None of us could ever have predicted how dramatically the world would change because of COVID-19. Over the past two months, we have gone through change and upheaval in our community that is unprecedented in our lifetimes. It has required all of us to make significant adjustments in every aspect of our lives. The Mandell JCC was no exception.

But when we were put to the test, the JCC demonstrated our mission at its best as we continued, without interruption, to provide valuable support and needed resources to our members and our community. Within a few days of closing our physical doors on March 13, the JCC opened a new window onto a robust online presence. As we amplified our online programming, we also saw ever-growing members of our community joining us every day.

Our work has traditionally been grounded in providing our programs within the JCC building, at The Swim & Tennis Club, and at Camp Shalom. We have all learned that there is vibrancy and meaning in the creation of community outside the traditional walls of all of our institutions. I have been inspired by my colleagues in the agencies, organizations and synagogues who have committed themselves to expanding on the meaning of communal spirit.

**Stronger Together**

The JCC has always been a “fee for service” institution – charging membership dues, school tuition, summer camp and program fees. Like all nonprofits, the pandemic has brought about some significant financial challenges at the JCC. We appreciate – beyond words – our Pillars, Pacesetters and Friends in the Community Donor Circle for their support throughout the years. Last month, we asked our members and our Early Childhood Center (ECC) families to support us by donating their monthly dues and tuition. We were overwhelmed by the response and we could not be more grateful. This is the truest sense of a community that is all in this together, a community that is stronger together.

Right now, we are transitioning to what everyone is calling the “new normal.” We will continue to innovate with robust offerings to address our community’s immediate needs. And, at the same time, we are planning for the revitalized JCC that we will all return to when this crisis is over. While we cannot anticipate what that will look like, we are getting ready. We are working to understand the new guidelines that will dictate when and how we will open to ensure that safety is the priority.

What we do know is that after this prolonged period of social distancing, our community will be yearning for connection more than ever. And the Mandell JCC will be here to welcome you home.

The entire Board and staff are sending our extreme gratitude, and warm wishes of hope and good health to you and your families.

**David Jacobs**  
*Executive Director, Mandell JCC*
During this challenging time, it is also important to pause and express our thanks. The Mandell JCC was doing just that on May 19th with our first-ever #JCCGivingGratitude Day.

The day’s activities allowed us to say “thank you” to the members, donors, staff and neighbors who have participated so enthusiastically and have supported us so generously. From joyful videos that tell the stories of how we have come together as a community in new ways, to heartfelt thank you messages from our staff, plus a special treat from our adorable ECC children – the JCC brought the feeling of gratitude to life.

Because we are all in this together, we invited everyone to participate in the “UNselfie” project. We shared these “UNselfies” of our members holding signs expressing what they are grateful for – and these uplifting messages encourage and remind us of what we can still be thankful for – no matter how simple it may be.

#JCCGivingGratitude Day empowers us to connect, to celebrate, and to perpetuate communal kindness and generosity. And when our Mandell JCC community comes together, anything is possible.

WHAT ARE YOU GRATEFUL FOR?

SUPPORTING OUR HEALTHCARE HEROES
The Mask Makers in Our JCC Community

“Thank you to the WONDERFUL JCC members who have sewn cotton surgical masks for St. Francis Hospital. We are so grateful for your support. In this anxiety-ridden time, we thank you for thinking of us. We appreciate your willingness to stay home to help decrease the spread of the coronavirus. We are here to help the community and we greatly appreciate the JCC community helping us.”

Dr. Lisa Roland
Saint Francis Hospital

NO ONE SHOULD GO HUNGRY
Filling Our West Hartford Food Pantry

“I want to reach out and thank you and your amazing community for the tremendous food donation. The amount of food you gave to help residents in West Hartford was truly remarkable. Please extend my thanks to everyone involved!”

Nancy Stockman
West Hartford Food Pantry
“I celebrated my birthday on the last day of Passover. I am not normally one to make a big deal about birthdays. But this year was a little different. My Pandemic Passover birthday made me a bit more reflective. Having spent the last 12th of this year with the same 4 other people (and dog), I am reminded how lucky I am.

I married someone that I love, and our kids are doing better than can be expected. We have a roof over our heads, food in our bellies, and most importantly, as far as we know, everyone we love has avoided getting infected.

So, I decided to put my birthday to good use. I started a Facebook Fundraiser to help raise money for the Mandell JCC. I asked my friends and family that instead of taking me out dinner, or buying me a drink (which they can’t do anyway), to make a contribution to the Mandell JCC.

