values teacher, parent and child participation, as defined by Reggio Emilia educators. Annalisa Rabotti, a pedagoga in the Pedagogical Coordinating team of the municipality of Reggio Emilia believes, “the value and the strategy that defines how the children, the educators, and the parents are stakeholders in the educational project; it is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived day by day in the encounter with others and in the interpersonal relationships. This gives value to and makes use of the hundred languages of children and

of human beings, viewed as a plurality of points of view and of cultures; it requires and fosters forms of cultural mediation and develops in a multiplicity of occasions and initiatives for constructing dialogue and the sense of belonging to a community. Participation generates and nurtures the feelings and culture of solidarity, responsibility, and inclusion; it produces change and new cultures that contend with the dimension of the contemporary world and globalization.”

Intertwined, schools and educators are stronger together. With the value of participation as a driving force for our education project - we are also developing pedagogical relationships with other schools that are invested in analyzing and studying constructivism – specifically the experiences and philosophies of Reggio Emilia.

UNF is currently our strongest partner. Not only do we welcome their interns and early childhood classes to visit us at the JCA, but we also partner with the UNF early childhood school. Additionally, we collaborate on creating professional development for our teachers and mentorships between our network of educators at the JCA and at UNF. As we continue to bring educators and administrators from various schools in and around our community together to engage in and reflect on current practices - we are all developing ideas for positive change – and that work is already shaping a bright future for our children.

If you have questions about our approach to learning or are a parent who wants to be more involved, please email me at [natalia.fisher@jcajax.org](mailto:natalia.fisher@jcajax.org) to schedule a time to meet.



**Join our team and be part of the excellence we offer families at Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten, we are hiring lead teachers and assistant teachers. Scan here to apply today.**



**Accredited by NAEYC  
National Association of Education  
of Young Children**

Every early childhood learning experience at the JCA is hands-on and formulated to help children reach their full potential.

**Please visit [jcajax.org/early-childhood/](http://jcajax.org/early-childhood/)**

to learn more about the unique learning opportunities we have available and how your children can become students at Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten.



# ALUMNI CORNER

By Theresa Levy, Alumni Coordinator

## Family Inspired by a Strong Start in Gan

By Theresa Levy, Alumni Coordinator

When the JCA building renovations are complete, there will be a dedicated lounge for educators in Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten. The heartwarming story behind how, why and who the lounge will be named for started more than three decades ago when Helen Rowan and Paul Halloran moved to our area.

When they came to the JCA, Helen and Paul enrolled their daughter Diana in our school when she was two years old. The family grew and when it was time, their other children, Sean and Margaux, joined us at Michele Block Gan Yeladim preschool too. All three experienced their 3 to 4-year-old Teddy Bear program in Deanna Lissner's class. In addition to being a long-time teacher, Deanna was instrumental in founding our school 50 years ago.



"We met Deanna when Diana was at a very formative stage of her development. Deanna's warmth, professionalism, and resourcefulness helped us to channel Diana's energy and encourage her interests - even at such a young age. No question that Deanna helped us to be better parents, and we were (and are) grateful for the advice and encouragement she gave to us," remembers Helen. "Deanna's ability to listen, teach, and encourage students also influenced Sean and Margaux. We have many wonderful memories from our children's time in her classroom. Deanna profoundly impacted our family, and it was an easy decision to name the new lounge in her honor."

Even though their children are grown, Helen and Paul continue to enjoy their decades-long JCA membership by taking regular group fitness classes and working out with our incredible personal trainers. In fact, staying in shape at the JCA is a family tradition; any time Helen and Paul's children are in town, they come for a workout too.

### So, what are Helen and Paul's Gan grads doing now?

Diana is in her fourth and final year of her Emergency Medicine residency at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago. When she finishes at the end of June, Diana will then move to Indianapolis to complete a one-year fellowship in palliative care at the University of Indiana. Diana recently announced her engagement to fellow ER resident Dr. Rafael Lima. *Mazel Tov!*





**We have many wonderful memories from our children's time in her classroom. Deanna profoundly impacted our family, and it was an easy decision to name the new lounge in her honor.**



Sean graduates in June with his medical degree from Dartmouth Geisel Medical School, and an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. Sean will do his residency in Internal Medicine at Northwestern Medical Center in Chicago and specialize in Interventional Cardiology or Oncology. *Mazel Tov!*

Margaux graduated from Parsons School of Design in 2023 with her bachelor's in fine arts and now lives in London. Next on Margaux's list of achievements is earning her master's degree in sculpture at the Royal College of Arts in London. While much of her art practice focuses on oil painting, Margaux loves both practices and often paints at home after doing sculpture work in her school studio. *Mazel Tov!*

Whether healing bodies medically, souls artistically, or inspiring others with their incredible gifts - our future is bright at the JCA thanks to the generosity of Helen, Paul, Diana, Sean, and Margaux.



