



Building Jewish Community Throughout Europe

2019 Year End Report



Prepared for the Becker Endowment Fund
September, 2020

Inspiring Continued Growth and Development

In his bestselling book, *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell shares the mystery behind the health and wellness of a vibrant community in Roseto, Pennsylvania. Surprisingly, the people of Roseto are not particularly committed to exercise or even nutrition. In-depth research uncovered the explanation for residents' well-being: it was the close-knit, cohesive community they had created, in which each member is respected and supported. "The values of the world we inhabit and the people we surround ourselves with have a profound effect on who we are," Gladwell wrote.

As in Roseto, Jewish communities throughout Europe are progressing and thriving, and the reason is simple: your commitment and dedication to the values and power of a caring community are strengthening these Jewish population centers as they address and meet the needs of all.

Through the generosity of the **Becker Endowment Fund**, programs and services are being provided for every stage of life, from birth to the senior years, including education for youth, critical assistance for impoverished families, leadership development and interfaith dialogue for young adults, socialization for lonely elderly, and much more.

Each program and service that you support gives community members of all backgrounds the chance to bond and increase their knowledge and kinship, with their local Jewish community and the broader European Jewish family. These opportunities go way beyond one-time experiences. They allow participants to remain involved as both partakers and contributors throughout their lives, to be an active part of a vibrant local and global Jewish community. The fortifying effect of these many endeavors has been especially significant in 2020 during the global Covid-19 impact. The services, education, and connections your support has created between Jewish communities throughout Europe are helping to maintain the considerable progress made in 2019.





In this report, we share how your involvement throughout 2019 made a difference in the lives of so many, bringing people of all ages together to create strong, healthy communities that care for every member.



Grant Overview

In 2019, the following programs received support from the James H. Becker Endowment Fund:

	Amount (USD)	Page
Community Development		
Bulgaria Community Development Programs ¹	34,000	3-4
JCC Programs (Poland)	17,000	4-5
Pan European Leadership Training Seminars	20,000	6
Junction Programs for Young Adults	19,000	7
Measurement and Evaluation – ICCD	23,619	7
Community Development Subtotal	\$113,619	
Youth and Family Camps and Retreats		
Baltics	31,000	8-9
Youth and Family Camps and Retreats Subtotal	\$31,000	
Children		
Children in Need (Poland)	3,195	10-11
Youth and Children Programs (Bulgaria)	11,327	10-11
Children Subtotal	\$14,522	
Welfare NNV (Bulgaria)	15,000	12
Welfare NNV (Poland)	21,000	12
Welfare Subtotal	\$36,000	
2019 Grand Total	\$195,141	

¹ Funding for some Bulgaria community development programs is from the Morrison portion of the Becker Endowment Fund.



Community Development

Bulgaria Community Development Programs

In 2019, the Becker Endowment Fund continued to work closely with Bulgarian Jewry to rebuild communal life and revive the country's Jewish legacy post-Communist rule. Your longstanding partnership has resulted in expanded opportunities for Bulgarian Jews to be involved in and support the Jewish community.

The **Young Adults & Middle Generation Programs in Bulgaria** saw an increase in young adults and families seeking to play an active role in the Jewish community and learn more about Jewish culture and tradition. Young professionals now participate in Jewish leadership positions, and contribute their professional knowledge and experience, serving on the board of the new Jewish day school and other Jewish community projects. Young professionals took the initiative to form a steering committee to help guide the local Hadracha College program, which trains Jewish teens to take on leadership roles, such as being Jewish camp counselors. As a result, young adults are more likely to attend Jewish community events and programs, particularly those designed especially for them, such as Shabbat weekend retreats and Shabbat dinners.

The Organization of Jews in Bulgaria (OJB Shalom), JDC's partner in Bulgaria, provided a venue for many of the following 2019 activities that took place, including collaborations with several organizations as part of ongoing outreach:

Jewish Learning: OJB Shalom fostered Jewish identity and knowledge throughout the year. For example, at the beginning of each Jewish month, Shalom held an educational lunch for staff who had minimal Jewish background, including social workers, administrative workers, etc. An introductory class for those interested in converting to Judaism attracted non-converts as well, wanting to learn about Jewish life and tradition.

