

December 2024



# THE DONOR DIFFERENCE

A Newsletter for the Mandell JCC Community Donor Circle



LIGHTING the WAY  
for the FUTURE



Nolan with Shabbat Bear in the ECC



Nolan and Devon



Nolan, Devon and friends during Camp Shalom Maccabiah



Dave, Devon, Nolan and Kim in Jerusalem, 2023

## A message from Kim Corona Charron, Chief Operating Officer

The JCC is “home”. I have been here for 23 years. I started as the payroll administrator and have held various financial roles and responsibilities during my tenure.

The Mandell JCC is a very special place for me and my family. My boys, Devon and Nolan, have grown up here, surrounded by the community. Their start in the ECC, provided their Jewish foundation by singing songs, marching in Purim parades, reciting prayers and learning about Jewish values and traditions. We’ve also attended Passover seders with JCC friends since they were very young. Because we do not live in the West Hartford community, our boys would look forward to their summers at Camp Shalom. This is where they would reconnect with their ECC friends. Camp Shalom provided them with connections, friendships and, in recent years, the desire to work there. Devon has worked at Camp Shalom as a counselor, the teva (nature) specialist and the boat driver. Nolan is ready to take on a role at camp this coming summer as he has completed the CIT program last year. Though he thought he was ready to work there several years ago!

Growing up Christian and going to a Jewish pre-school and camp has been one of the most rewarding experiences for my kids. They have been exposed to different traditions that we have brought into our home and have shared with our family.

In March 2023, our family had the unique opportunity to visit Israel on the Federation community mission. This trip became a reality for us because of our connection with the JCC and the Jewish community. We learned so much more about the country, the people, the culture, the history and the importance of Israel in all of our lives.

I love being at the JCC: the people, the friendships, and the community. One of the best advantages of working at the JCC is running the J School of Dance program and being an instructor. I love seeing our young dancers around the building and performing on the stage. I love watching them grow, developing their dance skills and finding their true self. They are remarkable children and I am grateful that I am a part of their lives. The JCC is where our family belongs and a place we all can call home.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim".

**Kim Corona Charron**  
Chief Operating Officer

## ENDOWMENT FUND FEATURE:

# Dan & Joni Fine

“The JCC is in our DNA, it’s our home away from home,” explains Joni and Dan Fine. Joni grew up at the JCC in Albany, NY. It was a big part of her life and her family’s life – she was always at the J. Dan grew up at the Hartford JCC in the 50’s when it was a house on Asylum Avenue, well before it moved to the current location. “There were no facilities there like there are here now, maybe a basketball court and a piano downstairs, but that’s where all my friends were.” As a family, they joined the JCC in the late 1980s and immediately Dan became a member of the Health Spa. “Howard Siegal<sup>21</sup> was a big solicitor back then and whatever he recommended, I did. I also knew that belonging to the Health Spa was supporting the JCC so that felt good too.” Joni and Dan’s children, Melissa and Rick, were part of a few youth theater performances and Joni was a member of committees that supported the theater, cultural arts and the Jewish Book Festival. Another reason to join the JCC when they did, was the pool. Dan has been a swimmer since the age of six and still swims 5-6 times a week. He swims 18 lengths most days which comes out to ¼ mile, and sometime swims as many as 36 lengths which is ½ mile! If he isn’t swimming, he’s playing the piano – another life-long love and hobby. He’s got lyrics and rhymes for almost every subject you can think of. He’s played professionally since he was 14 years old and loves playing the piano each year at the Adults with Special Needs fashion show – a truly special evening.

“We like the people here, they are very friendly, and this is where a lot of our friends are. I really feel good when I come in here, It’s just so comfortable. To be greeted by name and to see so many familiar faces,” Joni shares.

“In the Health Spa, you see all your friends there. The first group I see is when I walk out towards the shower room, there’s the second group, the third group, the fourth group, and people stick their heads out of the lines of lockers and everybody is saying hi. Then, when I go down to the pool, the people that I share lanes with, I also know!,” Dan says.

“It’s so much more than just going to a gym. One of the reasons why we are so connected to the JCC is because we appreciate all of the different groups that the JCC supports – adults with special needs, seniors, Café Europa, we love the gallery and seeing the diverse exhibits that are shown, and we also enjoy Brainsavers. It’s the perfect program to have here.”

