




Philly 

Kaiserman JCC

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“State of the JCC” – December 15, 2022 – Alan Scher

Thank you Senator Cappelletti for your vision, your service, and your support of this community center.

I want to begin with several other recognitions. We are reestablishing this event after a pause of several years. Beyond even the pandemic, this ritual of coming together and celebrating our JCC had ended, and we are incredibly excited to revive the tradition. For us, it serves as a microcosm of our mission here at the Kaiserman JCC – to bring together community, and joyfully celebrate the myriad of capacities in which we enhance lives. We are so grateful to all of you who join us this evening to mark the occasion. In addition to Senator Cappelletti, thank you again to U.S. Representative Mary Gay Scanlon, Chair of the Montgomery County Commissioners Doctor Valerie Arkoosh, Lower Merion Commissioner Rick Churchill and joining us later in the evening, State Representative Mary Jo Daley. I would also like to thank our tremendous partners from Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, including President & CEO Michael Balaban, Senior Chief of External Affairs, Jeff Lasday, and Chief Strategy and Impact Officer, Kelly Romirowsky. Your leadership in this community is instrumental in our success.

I want to thank the visionary leaders joining us this evening associated with this institution, and its history. This begins with Ron and Rachelle Kaiserman, our partners, stewards, and legacy supporters. Our current board members, many of which you will be meeting this evening, as well as past leadership, including past president of the JCCs of Greater Philadelphia Arlene Fickler, and past president of the Kaiserman JCC, Jeff Adler.

Finally, I want to thank our staff and their families. You are the beating heart of this organization, and I come to this event, and this building daily, in awe of your capacity and commitment for service to our community.

We gather together this evening at a particular juncture in the Jewish calendar, nearing the holiday of Hanukkah. Many of us learn the story of this commemoration through the game of dreidel, and the Hebrew phrase that anchors the activity, *“Nes Gadol Haya Sham.”* “A Great Miracle Happened There.” I was thinking about this recently, and the resonance with our JCC anniversary. In so many capacities, a great miracle happened here. We have been doing some math, contemplating this miracle. The record of impact behind this institution is impressive, to say the least. In my first year and a half working here as CEO I’ve had countless conversations with stakeholders, and sometimes strangers, who speak about their connection with the Kaiserman JCC. For so many we are the place they learned to swim. The place their parents met, kindling familial future. We are the place where children grow into adulthood. We are the place adults build lifelong friendships.




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By our best estimates, over 5,000 students have graduated from the Robert J. Wilf Preschool and Kindergarten. Over 10,000 campers have had their best summer ever at Camp Kef. Over 7,500 elementary aged children have participated in our KidsTime, and other, Afterschool Enrichment Programs. Over 500 Mildred Lasch Special Needs Inclusion Program campers blossomed in their bunks. Over 20,000 adults have utilized our health and wellness offerings, including fitness, aquatics, and group exercise. And over 15,000 teens have found a place for themselves at the JCC through the JCC Maccabi Games, Diller Teen Fellows, and other programs. A great miracle indeed has happened here.

Over the past year we've seen that bright light of impact rekindled following a pandemic. Record enrollment in our early childhood program, opening new classrooms, hiring new staff positions, and enhancing the offerings for young families using our preschool, and those who join us from beyond it. Generous grants from Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and others have allowed us to engage with families across the Philadelphia region through our J on the Way program and introduce new Jewish parenting initiatives to the communities we serve. Our youth programs have soared and expanded, with hundreds of young people attending our after school, enrichment, and youth sports initiatives, including new offerings like our Girls J Ball program, our hosting Challenger Soccer, and serving as the Main Line home for the Fencing Academy of Philadelphia. We have enhanced our summer programs with successful fundraisers like our Best Summer Ever fund, the introduction of a new program for young people with Developmental Disabilities, SEC @ Camp Kef, and significant renovations of our summer swimming pool. Adult fitness and cultural classes have returned to the JCC, with generous new funding from the Weinberg Family Fund, as well as partnerships with Main Line Health, Folk Shul, Theatre Areil, and others. Teens are once again streaming into our building with the return of the JCC Maccabi Games, the introduction of our new Diller Teen Fellows program, and other initiatives, including – get this – the first partnership between a JCC and an Israeli Basketball program. Take a look at that banner – we are the only JCC actively working to program, and foster partnerships with our sister community of Hertzlyia. What a gift. We've invested across this institution over the past year, putting impactful resources into capital improvements to shore up our infrastructure, invest in Jewish engagement programming like our Purim and Sukkot festivals, serving as the new home for the Philadelphia Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, launching a new website for our agency, and much more. We have so much to be proud of. Most importantly, our agency is healthy. On firm financial footing. And this fall our board approved a new strategic plan. The vision for the Kaiserman JCC is bright.





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At the center of the plan is an image, crystalized through conversations, focus groups, and countless data points of opportunity accumulated through our planning process: The Kaiserman JCC as the vibrant hub of Jewish life here on the Main Line, and increasingly across the region. Our center serves in this paradigm as a force to help knit this community back together following a pandemic. Hundreds frequent our fully renovated campus, and our satellite programs, building connections, learning new skills, and fostering Jewish peoplehood through exemplary educational, cultural, and recreational endeavors. We are the town square for the Jewish community. Realizing these ambitious goals begins today, with not only the adoption of the plan, but six core priorities for this next fiscal year. Strategies focused on catalyzing our efforts, renewing energy and traffic into the organization, and developing new sources of revenue to sustain the operation.

Over the next year we will work with our partners at Jewish Federation to map out a state of the art JCC, on a vibrant, communal campus, beginning with improvements to our preschool, sports fields, gymnasium, and aquatics facilities. Over the next year we will expand our adult and older adult programs, furthering our hub of wellness, and arts and cultural programs that showcase our Jewish and Israeli heritage. And over the next year we will further enhance our early childhood programs, exploring the possibility for a second preschool, and dramatically expanded parenting initiatives. We will accomplish this all by investing in our staff, and completing a fundraising campaign we are calling, “50th to the Future.”

I am proud to announce that we have committed to raising \$500,000 this year to begin this work. I am grateful and humbled by the stakeholders who have already invested in helping us achieve this goal. Cindy Smukler, our now immediate past president, and her family have made a significant donation to be used as a match for this campaign. In addition, our founding family, represented so frequently by Ron and Rachelle Kaiserman, have generously given to further this match. Since procuring this investment, along with some preliminary fall fundraising, we are more than halfway to our goal – having raised over \$250,000!

Earlier, this evening, in discussions with our board, we doubled down, as a community, to making this ambitious campaign a reality. We are a community center. It is on each of us to help. And you understand that. Everyone here this evening is an investor in this center. You are not only users, but supporters. Our collective belief in our new strategic plan, the cause of the Kaiserman JCC, and our advocacy for this institution will forge yet another miracle.

So, let’s make a toast – to 50 years of impact! To the Kaiserman JCC! A great miracle happened here!