Family Programs: A variety of programs provided a pluralistic Jewish environment for Bulgaria's young Jewish families. A monthly educational/social event attracted mothers with toddlers. Special Jewish holiday events gave parents and children the opportunity to experience the beauty of Jewish customs together, and then replicate those practices. For example, on Shavuot, families united for a festive meal, and a discussion on how to create their own Shabbat traditions.

Makeathon of Tikkun Olam Makers: Focusing on the needs of the disabled in the community, the annual Makeathon gave innovators and inventors an opportunity to devise solutions to improve the world for disabled people. The program also achieved another essential goal: it provided an avenue for young Jewish adults to use their talents to engage with community life. In a show of gratitude that also connected the program to Jewish ritual, the Jewish community hosted a dynamic Shabbat dinner for participants.

Empower Young Leaders: Further supporting the disabled, the Jewish community took part in an initiative of the Listen Up Foundation, an advocacy organization for full inclusion,



empowerment and quality education for Bulgarian individuals who are hearing impaired. The Jewish community provided a sign language course for members to learn to communicate with the deaf, which culminated in a joint event with deaf individuals. This was a great example of giving the community an opportunity to learn new tools, then put them into action, building crucial bridges with people with disabilities in the community.

Do Good: In a new development, Jewish ophthalmologists began providing eye exams for low income elderly, identifying, addressing and improving vision issues long unchecked. This new program expands the existing emphasis on providing for the physical and emotional wellbeing of poor Jewish seniors in Bulgaria, from medical care to social interaction. Many live on meager pensions and have little to no family support since their relatives have immigrated. In 2019, the ophthalmology team continued to conduct eyesight screenings for kindergarten children, and provide free exams and glasses for needy people across Bulgaria.

JCC Programs (Poland): How You Connected Jews to Jewish Life

The center of Jewish life in Poland continues to revolve around JCC Warsaw. In Poland, where Jewish identity can be fraught with tension, the JCC's doors are wide open to anyone who is interested in learning more about Judaism, its rich culture, traditions, and history. Since its establishment six years ago, JCC Warsaw has provided a safe place for people of all ages to come and explore their Jewish background. The need and desire for education and accessibility is clear: JCC membership rose to 500 members in 2019, a 16 percent increase since the previous year. The Becker Endowment Fund helped build and sustain this welcoming environment for people like Nadia, who recently discovered her Jewish roots:

"When I found out I was Jewish, I didn't really know what that meant. I was too scared to walk into a synagogue, but the JCC felt different to me. I was more comfortable asking all my questions there, and I knew that if I could make it at the JCC, one day I would also be able to go to a synagogue. The JCC changed my life." – Nadia (not her real name) is part of JDC's Kaplan Leadership Initiative*, preparing to take her place as a Jewish leader.



Havdalah at JCC Warsaw's sixth anniversary party

You helped start Nadia on this life-changing journey. Your support of JCC Warsaw gave Nadia, and dozens of others, an approachable Jewish space in Poland where they feel comfortable questioning, learning and growing. You helped to strengthen Jewish life in Poland by responding to the needs of all generations:

*The Kaplan Leadership Initiative empowers current and future Jewish leaders to revitalize and strengthen their Jewish communities in the Former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Latin America, where Jewish communities are experiencing a renaissance.



Older Adults: A JCC survey revealed a challenge JCC Warsaw experienced in reaching older community members. As one person explained, "I associate [the JCC] with teens, young adults or young families, not for people like me who have grandchildren."