As a board member of the JCC, I am aware of how the closure of the facility has impacted our financials. But also, **I have never been prouder of the JCC than I am now.** The quick transition that was made to a FREE virtual platform; open to members and non-members was astounding. The dedication that our staff has put in trying to engage people from their living rooms and basements and kitchens beyond belief. The hours that are being devoted planning for the eventual re-opening are too many to count.

**So by having my birthday fundraiser, and raising a little money for the JCC, I feel like I contributed just a little to making sure that the Mandell JCC is will able to remain the leader in Jewish communal life in Greater Hartford.”**

Karen Tuvin, Mandell JCC Board Member, Sharks Swim Team Parent, ECC Alumna

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**RAPID RELIEF AND RECOVERY**

**Urgent Help for Urgent Needs**

The Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford and the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Hartford have established the Jewish Hartford Rapid Relief and Recovery Fund to address urgent community needs in the wake of COVID-19.

Since March 25, the Fund has raised close to one million dollars. It has been providing financial and human resources to help the local community partners with initiatives such as delivering 2500 prepared meals and 300 bags of groceries, providing behavioral health counseling for our neighbors in crisis, and supplying financial assistance for basic needs and vital social services to individuals and families affected by COVID-19.

The Fund is continuously working with local Jewish agencies, schools, and synagogues to assess their needs and plan for emergency operating support so that they can ensure that seniors, struggling families, and other vulnerable people receive the help they urgently need.

If you or someone you know needs help:  
https://www.jewishhartford.org/get-help-covid19  
For online donations to the Fund:  
https://www.jewishhartford.org/rapid-relief-recovery-fund

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Wishing our Muslim friends peace, health and joy during this holy month of Ramadan.
VIRTUAL IS THE NEW REALITY
Physically Distancing, Socially Connecting

The Mandell JCC is committed to building community, creating connections for our members and neighbors. And even in these times of safe physical distancing, the JCC continues to connect us by creating opportunities to interact with each other through online content. Our aim is to continue to inform and inspire you with a diverse offering of adult and kid fitness, early childhood center activities, family enrichment activities like bake alongs and story times, senior adult fitness and informational programs, arts and culture offerings like the virtual Jewish Film Festival, and camp at home. All of these innovative programs are updated and curated daily and can be found on our website.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

STAFF: Gennifer Delay Pasternak, ECC Director & Andrea Rosenfield Short, ECC Assistant Director
“We know how important it is for the children to see and engage with familiar people – teachers and peers. We continue to provide activities and resources that maintain connections, engage the children and help to make this difficult situation a little easier for everyone. Weekly virtual connections bring such comfort and excitement to teachers and children. Despite our physical distance, we seek to maintain our Bri’t, or school community.”

MEMBER/ECC PARENT: Jaime Saunders
“Everyone morning I run downstairs to check my email with my son to see today’s activities. In the ECC Zoom classes, our son lights up when he gets to see familiar faces from his teachers to his friends. So quarantine has been an adjustment but even though we are all apart, the sense of community from the Mandell JCC is 100% still there!”

WELLNESS CHECKS FOR SENIORS

STAFF: Susan Holtzberg, Adult Director
“Reaching out to the seniors in our community has been a vital part of our engagement process during this health crisis. What they miss the most is the human contact, so my calls to them mean that much more.”

Here’s what our staff and community is saying about the Virtual JCC.

The Mandell JCC continues to connect our community with 24/7 virtual programming for every age.
FITNESS

STAFF: Farrah Mead, Fitness Center Director
“Every week, I am creating classes that help our community stay active and healthy. It is my hope to create a sense of normalcy for our members by offering them a variety of options to work out with us. I wish to do all that I can for our members and community as we navigate this uncertain time in our world.”

MEMBER: Larry Percival
“The Covid-19 crisis makes clear to me that the JCC is a lot more than just a building with equipment. Every day, the JCC continues to deliver my must-haves. I need emotional well-being through social connection. I need physical health through motivation, discipline and routine. I get ALL of this through the virtual JCC and its supportive community.”

MEMBERS: Barbara & Jonathan Fink
“My workouts have not missed a beat because the fitness staff have kept the group classes going from basically the minute you closed, and my kids have been able to take karate classes and gym and bake. We feel so LUCKY to be a part of this great community.”

FAMILY ROOM

STAFF: Jane Pasternak, Family Room Director
“I’m seeing so many families putting a positive spin on the circumstances, with so many grateful for what they ‘can’ do rather than what they can’t. Children may gain a different perspective on everyday life if they experience it all through a positive lens.”