If you are a first or second-generation Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten graduate, I would love to hear from you! Please share your contact information along with stories and photos from attending preschool and kindergarten at the JCA with me by emailing, [theresa.levy@jcajax.org](mailto:theresa.levy@jcajax.org). **Todah Rabah!**

## Let me tell you a story...

**By Kendall Sisisky Valliere, Development Director**

Picture it: a sunny Friday morning, the children in Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten are full of excitement, joy and laughter. Students enter their classrooms, begin hanging up backpacks, and greet their friends and teachers. Then, one by one, each child places a rolled-up bill or a few coins in the classroom *tzedakah* box. *Tzedakah*, translated to mean justice or righteousness, is the responsibility of all Jewish people to help those in need, through acts of service, tangible goods, or financial donations.



This act, fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, instills a valuable lesson in young children, teaching them to share their money as they foster compassion and empathy while helping others. During our annual *Grandfriend's Shabbat* celebration, we further exemplified and cultivated this culture of giving when our *Grandfriends* share in the Jewish lens of *k'dusha* or intentionality of helping others. Please note, *Grandfriend* isn't a real word; it is one we created to represent all the people who help the children in our school learn and grow.

Through acts of giving, echoing the timeless tradition of *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation, we are collectively passing on a philanthropic legacy to our children. When we give at Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten, we can reflect on a broader commitment to generosity and illustrate to the next generation just how our collective efforts can contribute to a culture of philanthropy and positive change.



I invite you to share in the *mitzvah* of giving by using our virtual *tzedakah* box.



**Scan here to make a gift to our JCA**



PAC Presents

# PETER PAN



**By Shelly Higgins Hughes, Theatre Director**

Peter Pan is one of my favorite stories. Although it presents itself as a whimsical tale of a boy who refuses to grow up and leads his band of rag-tag lost kids on countless adventures - there are many lessons to be learned. The story encourages and inspires audience members to be authentic and unapologetically themselves by the time they leave the theatre.

First, the power of storytelling! Telling stories is one of the most powerful ways people must influence, teach, and inspire. Then, there is the power of curiosity and imagination. Children are filled with curiosity and imagination; however, as they get older and begin to "grow up" these very important gifts are sometimes squashed. Peter Pan teaches us that you are never too old to find the magic in your imagination.

There are also the people who need to be taught that sometimes you must embrace your inner pirate! Ask questions, break a rule, or take a chance - and don't forget about adventure. Whether you are young, old, or in your prime, there is always an opportunity to explore, discover, and experience adventures. All it takes is "faith and trust and a little bit of pixie dust."