With your help, the JCC took action, meeting that challenge head-on by offering more multi-generational programs and making an extra effort to reach out to Warsaw's senior Jews:

- An intergenerational cooking workshop was launched in cooperation with the Polin Museum's TISH Food Festival.
- Older adults cooked recipes from their childhoods with their grandchildren; a partnership was created with the Jewish Community's Senior Club to hold joint activities for seniors and teens at the JCC.
- An intimate gathering was held at the JCC's new Hebrew library, where a Holocaust survivor shared her experiences with youth.

Children: Moadon Children's Club: Each week, 20-25 children have access to the many activities offered by JCC Moadon, with even more participants joining during holiday events. This year, Moadon ran activities in Hebrew for Warsaw's growing Israeli ex-pat community. When Poland's teachers went on strike, Moadon offered three full days of programming, including teaching Polish Jewish history, so parents could continue to work. In a sign that JCC members are taking on increased ownership in programs, Moadon parents formed a parent council to share concerns and implement feedback.

Teens: In addition to organizing fun social activities, the Hultaj teen youth group instilled a sense of social responsibility in 2019. Teens volunteered in the JCC garden and built the JCC Succah. The group also provided support to the greater community by organizing a fundraising drive for WOŚP, a large humanitarian effort that supports public healthcare in Poland, and volunteering at an animal shelter.²

Camp ATID: Camp ATID brought 75 campers ages 7 to 16 to the Polish countryside for 12 days of Jewish exploration. The camp counselors and educational staff were all driven by a similar goal: When they were children, Jewish camps changed their lives. Now they want to give this gift to the next generation.

² Funding for non-sectarian activities is from the Morrison portion of the Becker Endowment Fund.



Families and Community: An exciting inter-generational Passover event was offered by the JCC. Children participated in an interactive game in which they learned the Exodus story, while adults enjoyed a "Passover for beginners" workshop (pictured). For many participants, who grew up under communism, this was their first introduction to the holiday and its many rich traditions. Through the JCC's welcoming and inclusive space, participants felt comfortable learning how to prepare and lead a meaningful Seder.





Pan European Leadership Training Seminars

Professional Development for Social Workers Take a New Approach to Elder Care

A key to community resilience is the health and safety of its weakest members, the elderly. You furthered this goal by supporting two social welfare conferences in 2019 that brought together elder care professionals from throughout Europe— first in London, and then in Paris. The seminars introduced the idea that older adults should not be viewed simply as passive community members or recipients of aid; rather, they should be seen as potential pillars of communal life, through volunteering, serving on committees, and participating in local programming. Participants also developed new ideas for fundraising, networking and inclusivity of nursing home residents with dementia. Participant feedback indicated that the conferences gave them a new outlook about social services: **“I expanded my understanding of key trends affecting Jewish communities,”** and **“I gained new ways to think about Jewish social welfare.”**

YESOD Initiative Energizes Jewish Communal Leaders

In 2019, your gift nurtured European Jewish leaders and provided them with continuous professional development. Thanks to you, these leaders acquired the tools that enable them to inspire people in their communities to work together toward shared goals.

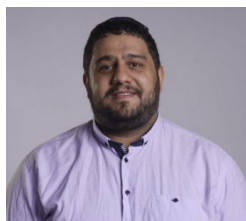


YESOD held a seminar for 15 Jewish community professionals from 11 European countries. Many are the "go-to" people in their communities who develop services and programs for everyone else, but have few resources of their own. This five-day, experiential “Vision and Purpose” seminar, held in Jerusalem, incorporated skill-building workshops, text-based study, and inspirational visits to Jerusalem landmarks. Professionals reflected on their agendas, shared insights about their communities with peers from across Europe, and felt energized about inspiring donors, volunteers, and community members.

Feedback from seminar participants was overwhelmingly positive, including this input from one UK leader: “I got exactly what I wanted from this seminar and more. The programming was very strong and I felt engaged. I loved the study of Jewish texts and thinking about how these ideas relate to my work. And the storytelling session was one of the best professional development sessions I've ever had – it was so engaging and gave me so many practical tools. I've already shared this knowledge with members of my staff. Finally, it was great to connect with the other participants, learn about their communities, and feel a part of a wider Jewish community.”



