

BE A HERO THIS GIVING TUESDAY



Your JCC is touching the lives of many on a daily basis. Read these inspiring stories to learn more about some of the ways that the JCC is making waves in our community.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Ronald Gardenswartz JCC of Greater Albuquerque, an outstanding community center that is inclusive and welcoming to all. Our Jewish values and traditions play a huge role in enriching and educating our community. Your generosity helps provide positive, impactful programming and services to the Jewish and greater Albuquerque community. The JCC is in a unique position, on a daily basis, to bring culture, education, fitness & wellness, and joy to individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds.

The JCC stands with Israel. It is vital to support Israel during this time of crisis. Our hearts are heavy with concern for the continued existence of our homeland, and for all the innocent victims caught in the middle of this conflict. While providing support to Israel during a war is important, local fundraising here at home ensures the stability and continuity of programs and services that directly benefit our own Jewish and greater community.

It is critical to support a strong JCC now and always. Please help provide the resources for the JCC to stay ahead of the curve and provide innovative programs that meet the needs of our community. Our JCC must stay resilient, and be a light to the community through all the good we bring. This is how we combat anti-Semitism. How lucky are we to have a stellar JCC in Albuquerque, the only JCC in the state of New Mexico. Please do your part and continue to support a thriving JCC, one that we can all be proud of.



A SLAM DUNK



Lifetime member **Ezra Shelhav** spends so much time at the J, you could call it his second home. Ezra has truly been a member for his entire lifetime – his family were some of the founding members of the JCC, before he was born. Now, as a 21-year-old, he is more active at the J than ever. Not only is he a regular visitor, but also works as an employee, nearing his 1-year anniversary.

Ezra's journey here began as a young child making visits to the J with his family, spending summers enrolled in Camp Chai and taking swimming lessons in the pool. He says he never missed a year of camp and remembers every lifeguard.

As he got older, Ezra got into sports – soccer, baseball, and basketball. Basketball stuck. "My dad played basketball growing up, and he told me he was a great shot. I think I got my great shot from him. But I'm taller than him now, and he's really mad about that," he jokes.

Basketball at the J has become a huge part of Ezra's life over the past decade. As a teen, his parents would drop him off after school and on weekends to shoot hoops and join pickup games, and he also helped as a scorekeeper for the J's evening basketball leagues. He has kept that routine as a young adult and has also added weightlifting. "I'm

at the J for at least three hours pretty much every day," he says.

Aside from his love of the court, it's the relationships he's made that keep him coming back. "I talk with a lot of the APD officers that work out upstairs – they are my good friends," Ezra says. "Travis is my personal trainer, and I really like working with him. And Kenny (JCC Athletics Director) is an unbelievable person. He's been very good to me, and I love him very much. He gave me my job here. I'm very grateful to him."

"I have also made friends with the firemen at Station 15 on the basketball court. I play pickup games with them, and I destroy them every time, because I'm pretty good at basketball," he jokes with a smile.

About a year ago, Ezra lost several people in his life that he was incredibly close to, all within the span of a few months. He regards the J as a therapeutic place that has helped him through those difficult moments.

"I love the J – if I didn't have it, I don't know where I would go. I can come here and I feel at peace. I feel like I'm home."



Ezra on the court

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Long-time JCC member **Katrina Wagner** came for the fitness and stayed for the community. Close to a decade ago, Katrina visited the JCC with a friend. At the time, she belonged to another gym in town, where she says, “I never felt like more than a card-carrying member just swiping through.” Katrina and her family have been active members of the J ever since.

“From my first visit, I knew the JCC was where I belonged,” she said. “The front desk staff was warm and welcoming, and the childcare employees greeted my kids by name.”

Her kids grew up making trips to Tot Spot, then J-Zone, and have spent summers with Camp Chai. She has participated in small group training, fitness programs including Skinny Jeans and 42-Day Shred, and competed for the first time this year in the 2023 Samson Challenge. Her son is now an employee of the J and works with the kids in J-Zone.

Outside of fitness and friends, Katrina is drawn to the inclusivity and diversity she regularly witnesses at the J. She recalled a summer when her kids were young and she had taken them swimming. “We came to swim one afternoon, and I noticed a Muslim

family at the pool. The mother was completely covered, and their family seemed so happy and relaxed – just having a great time together. I thought that was so cool – it was the first time I really noticed the true diversity of the JCC. I love that you let everyone know that they belong.”