In his professional life, Dan was a stockbroker for 45 years. He truly understands the various ways that their philanthropy can benefit the JCC. They supported the JCC’s Centennial Campaign in 2014 and the Community Endowment Campaign in 2015 – that’s when they opened the Joan and Dan Fine Fund for the Mandell JCC, a designated fund at the Jewish Community Foundation that will give a grant to the JCC on an annual basis, in perpetuity. They are joined by so many other generous designated fund holders who support the JCC in this way. Each year, they make a gift to their fund from Dan’s Individual Retirement Account (IRA) so the balance of the fund grows, using his Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). When it’s a good year, as Dan describes it, they are able to do more, and they do. Their family also celebrated Dan’s 80th birthday with a capital gift to the recreation and wellness wing in the JCC in 2019.

For all these reasons and more, Joni and Dan agree that, “our dedication and our loyalty is to the JCC, and it will always be.”

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OUR DONORS | Why They Do It

# Robert Kennedy



*Bob with ECC children*

If you come to the JCC on most week days, you probably have seen Bob Kennedy. He's a tall man with white hair who walks on the track, works out in the fitness area, relaxes in the health spa and has lunch in the Café. Bob joined the JCC 10 years ago to prepare to start traveling abroad. He knew that there would a lot of walking on the tours and he wanted to be able to keep up.

Bob has lived in the same house in East Hartford for the past 64 years. His family owned, operated, and lived above Kennedy's Market on Burnside Avenue throughout the depression. They then moved next to the store when a house became available. Bob's memories from his early days center on family, especially his brother Alvin, who was 4 ½ years older than him. "He was bigger than me, smarter than me, and more outgoing than me. I really looked up to him," Bob shares. In 1951, at the age of 23, Alvin was drafted into the Korean War. Six weeks later he was shot and paralyzed. Alvin was in nine different hospitals on his way back home to East Hartford where Bob became his caregiver. Alvin's doctors showed Bob how to take care of him and they lived together for the next 56 years until Alvin died at the age of 80. They did everything together – especially travel. "I was the muscle, and he was the brains," is how Bob describes their relationship. "He made most of the decisions, and I followed along. When he got interested in something, he really sunk himself into it. As kids, we loved playing ball and Alvin could name all the players, along with their statistics and batting averages." Once he became well and started to earn some money, Alvin invested in the stock market, and that's when he started to really shine. "He was smarter than the stock brokers!" Bob says.

Bob's connection to the Jewish community started at Temple Beth Tefilah in East Hartford, where he used to go with his family. Members of the men's club still meet on a weekly basis even though the synagogue has closed its doors.



*Alvin and Bob Kennedy*



*Alvin and Bob Kennedy*



*Bob with cousins Samantha and Mark*

Alvin was active in the Jewish War Veterans group which met at the Mandell JCC and they invited Bob to join as an honorary member. In 2010, the elevator that led up to their meetings on the 2nd floor stopped working. That's when Bob made his first gift to the JCC in memory of Alvin – to help replace the elevator. Before his death in 2007, Alvin got involved at the Jewish Community Foundation and created a scholarship fund. Together Alvin and Bob would make grants to organizations in Israel and in Greater Hartford.

Bob's accountant, Harlan Shakun, first suggested that he get involved as a donor to the JCC, and for the last 10 years has been a member of The Pillars Society. Bob also makes grants on a regular basis to fund JCC programs that are part of the Jewish Community Foundation's wishlist.

However, his biggest and best gift, according to Bob, has been to build two new playgrounds at the Beatrice Fox Auerbach Early

Childhood Center. "I love seeing children run around and be happy. Growing up we were very poor. So being able to do this for the kids means so much to me. To be able to get the enjoyment of giving this type of gift, while I'm alive, is very special." Joining Bob in support of the playground are parents, grandparents and friends of the Early Childhood Center, helping to see the dream of two new playgrounds come to life. In the spring, the playgrounds will be dedicated by Alvin Kennedy<sup>21</sup> and Robert Kennedy.

Family continues to be extremely important to Bob. Bob's family connection stretches now to the next generation. His second cousin Samantha hosts him in Washington, DC for the winter months and his other cousin Mark, who lives close by in Connecticut, speaks with him on a daily basis. Bob is deeply committed to his family and they are deeply committed to him.

*ECC Playground Donors at the groundbreaking ceremony:  
(L-R) Aaron Smith and daughter, Alyssa Stern and son, Cara Wallace,  
Amanda Katzman, Bob Kennedy, Jillian Feldman.*



# JNext Fall Fest

JNext kicked off its fourth year at the JNext Fall Fest on October 19, 2024 at Sparrow Pizza Bar with great food, fun drinks and amazing people. JNext is developing the next generation of JCC donors and leaders, while creating community and friendships. Thank you to all of our JNext members – you are making an impact.

mandell jcc

**JNext**



[WWW.MANDELLJCC.ORG/JNEXT](http://WWW.MANDELLJCC.ORG/JNEXT)



## LEGACY TESTIMONIAL:

### Karen Wyckoff

The JCC truly had been my second home for over 40 years!