Your impact: Meet Maxim Delchev, Educational Director of Shalom, the Jewish Organization of Sofia, Bulgaria



Maxim Delchev is a perfect example of the profound difference programs like Jewish leadership training have made in many lives in Europe. Maxim attended Jewish summer camp and fell in love with the richness of Jewish tradition. As educational director of the Jewish organization of Sofia, Bulgaria, Maxim plays a central role in the growth of the country's Jewish communal life. He is determined to deliver original community programs that speak to the mindset of today's Jews.

He is known for creating community programs that combine Jewish tradition and modern life including sushi Passover seders and board games based on Jewish holidays. A Yesod³ Jewish leadership grant enabled Maxim to take a sabbatical in Israel and attend the Experiential Educators program at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. **"My year in Israel helped me to understand more about my Jewishness, and why my community work is so critical,"** Maxim says. Maxim is now back in Sofia, harnessing what he learned to keep Jewish community life engaging and welcoming to all.



Junction: Shaping Jewish Identity Across Europe

Europe's Jewish young adults are eager to build an inter-connected European Jewish network so that they can share ideas for supporting and strengthening their communities. You gave them plenty of occasions to do so in 2019 through Junction's Jewish networking programs that brought young adults together for professional development and to celebrate Jewish multiculturalism. You also provided a subsidy program to support new ideas to advance Jewish community. Related highlights from 2019 included:

Networking Opportunities: "Change, Blast, Reboot, Distruct and Preserve," was the inventive theme of an annual retreat for young Jewish leaders held in Athens. The three-day itinerary included lectures, discussion and hands-on activities. Nearly 200 participants from 47 cities and 25 countries across Europe explored how to make smart decisions in a rapidly changing world. This event took place in December, pre-coronavirus. Only a few months later, when all of us went into quarantine, these young adults drew on the inspiration they gained from the crucial retreat that you helped to make happen.



Junction Workshop in Athens combined creativity and discussion.

Microgrants Empower Social Entrepreneurs: Modern Jewish life across Europe is being shaped by your generosity. In 2019, you offered microgrants, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, to 41 social entrepreneurs to develop new initiatives in their Jewish communities. As a result, these innovators were able to launch a variety of programs including Jewish educational activities in the Balkans, cooking classes in Bulgaria, weekend retreats in Greece, a large Purim weekend in Switzerland, and egalitarian Jewish learning sessions in France. By year's end, thanks to the ongoing guidance and group communication you enabled, 70% had established program proposals for 2020 and 40% found alternative sources for future funding. By investing in these young adults, you initiated a series of new self-sustaining programs that will enrich community life throughout Europe, and continue to strengthen the connection participants have with Jewish communal life.

Planting Seeds of Community Life: Also, in 2019, Junction professionals fanned out across the continent to share their expertise with 300 professional and lay leaders. They brainstormed ideas for local programming for young adults, led workshops for young entrepreneurs, and consulted with young leaders about their plans for community events. These efforts enhanced Jewish life in local Jewish communities, and attracted new members to Junction's Pan-European activities.



Measurement and Evaluation – ICCD

In 2019, your commitment to evidence-based programming helped JDC-International Center for Community Development (ICCD) analyze trends in the Jewish world, and measure the impact of community initiatives. This information is vital in understanding and meeting current needs. For example:

Continued evaluation of Szarvas International Summer Camp Year Five: In the summer of 2019, ICCD again conducted research to analyze the impact of the popular Szarvas summer camp program on 13 to 16-year-old campers. For the first time, campers answered the survey via smartphone or tablet; 627 responses were collected. Findings were compared with previous Szarvas evaluations. Results confirmed trends observed in prior years, notably that Szarvas is a powerful vehicle for instilling Jewish knowledge and identity in campers from Eastern Europe, and that youngsters with the least exposure to Judaism in daily life tend to gain the most knowledge at camp. Survey data has been shared with key Szarvas staff and JDC Europe leadership.