Katrina at the JCC's 2023 Samson Challenge

Fast-forward to the year 2020, when Covid hit. Katrina, like many, was sent to work from home. After working full-time in a collaborative office for many years, the change was a huge test of her identity. The sudden shift from high heels to slippers caused her feet to suffer, leading to a case of plantar fasciitis so severe it eventually required foot surgery. The surgery, along with being stuck at home, contributed to less activity and rapid weight gain. Also during this time, her father, who had been living with them, caught Covid and passed away.

Once Katrina could begin exercising again, she made her return to the J. She is consistently training with the Bodies by Hallie group that meets twice a week.

“The JCC has played a huge role in my rise back up from that horrible time. It has helped my mental health and my physical health by allowing me to get back into a more active routine, and I was able to lose a lot of the weight. My workout group and my friends at the J keep me inspired and coming back,” she said.



Katrina and friends at a JCC lunge-a-thon benefit event in May 2018

EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT!

Waterplay at its finest: Splash Pad coming Summer 2024!!!

The JCC Splash Pad will delight families, engage campers in Maccabi-style games, and encourage grandparents to join in the fun. This fully accessible experience will stimulate the senses, offer tactile, cognitive & social opportunities, and offer multigenerational fun. Get ready to play with a Aqua Gather Station, Stream Jet, Sea Crawler, Geyser, Arch Jet, Floral Swirl + more! For more information on sponsoring a Water Play feature as part of our Splash Pad, please call Emily Blaugrund Fox at 505-418-4471 or email: emilyf@jccabq.org

SPREADING THE LOVE

When you love something, you want to see it thrive. Maybe that's why JCC member **Ellen Goldstein** shares so much of her time here with us.

Ellen is an active member of the Albuquerque Jewish community, and a founding member of the JCC. Ellen's son grew up enjoying Camp Chai, and years later, Ellen became a part-time employee with the JCC's Arts, Culture & Education (ACE) department. When her mother passed away in 2017, her elderly father came from Oklahoma to Albuquerque and lived with her briefly. At this time, she stepped away from her position with the J, but remained an active member.

Ellen witnessed her father's life being greatly impacted by both the JCC and its Jewish Care Program (JCP). *"He had several home visits and was a recipient of the JCP's holiday baskets," Ellen said. "I saw how important it was for him to have this community – he was a long-standing member of the JCP's grief group, which was really important for him. He also occasionally attended the JCC's Wonderful Wednesdays programs, Jewish Book Fest events and went to chair yoga classes."*

Now, Ellen serves the JCC in a different capacity – as a devoted member, volunteer and monetary donor. Since 2018, Ellen and her sister Lauren have been baking the honey cakes for the JCP's Rosh Hashanah holiday baskets. Each year they bake 80-100 cakes. Once assembled, the baskets are delivered to the JCP's list of recipients, which includes homebound Jewish seniors, Holocaust survivors and others in need of assistance.

"It's always better to give than to receive. It's a good feeling to be able to participate in my community in that way. And



Ellen and her son Adam

especially with the Jewish Care Program, because my dad benefitted directly from those services. It was really meaningful for him to have in his life," Ellen said.

Aside from her role serving as a volunteer for JCP, Ellen also serves on the JCC's Jewish Book Fest committee, helping to select books for the author series events. She also enjoys Pilates classes and occasional pickleball play.

"It's a very important place to me. It's always been a part of my life in Albuquerque," Ellen said. "I'm grateful to Harold Albert, Art Gardenswartz, and everyone who helped to make the JCC a reality. It's open to everyone – it's a nice place to meet new people, and to connect with my friends from within the Jewish community. I recognize the importance of the J for all generations – all the way from my son as a toddler, to my father as a 96-year-old."



8.3 Acres and Beyond

Every Day. Every Week. Every Month. Every Year.

Your gift benefits Children, Families, Adults, Retired Seniors, All Nationalities, All Religions, All Shapes, Sizes, and Abilities.

Your gift is critical to maintaining creative programs available to every person who walks in our door; each with rich, beautiful, impactful stories and experiences.

Your gift is critical to 11 different departments that ensure we create and maintain a place for people to come together, support the community, learn, make new friends, feel respected, safe, nurtured, and stronger in every way.



Donate Now!

Join us NOW to reach our match of \$57,500 by December 31, 2023!



A program of the HAROLD GRINSPOON FOUNDATION

Life & Legacy is a program dedicated to ensuring YOUR JCC is here Every Day, Every Week, Every Month, Every Year for generations to come.

Please contact Emily Blaugrund Fox (505-418-4471 or emilyf@jccabq.org) to discuss how you can become a member of the **Life & Legacy** program through your estate plan.

Please return the enclosed mailer with your gift to the JCC. Give online by scanning the QR code above or visit jccabq.org/donate. Donations can be made via phone at 505-418-4471.