My daughters Colby and Katie grew up at the JCC beginning with the Early Childhood Center, Kids Korner, and Camp Shalom. Growing up, all of their work experiences were JCC related. Colby currently is the Camp Shalom Director.

It was so great to be able to watch the campers grow up year after year, and then hire them to work at camp. Especially when they grew older, after college and they wanted an administrative position. When you've got camp in your blood, it never goes away!

The JCC memories I have will never be forgotten. I frequent JCC events, and occasionally just drop in to visit.

The JCC and Camp Shalom will always be in my heart.

*Katie, Karen and Colby*



David Jacobs and Bishop Peter A. Rosazza

# Why I Love the JCC

By Bishop Peter A. Rosazza

A few days ago I awoke in a cold sweat after a horrible nightmare. I dreamed that the JCC didn't exist! Instead of a building, there was an open field. When I came to my senses I gave thanks to the Lord for this wonderful enterprise and for the many people who, including myself, use it and are enriched by all it offers.

From the very first day after joining ten years ago, I was elated to find the JCC staff so welcoming, from Rachel to Marj, Lera, Amanda and Chris who greet me when I go by to the health spa. Kevin, one of the facilities staff, is always cheerful and I enjoy conversations with the men who have lockers nearby mine in the spa. I consider the JCC my home away from home, a nice break from my daily routine.

After my shower, I descend the stairs to the pool where I am greeted by Jaine or Brian or David or one of the young lifeguards. Like the spa, the pool area is immaculate and the water crystal-clear and the temperature just right for lap swimming. My goal is to swim three times a week, 16 lengths each time. After being a competitive swimmer in high school and one year at Dartmouth College, this is how I keep my connection to swimming going.

Two years ago while swimming, I experienced vertigo. The lifeguard on duty helped me exit the pool and Dave Laporte made sure I had a chair and was able to get my belongings from my locker. A nurse from the Early Childhood Center was called and contacted 911; I was taken to St. Francis Hospital where I was evaluated and sent home. The JCC staff could not have been more compassionate.

Dedicated with friendship and gratitude to  
**The Most Reverend  
Henry J. O'Brien  
&  
The Archdiocese of Hartford**  
*For the gift of land for the new JCC in 1961*

Also, I am happy to say that the first Archbishop of Hartford, Henry J. O'Brien, who lived at St. Thomas Seminary at the time, and where I live today, donated two acres of our property to the Jewish community in November of 1960, so that the Jewish Community Center could be built. To commemorate this generous gift, the leadership of the JCC created a plaque in his honor. And while I have lived a life dedicated to the Catholic faith, the JCC has been so good to me so I want to see it thrive. That's why I make an annual gift each year. The openness of the community is so refreshing. Any organization that breathes kindness, shows respect for human dignity and cares for the community, like the JCC, is somewhere I want to support.

Finally, I hope and pray that the JCC, under the leadership of my friend David Jacobs, will continue to enrich the lives of thousands, as it has mine.



Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell  
Greater Hartford  
Jewish Community Center  
335 Bloomfield Avenue  
West Hartford, CT 06117-1543  
860-236-4571  
www.mandelljcc.org



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## There are several savvy strategies you can consider to maximize your personal donations and year-end giving:

- 1) Donate appreciated stocks or securities directly to the JCC, which can potentially provide you with tax advantages. By donating these assets, you may be able to avoid capital gains taxes and claim a charitable deduction based on the fair market value of the donated securities.
- 2) Consider a gift from a donor-advised fund (DAF), which allows you to make a tax-deductible donation to the fund and then recommend grants to the JCC. This approach can provide you with an immediate tax benefit while also enabling you to support our mission in a sustained manner.
- 3) Use your IRA for good! A charitable IRA Rollover is a special provision allowing particular donors of age 70½ and above to make a QCD – a transfer of IRA assets directly to public charities like the Mandell JCC – thereby excluding that amount from taxable income and counting toward their RMD.
- 4) You may be eligible to get a matching gift from your employer (or your spouse's employer) which can double or triple the impact of your JCC gift. Be sure to contact your company's Human Resources office to see if your employer will match your gift.



To discuss your giving options,  
please contact **Elana MacGilpin**,  
Chief Development Officer,  
860-231-6317,  
[emacgilpin@mandelljcc.org](mailto:emacgilpin@mandelljcc.org).



DONATE

Mandell JCC Tax ID #: 06-0662142

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