



FOUNDING DATE

April 2006

NO. OF MEMBERS

133 Jewish teen philanthropy programs, engaging over 2,000 teens each year

MEMBER AGE RANGE

13-18

ANNUAL MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Teens contribute up to \$500 of their own money, and often raise additional money to add to their grantmaking pools.

GRANTS AWARDED

Teen foundations award \$1-2 million in grants each year.

DURATION OF GRANT CYCLE

Teen foundations run over a 2-week period (at summer camp), a semester (at school), or an academic year.

ISSUE AREA OF FOCUS

Varies over teen foundations

FINANCIAL SETUP

Hosted by a variety of organizations

NO. OF MEETINGS PER YEAR

10-50 hours of meetings over the course of the program; an annual meeting to vote on grant awards

CONTACT

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Case Study: Teen Giving Circles

By Stefanie Zelkind, Director

The Jewish Teen Funders Network is a central resource for the growing field of Jewish teen philanthropy. JTFN creates, connects, and supports 133 Jewish teen philanthropy programs throughout North America. JTFN promotes philanthropy and collective giving as forms of experiential education for Jewish teens.



Giving circles don't follow a formula: they can be large or small, in-person or virtual, time-intensive or low-key. But they all share a passion for connecting, learning, and giving with greater intent and impact—by giving together. Our Case Study series introduces you to some amazing giving circles, showcasing their unique models. Find more Case Studies at www.AmplifierGiving.org

Starting Out

Recognizing the potential of teen philanthropy to empower and educate teens about effective philanthropy and Jewish values, several visionary leaders came together in 2001 to determine how best to support this emerging field. Over the subsequent years, and with the support of the Jewish Funders Network, they developed a shared vision and strategic plan for the future of Jewish teen philanthropy. In April 2006, JFN and several other organizations sponsored a Jewish teen philanthropy conference that brought together over 150 teen participants in Denver, Colorado. Building on the success of the conference, Barbara Gervis Lubran, Ricky Shechtel, and the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation joined together to create the Jewish Teen Funders Network (JTFN) to grow and strengthen the field of Jewish teen philanthropy.



The Circle Experience

JTFN's teen philanthropy programs follow two models: teen foundations and individual giving programs.

Teen foundations bring together a group of about 20 young people, aged 13-18, to contribute funds to a collective pool that is often matched by a local donor. In some foundations, teens also engage in fundraising efforts to add more to the pool. Teens work together through a series of educational activities to create a mission statement for their foundation, clarify their funding interests, learn about relevant organizations, solicit and review grant proposals, go on site visits, and work through consensus to make decisions about which organizations to support. Teen foundations are run by many types of Jewish institutions, including Jewish Community Centers, day schools, religious schools, synagogues, social service agencies, Jewish Federations, camps, and community foundations.

In individual giving programs, young people establish individual "giving accounts" at the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Structured like a savings account or a small endowment, teens are encouraged to use the funds to support organizations they care about. B'nai Tzedek, the most popular individual giving program, was created by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in Western Massachusetts in 1997, and then replicated in Jewish Federations and community foundations throughout the United States.

Circle Activities

COACHING & MENTORING

Teens are given the opportunity to learn and practice new skills, try on various leadership roles, and experience first-hand what it means to be a philanthropist.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Many Jewish teen philanthropy programs organize service-learning and volunteering opportunities for teen participants, so that they can experience giving of their time as well as their money.

CONNECTIONS & NETWORKS

Relationship-building takes place among teens within the teen philanthropy programs, and among adult program leaders and facilitators through JTFN's programs and events.

CONVENINGS

JTFN organizes in-person and virtual convenings for the (adult) program leaders and facilitators of Jewish teen philanthropy programs, for the purpose of learning, networking, and information-sharing.

JEWISH EDUCATION EVENTS

Jewish teen foundations are, first and foremost, educational programs for teens. Participants explore Jewish values, texts, and traditions related to giving; learn about the nonprofit sector and grantmaking; and gain valuable leadership skills.

PHILANTHROPIST SUPPORT

Teens report that participation in a Jewish teen philanthropy program opened their eyes to needs in their communities, and enabled them to explore their passions and learn about organizations working on issues that matter most to them.

Giving & Impact

OUR GRANTMAKING PROCESS

Each Jewish teen foundation creates its own educational program and grantmaking process, building on “best practices” and resources in the field (available at www.jtfn.org). Most follow a similar program arc, building on the following core components:

Jewish texts and values clarification



Mission statements



Nonprofits/grantmaking



Requests for Proposals



Site visits



Consensus-building



Grant decisions



Celebration and sharing



OUR IMPACT ON THE WORLD

Every other year, JTFN conducts a field-wide study to survey “Where Did the Money Go?”. The next report will be published in Fall/Winter 2014. Highlights of the 2012 study (of 50 teen foundations) include:

296 grants awarded; total of \$759,626

Average number of grants awarded per teen foundation: 6

Range of grant size: \$50 - \$14,750

Most grants (60%) awarded to local organizations; 8% national, 13% Israel, 19% international (other than Israel)

Most grants (60%) awarded to Jewish organizations (those serving Jews and the general population), 40% to non-sectarian organizations

Top 3 issue areas: youth, education, poverty

Unique Circle Features

JTFN works with professionals and lay leaders to create, build, and grow Jewish teen philanthropy programs in a manner that best meets the needs of each community and institution. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, JTFN believes in harnessing the creativity, experience, and enthusiasm of leaders “on the ground” to create a program suited to the teens in each community. With JTFN’s support, community leaders then build on “best practices” developed by seasoned professionals, use and/or adapt field-tested resources, and benefit from lessons learned by other program leaders. JTFN recognizes the power of the network – a group of incredibly dedicated, creative, and thoughtful educators – to further the work, continually learning and adapting materials and programs, troubleshooting and learning from one another’s challenges, and brainstorming new possibilities together.