## Cast:

Harry Aaronson ✦ Anya Anderson ✦ Nova Anderson ✦ Zohar Arad ✦ Ella Arnold ✦ Noah Arnold ✦ Addy Azevedo  
 Anastasia Beltz ✦ Stella Bides ✦ Shelly Cohen ✦ Charlie Cohlmi ✦ Sophie Cohlmi ✦ Max Csar ✦ Amelia Davis  
 Abby Dean ✦ Finn Dean ✦ Olivia Dillon ✦ Molly Draper ✦ Cassidy Dunn ✦ Annabel Fernandez ✦ Julia Frank  
 Immy Green ✦ Neshama Laya Gross ✦ Audrey Hall ✦ Cooper Hall ✦ Devon Hall ✦ Maggie Harrell ✦ Ellen Hedrick  
 Milly Hedrick ✦ Madeline Herbin ✦ Amelie Holstein ✦ Emma Holstein ✦ Dafna Holzer ✦ Eitan Holzer ✦ Rena Holzer  
 Eliana Horovitz ✦ Beatrice Jones ✦ Evangeline Jones ✦ Juliette Jones ✦ Rayna Kempner ✦ Charlie Kerschner  
 Sophie Kerschner ✦ Eleanor Kianian ✦ Olivia Knoll ✦ Ellie Lasseter ✦ Maya Lemay ✦ Maya Lockenbach  
 Joseph Mayer ✦ Peter Mayer ✦ Fiona McCullough-Orrv ✦ Abraham Murray ✦ Luke Murray ✦ Leona Mychka  
 Leora Neihaus ✦ Ava Owen ✦ Miriam Pactor ✦ Oliver Preckajlo ✦ Olivia Price ✦ Eliana Raffol ✦ Pavel Ratchev  
 Shelby Rauchwarger ✦ Charlotte Russell ✦ Andrew Saltz ✦ Henry Smith ✦ Adaline Sowada ✦ Saige Sowada  
 Emma Stanley ✦ Olivia Stanley ✦ Desmond Taylor ✦ Donovan Taylor ✦ Sicily Thames ✦ William Thompson  
 Drew Torres ✦ Hannah Trest ✦ Zach Trest ✦ Sarah Tyson ✦ Victoria Wall ✦ Brenna Walter  
 Levi Welch ✦ Tali Werner ✦ Eloise Whitkop ✦ Veda Wray ✦ Clara Zeno ✦ Martin Zeno

**Show Dates:** May 12 | 1 and 4 pm ✦ May 19 | 1 and 4 pm



## Family Mezuzah Making – Again!

By Rachel Sandler, J Institute Assistant Director, Jewish Education

When you walk into the JCA and around our campus, you might notice a small decorative case called a *mezuzah* inside many doorposts. It is customary for Jewish people to put a *mezuzah* by the front door of their homes, as well as to fix one to the righthand side of doorways throughout the home in the top third of each door frame, except for the bathrooms.

Inside the *mezuzah* case are two paragraphs from the Torah that are written on a special piece of parchment paper by a *sofer* or scribe. The first paragraph of the paper is the *Shema* which is the prayer that expresses the belief in one G-d. The second paragraph is about observing the *mitzvot* (the commandments) in the Torah, studying Judaism, and includes putting up a *mezuzah*. For this, some people touch the *mezuzah* and then kiss their hand when they walk by and think, 'I want this to be a place where even G-d will feel at home.'

Our JCA partnered with PJ Library and the Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida for a family *mezuzah*-making program hosted by Etz Chaim Synagogue to kick off 2024 - and I am thrilled to announce we are going to do it again!

During the program in January, Rabbi Aharon Yosef Green from Etz Chaim explained the *mezuzah* to our group and PJ Library shared the book, *A Mezuzah on the Door*, a story about a boy who moved to a new house and got to put up a *mezuzah*. Then, we watched a short clip from *Shalom Sesame* to hear how a *sofer*, writes the scroll that goes inside the *mezuzah*. After, every child pretended to be a

*sofer* and wrote with a feather quill on play parchment paper. To close our *mezuzah* celebration, families decorated a wooden or plastic *mezuzah* with markers, paints and stickers and placed a kosher scroll in each *mezuzah*.

Thanks to the organization, *MyZuzah*, we can offer this program again this April at no cost. Because the people at *MyZuzah* believe that every Jewish home should have a *mezuzah*, they have graciously provided our community with all the materials for every family to make one!

Mark your calendar for April 5 at 5:30 pm and meet us at Beth El the Beaches Synagogue to make *mezuzot* and enjoy a pizza dinner together. Beth El the Beaches Synagogues is located at 288 Roscoe Boulevard in Ponte Vedra Beach. We hope you can join us!



Please scan the QR code to visit [bit.ly/familymezuzah-0424](https://bit.ly/familymezuzah-0424) to register and let us know you are coming.



## The Name is Bond, Family Bond

**Evan McInnis, Youth Services Director**

There is no better way to strengthen family ties than by enjoying activities together. Whether taking an adventure, doing housework together, crafting or any number of activities - little moments have big impacts on your children's lives.

The US Department of Health & Human Services' National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement researched the outcome of family well-being and found that dedicating time to family activities improves familial social connection and increases happiness. That's not all! The benefits of family time include reduced stress and anxiety, lengthened life spans, and motivates every member to be the best version of themselves. The importance of family cannot be understated when it comes to the love and support it provides.