Broadening interreligious tolerance and understanding across Europe continued to be a key initiative of JDC-ICCD. Strategic partnerships were formed with organizations working in interfaith relations. For example⁴:

Moishe Houses in Vienna/London/Munich/Paris/Barcelona: Your generosity enabled Moishe Houses throughout Europe to strengthen dialogue among young adults of different religions and beliefs. Jews, Muslims and Christians gathered together for Shabbat dinners, book clubs, holiday gatherings, educational events, and discussions.

Coexister: To further promote active harmony between religious groups, you made it possible for ICCD to maintain its key support for the annual leadership training event of Coexister France. The 2019 conference attracted 80 interfaith activists from multiple countries, enabling them to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies to return home and promote Coexister interfaith activity in their local community groups. Participant feedback was enthusiastic and positive:

"There was such amazing atmosphere in my room! A Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew, able to listen to each other's prayers and ask each other questions!" - Nathan, Nantes

"This was my first national event, and I had some very enriching encounters with people so different that I wouldn't have met them in any other place." - Sophie, Lyon

⁴ Some funding for inter-faith activities is from the Morrison portion of the Becker Endowment Fund.



"I often felt alone with my beliefs and questions. The affirmation I received here made me feel more confident in my convictions." Alizée, Dijon

Learning From Each Other – Many Muslims and Jews in England attend single-faith schools as children, and do not have the opportunity to interact with people of other faiths until they attend university. Through your support, Jewish and Muslim students on 12 university campuses across the UK and Scotland, were able to meet to learn and understand more about one another. A series of interfaith discussions, joint educational sessions and social action projects were offered through the UK University Jewish Chaplaincy initiative, Learning From Each Other. Activities highlighted similarities and enabled participants to discuss issues in an informed and respectful manner.

Youth Camps and Family Retreats

Jewish Camping in the Baltics

"Thanks to Olameinu, I learned about so many things – not only about being Jewish but other topics as well that have changed my outlook on the world and the way I live my life. Going to Olameinu has always been absolutely magical; it's a unique and invaluable experience."

-Elizabeth, 16, Tallin, Estonia

Jewish camp is a pillar of communal life in the Baltics, and a high point of the year for participants like Elizabeth, who, in 2019, spent her fifth summer at Olameinu, the flagship Jewish camp of the Baltic States: (See more information about Olameinu below).

Last year, campers of all ages learned more about themselves and one another, made new friends, and increased their Jewish knowledge and Jewish community connection through a blend of typical camp and creative educational activities. There were many first-time offerings like Israeli cooking classes, a survival workshop, theater, teambuilding sessions, Krav Maga (Israeli martial arts), and in-depth discussions about Jewish issues. As always, the special Shabbat atmosphere was a highlight, with campers and counselors experiencing joyous traditions together, singing, and celebrating arm-in-arm, creating memories to carry them through to their next reunion.





You have made these special sights and sounds of Jewish camping a happy reality for hundreds of participants at winter and spring camps held in the Baltic region. Most significantly, you have brought together Jewish children from across the Baltics and helped them to realize the value and importance of having a strong Jewish identity and belonging to a local and global Jewish community. “Olameinu is important because it connects people from different communities. Olameinu is the reason why children understand that we are much stronger when we are united than when we are alone,” says Ariela Mareida, a counselor from Riga, Latvia.

Some highlights from Olameinu’s 2019 programs:

L’chaim Spring Camp in Estonia: L’chaim kicked off the 2019 Jewish camp season with 83 campers (a record high!) ages seven to 17, a five-member leadership team, ten madrichim, and seven workshop leaders. Prominent Jewish educators taught classes on Judaism, music, art, Israeli dancing, music, and videography. A camp high point was the “Big Jewish Game,” a quiz aimed at deepening campers’ knowledge of Judaism in an interactive, fun, and competitive format. Campers came together daily to bond over shared experiences and to learn more about the topic of the day in an informal way.

