

Strength in Numbers

The PJ Library community in Baltimore is focused on connecting families to Jewish life — and its strategy is working.

BY RACHEL WETTER
ADVANCEMENT COORDINATOR

In 2021, Baltimore marked its 13th year as a PJ Library community. Just as many Jewish children recognize their 13th year of life with a *b'nai mitzvah* celebration, the community celebrated its milestone with a Book Mitzvah party. And as Baltimore enters its 14th year, it continues to have plenty to celebrate.

When the program started — with the help of local supporters like Howard and Michelle Rosenbloom — 577 children signed up for books, and many lived in the city's center. Today it serves almost 3,200 children and has a much wider reach.

"PJ Library has been a blessing for our Baltimore Jewish community by enabling us to connect with young families in meaningful ways through the gift of reading and education infused with Jewish content," says Marc B. Terrill, president of the Associated, which runs PJ Library locally through its Macks Center for Jewish Connections.

Those connections weren't by accident. Using PJ Library data, the Macks Center for Jewish Connections noticed that families were moving an hour north of the city. Soon it connected those families to the PJ Library community and Jewish-life opportunities in Greater Baltimore.

Another contributor to the growth? A group of 15 parent connectors. (Most programs have two to eight.) They engage with their local communities and reflect the diverse landscape of Jewish Baltimore, including grandparents, Russian-speaking Jewish families, and LGBTQ+ parents.

"The program is part of key objectives to provide a welcoming place for all Jews to connect with our Associated network of agencies and serve as an entry point to all that the Jewish community has to offer," Terrill says. ■



The PJ Library program in Baltimore is focused on family engagement. And it shows.

PHOTOS BY
DAVID STUCK

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

We had the good fortune of meeting Harold Grinspoon

before the inception of PJ Library, which he founded in 2005. At that time, camping, day schools, and Birthright Israel were the mainstays of keeping children Jewish.

And then the light went on, and Harold, with vision and passion, created PJ Library — storytelling within families that enables the values and ethics of Torah to be passed down from generation to generation. Now there are four pillars to ensure Jewish continuity. PJ Library ought to be one of the main addresses for Jewish philanthropy.

We thank Harold for being one of the great Jewish leaders of our time.

— Howard and Michelle Rosenbloom

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