Beyond the benefits of connection, the outlook of a child's life is deeply rooted in time spent with their family unit, in fact, medical experts say time spent with parents and siblings makes children more open to guidance and support. This special time together allows us to meet our youngest loved ones in the family at their level to understand them as the unique individuals they are becoming. This time also gives parents time to develop their parenting skills - which will ultimately be passed down to the next generation when their children begin to raise their own families.

More family time results in fewer behavioral challenges as children learn to communicate with their parents and hone their interpersonal skills. By guiding children through crafts, activities, games, and so on, we can help our kids learn to talk through problems and give them non-judgmental support. Youth.gov, which offers parents a variety of resources for family engagement, reports that these bonding moments help our children build self-confidence, enhance their conflict resolution skills, and create an atmosphere of familial stability which ultimately leads to greater success and resilience later in life.



Our Youth Services team is proud to offer opportunities to help your family strengthen bonds. We are excited about our upcoming Family Art-Venture on Monday, April 15 from 5:30 - 7:30 pm for families with children in kindergarten and up.

Our Youth Services Assistant Director, Curriculum and Enrichment, Lea Melvin will guide parents and their children as they work side-by-side to create captivating works of art. Including light refreshments and plenty of quality time together, we are certain that this enrichment class is an opportunity that is sure to create wonderful memories and strengthen your family's bonds.

### Family Art-venture

Grades K+

Mon, Apr 15 | 5:30 - 7 pm

\$60 | Valued member \$40

Price includes one parent and one child.

Add \$5 for each additional participant.



Please scan the QR code to visit [bit.ly/3xkFT8W](https://bit.ly/3xkFT8W) to register and let us know you are coming.



# Bravo, Brady!

## Beth Milograno, Communications & PR Specialist

Usually, when we hear piano music billowing through our JCA campus, it means someone is taking a private lesson or a world-renowned Young Concert Artist is visiting Jacksonville for the Berman Family JCA Concert Series.

Imagine our surprise when we started hearing the piano near the pottery studio play throughout the week. After smiling with our members at the Fitness desk and sharing in applause with Karen and Beshka, my curiosity was sparked. I couldn't wait to find the musician who created the beautiful sounds echoing down the Vandroff Art Gallery hallway and to find out why our Maccabee of the Month finishes his time at the JCA with music.

"I usually play basketball or take yoga classes and train with Jimmy when I am here. After my workouts, I love to play the piano for a little while too," explains 16-year-old Brady Pargman, who started playing piano in kindergarten. "When I am playing it is a similar mindset to my workouts, it feels good to play and to accomplish something. The piano is just a way for me to decompress and it helps me clear my head and relax."

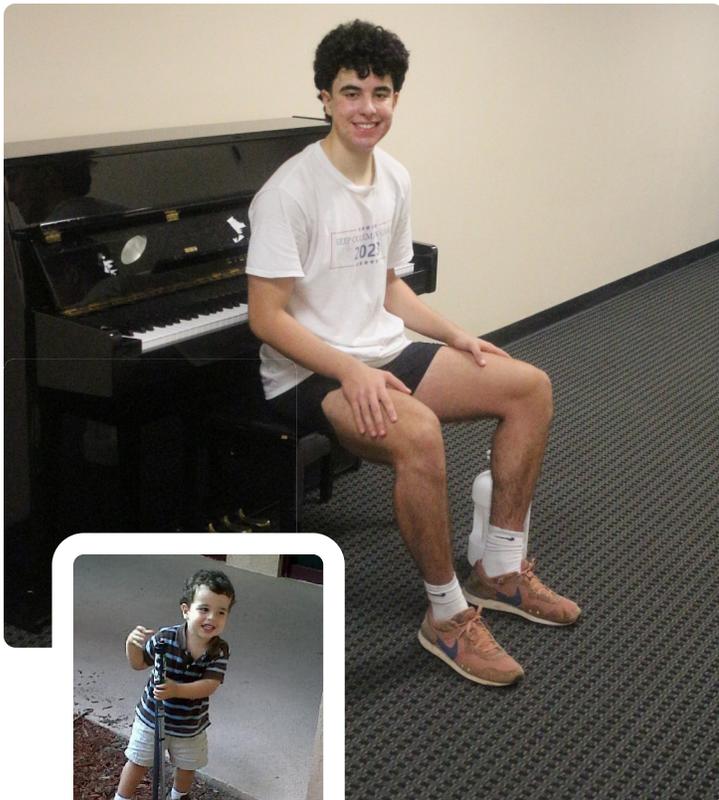
According to his dad, finding peace and motivation through exercise and music at the JCA is a long-time tradition for Brady and his family.