YOUTH SPORTS & REC

STAFF: Dave LaPorte, Karate School Director
“Many parents are struggling to balance working at home with caring for their children. Coach Thai and I hope that our JCC families and members of our community can use our virtual programming to help bring a little ‘normal’ back to their lives. For the two of us, we are able to stay connected to all the kids that we know from the JCC and those that we have gotten to know in the community.”

MEMBER/PARENT: Jenny Quinlan:
“Thank you so much for all you have been doing for our families! Please don’t change a thing. Your work is a model for how to successfully run virtual classes. I wish all of the virtual classes we are doing were as engaging, humorous, instructive, participatory and caring as yours are.”

FILM | ARTS & CULTURE

STAFF: Jill Ziplow, Cultural Arts Director
“The magic of the Film Festival has always brought our community together to share an experience. Now, we are able to bring these experiences to the community, even in these challenging times. Great movies will always connect us. Through filmmakers and distributors across world, cinema still allows us to travel and learn and laugh, together.”

MEMBER: Harriet Cutler
“Thank you so much, Jill, for keeping us on track with delicious films! It’s a great comfort to feel connected to the films!”
ALL JCC ONLINE PROGRAMMING
March 14 – April 27 (45 Days)

60+ Hours
Total Number hours of programming per week

200,000+
Total Number of People Reached via Mandell JCC Facebook Page (last 45 days)

FITNESS

200+
LIVE classes

18,761
Total number of online Views of all classes

19,000
Estimated Planks with Pete

YOUTH PROGRAMMING

100+
Total Number of Live and recorded online youth classes & programs (last 45 days)

16,987
Total number of Views of all youth programming

6,330
Total Number of Views - Weekly Bake-Along

25,000
Estimated Total Number of scones, crepes, biscuits, focaccia bread & cinnamon rolls baked

4,700
Total Number of Views - Weekly Kids Yoga

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

625
Hours of online learning

125+
Children participating in online learning

70%
Percentage of members who turned their monthly dues into donations
“When we found out we were expecting our first child, we immediately knew that the Beatrice Fox Auerbach Early Childhood Center would be our first choice for childcare. We have been continuously impressed with the care our daughter receives at the ECC, where she has attended since 2017. Everyone, from teachers to administrators, works tirelessly to create a special environment for the children to grow and develop. Through the JCC and ECC, we have developed friendships and gained a community that will remain a part of our lives for years to come.

Despite the unforeseen circumstances that COVID-19 brought, both the JCC and ECC quickly designed an online presence that brings the familiar community we are accustomed to into our homes. The daily newsletters, weekly class Zoom meetings and visits from teachers (remaining socially distant, of course) have given us all a sense of normalcy in these uncertain times. **We feel compelled to continue our support of the ECC to show our gratitude for all their efforts.**

Although we anxiously await the day that the JCC and ECC can reopen their doors, we are grateful for the online programs and will continue to keep the JCC as an integral part of our family’s lives. We look forward to seeing you all at the J again very soon. Until then, stay safe, stay healthy, stay connected!”

The financial impact of the pandemic has been unprecedented. We are aware that the costs of membership and programs may be a challenge for some people. The JCC is committed to doing all we can to fulfill its commitment to ensure that no one is denied a JCC experience due to the inability to pay the full price. Our programs have always been valuable and essential – and we know that they will be needed, now more than ever.

Asking for help can be difficult and uncomfortable – and for many, this may be the first time such a request is being made. We are working to develop a process that is streamlined, respects confidentiality (camp directors are not involved), and is as generous as possible.

Resources to support financial aid at the JCC come from our donors, funds at the Jewish Community Foundation, allocations from the Jewish Federation and the Mandell JCC’s Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament.

**Financial support will be based upon the specific needs of each individual or family and will cover a pre-determined time period. A sliding scale will help to determine the level of support, extended payment plans and deferred payments can be scheduled.**

Applications will be available shortly. For more information, please contact Annie Keith: akeith@mandelljcc.org
SUMMERTIME
Coming Soon…

Summer is fast approaching and we all know that the summer of 2020 will be unlike any that has come before. We also know how important our summer programs are to our families, and we are planning to be here for our community. As new guidelines become available we will send out news and registration information for the summer programs that we are busy planning at our traditional day camp at Camp Shalom in Windsor, our day camp filled with non-contact sports and swimming at our Swim and Tennis Club in Bloomfield, and Campareenah (preschool), Theater & Arts & Science camp at the Indoor JCC in West Hartford.