"Brady started school in Michele Block Gan Yeladim Preschool & Kindergarten and has always had great experiences at the JCA. He enjoys working out, whether it is personal training or on his own, and he appreciates the impact that physical activity has on his body and mind," explains Brian Pargman. "Brady has always gravitated towards music and movement as helpful ways to unplug. Playing piano and getting to work out or shoot hoops gives him a sense of progress and an opportunity to see results. The JCA was a wonderful foundation that set the stage for successful experiences, created life-long friends, and gave Brady an important sense of independence."

"Even being such a young man, his focus and preparation is great, he takes things seriously," says JCA Personal Trainer Jimmy Normeus. "I have no doubt in Brady, whatever endeavor he chooses, he will succeed."

Approaching his junior year of high school, our Maccabee says the physical might, spiritual strength, and mental resilience he gained through the years at the JCA are inspiring his college choices too.

"I want to do what makes me happy in college," says Brady. "I would love to play ball, continue with my music, and study something related to sports medicine or health nutrition."



The Maccabees were Jewish rebel warriors and heroes of the Chanukkah story. Maccabee means "hammer" and is known as a symbol of physical might, spiritual strength, and mental resilience in the face of adversity. If you know a JCA member who is a Maccabee, please email me at [beth.milograno@jcjax.org](mailto:beth.milograno@jcjax.org).



## En Garde! Prêt? Allez! Get in Position! Ready? Go!

By Beth Milograno, Communications & PR Specialist

Be *en garde* for the JCA Fencing Academy this season! The extraordinarily talented young fencers at our JCA are making big gains toward competition at the USA Fencing National Championships in Columbus, Ohio, this July.

Grayson Becker, Andrew Pak, Emily Pak, Ethan Rostholder, Hannah Rostholder, Kiara Vergara, Lakshya Yadav, Tishya Yadav, and Elizabeth Yao, all competed and earned qualifying points during the Battle at the Beach 2, a regional fencing tournament held in Daytona back in February.

"February's competition was part of a series of regional events around the country where fencers accrue points in different age and skill categories that will qualify them to go to National Championships and other national fencing events," explains Lindsay Stapleton who coaches our young fencers with the JCA Fencing Academy's Bill Becker. "We are so proud of and so excited for the growth and potential of our students. We have several kids who are competing at a national level after only a year of practice. Most had never competed or fenced before. We win medals at all the competitions we go to. Not only that but the sportsmanship and spirit of our kids make it so exciting and so worthwhile to be part of their journey as they grow."

The next round of bouts for our JCA Fencing Academy will happen at the USA Fencing Regional Youth Circuit Infinity Cup on April 6 – 7. The competition at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds is free to attend and will give our fencers a path to qualify for the 2024 USA Fencing National Championships.

"It is very exciting to have an event here at home since we usually travel to fencing competitions," explains Lindsay. "Spectators are welcome, and we would love support from our JCA community to help us cheer on these incredible kids. These tournaments are such a fantastic opportunity to compete, especially to start out at a young age."



Mark your calendars for the next sessions of our JCA Fencing Academy, starting May 7 and 8 for beginners and advanced fencers. Our Fencing Academy helps fencers of all ages and skill levels gain confidence through games, footwork, coordination, fencing drills, and bouts.



Please scan the QR code to visit [bit.ly/jca-fencing](https://bit.ly/jca-fencing) to register and let us know you are coming.



## Summer is Coming!

**By Dustin Rulien, Aquatics Manager**

The summer is nearly upon us, and I cannot wait to have our pools filled with swimmers this season! Our Makos Summer Swim Team begins practice on May 1 with the River City Swim League season continuing through July 21.

Parents in our community certainly

agree that our summer swim team is a fantastic way to introduce and continue competitive swimming throughout the summer months.

Our Summer Makos Swim program is designed for swimmers who complete Level 4 of the Learn to Swim programs at the JCA, or those who can perform the basics of each stroke, and is a fantastic opportunity to give kids a gentle introduction to competitive swimming while keeping the lighthearted and fun spirit of summer. There is a spot on our Makos swim team for swimmers at every level, ranging from newcomers fresh out of our Learn to Swim program to future college athletes. Makos swimmers compete in six friendly meets against similar teams in the River City Swim League from around Jacksonville.

Typically, we host three meets at the JCA throughout the season, and travel to nearby pools for the rest. The season concludes with the River City Swim League Championships at Bolles High School, where every team in the league comes together for the final meet of the summer. Interested swimmers should register and join us at the Summer Makos Team Kickoff Party at 2:30 pm on Sunday, April 7 to meet our coaches and get your Makos team gear!

Swimming offers the best of both worlds for athletes while they learn to compete as individuals and as a team. In the JCA's low-stress, friendly environment, swimming boosts mental health while it teaches self-confidence, positive body image, and self-motivation. Multi-sport athletes will not find a better way to condition off-season. When you think about it, there is no other endurance sport you have to hold your breath for.

If your athlete is not ready for our swim team, our Learn to Swim program offers a level-by-level curriculum designed for swimmers to graduate straight into swim team practices after learning all four competitive strokes.

Visit [jcjax.org/aquatics](http://jcjax.org/aquatics) to learn more.



## WE ARE HIRING

### We are hiring lifeguards and water safety instructors!

Our next Red Cross-Certified Lifeguard Training class happens April 8 – 11, the next Water Safety Swim Instructor Training is April 14 – 18, and we are hosting Community First Aid/CPR/AED: Adult – Child – Infant on May 17 and May 26.

Scan or visit [bit.ly/jca-certifications](http://bit.ly/jca-certifications) to register and learn more.



Questions? Please email me, [dustin.rulien@jcjax.org](mailto:dustin.rulien@jcjax.org) or call (904) 730-2100 ext. 417 for more information about our Learn to Swim programs, the Makos Summer Swim Team and American Red Cross Training Classes at the JCA.



# The BIG IMPACT of Tennis STRINGS



## By Lucas Ramos Campos, Tennis Pro

The first thing that comes to a player's mind when they think about equipment is their tennis racket, and rightfully so. However, tennis players often overlook a very important part of the equipment, the strings. Tennis racket strings have a big impact on how players maximize the benefits of a racket, and those strings need to receive the right attention.

There are four main types of strings: synthetic gut, polyester, natural gut and multi-filament. Synthetic gut strings which are made of nylon are the typical choice if a player is not sure where to start. This type of string offers great playability and value to beginners who do not want to invest a lot of money in their tennis strings right away.

Polyester strings are recommended for experienced players who are looking for maximum control, spin and durability. These strings are generally firm, but they are becoming more user-friendly with advanced technology. Hard hitters will see the benefits of the polyester strings while new tennis players should consider different options.

Natural gut strings are regarded as the premiere tennis strings. Made of natural materials, specifically from a part of the intestine of a cow called serosa, a gut string type offers great playability and comfort, and retains its tension longer than any other string type. The downside of gut strings is that they tend to be the most expensive. In my opinion, players who do not break strings too often should give them a try because they hold the tension very well.

Multi-filament strings are the closest thing to natural gut strings. This type of string offers a great feel, comfort and power at a more affordable price. Multi-filament strings tend to feel soft on the arm while holding the tension well, but they are not very durable for hard hitters.

Every tennis player needs to understand the tension that should be used on their strings. Tension refers to how tight the strings are strung in the racket. The range of tension used can vary significantly, but it is usually between 50-60 pounds. In general, the higher the tension, the more control you get. The lower the tension, the more power you get. There are a lot of considerations when choosing your string type and tension. As a reminder, different types of players have different preferences and really, there is no right answer that applies to everyone.

No matter what strings are on your racket, we have tennis programs for everyone at the JCA! From adult clinics and workshops to private lessons and fundamental programs for our pee-wee and junior players - please email me today to start playing tennis at the JCA, [lucas.ramoscampos@jcajax.org](mailto:lucas.ramoscampos@jcajax.org).

JCA Tennis News! Our Har Tru clay tennis courts are being resurfaced at the end of May. Please be on the lookout, details about the resurfacing and specific court closures will be announced in the next month. We are working to minimize any disruptions to tennis matches and lessons.



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 on the Ed Parker Jewish  
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**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  
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