Aviv Spring Camp in Latvia: A record 136 campers spent an action-packed six days exploring the theme, “Israel: Past, Present, and Future.” Campers learned about a new topic each day, such as the land of Israel in Biblical texts, Zionist visionaries, and Israel’s socioeconomic diversity. At the conclusion of Shabbat, camp counselors presented a moving performance about Jewish values such as love, peace, and family. This was followed by a traditional Havdala ceremony (conclusion of Shabbat), with all 170 campers and counselors singing in a circle, arms wrapped around one another, accompanied by guitar and drums. The spirited and united atmosphere made a powerful impression on children and adults alike. “I have been at every Aviv spring camp since I was 7 years old. I just cannot imagine my childhood without Aviv.” V.P., age 14 from Riga, Latvia

Kadima School for Counselors in Latvia: Many campers, inspired by their camp experiences, decide to become counselors themselves in order to continue to be part of the camp and provide that same positive experience to new campers. In April, 85 counselors took part in a four-day seminar in Latvia, jam-packed with lectures, Jewish text study sessions, leadership training classes, and art-based workshops. This year – for the first time – the Kadima School brought together new counselors to complete initial training in their hometowns of Riga and Tallinn with experienced counselors as mentors. Participants celebrated Shabbat through challah baking and leading Kabbalat Shabbat (opening of the Sabbath) and Havdalah (end of Shabbat/beginning of the new week). Counselors created a strong community based on shared Jewish values and learning. Young leaders who transition from camper to counselor share the love of Jewish camping that you have so generously passed on to Jewish children in Eastern Europe.

Olameinu Summer Camp for all Three Baltic States: For 11 days in July, nearly 350 children – supervised by 41 madrichim, 12 coordinators, two program directors, three Jewish educators,

five workshop leaders, and support staff – flourished at the Olameinu Jewish summer camps. The educational program introduced children to key Jewish historical events, taking place during biblical times, the Holocaust years, and modern Jewish life in Israel. They learned about different Jewish cultures and traditions that make up the fabric of contemporary pluralism, and about the core Jewish values of hesed (kindness to others) and tzedakah (charity). Participants returned home enriched and excited to participate in their home Jewish communities and learn more.

Olameinu Mishpacha Family Camp:

Held in Lithuania, the camp included 77 families from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – a total of 140 adults and 127 children – and a team of 28 staff



members and visiting professionals. Of those, 63 families had attended previous camps and 14 families joined for the first time. The five jam-packed days offered games, art, music, theater, and educational activities steeped in Jewish values and culture. Participants discussed the joys and challenges facing Jewish families in the Baltics. Elena and Pavel Zeigermacher and their children, Liora, 5, and Ron, 2, were newcomers to Olameinu this year. They loved their first camp experience and are excited to return next summer and to one day enroll Liora and Ron in the Olameinu camp for children. “Olameinu Mishpacha is a special place where we can meet Jewish friends and spend four lovely days in peace and joy, learning and having fun in a Jewish environment,” Elena says.

Children

Children in Need (Poland)

In 2019, the Becker Endowment Fund brought community and security to vulnerable Jewish children and their families in Poland, one of the poorest Jewish communities in Europe. You helped struggling families feed their children and ensured that they had access to the educational and recreational activities they need to grow and realize their potential. Most importantly, you helped them to feel part of a caring, supportive community.

Providing Security

You helped to cover the costs of food, medical care, school supplies, clothing and emergency financial aid. You not only met these families’ material needs – you also built up their dignity. By investing in JDC’s professional and compassionate staff in Poland, you ensured that parents would feel comfortable accepting the desperately-needed assistance that improved their



children's lives. And by helping **42 impoverished children** to get exactly what they need – new clothes, the right books for school and other basic supplies – you enabled them to feel healthy, proud and ready to join their better-off peers.

Providing Community

Summer camp is one of the most formative Jewish experiences a young person can have. Thanks to your gift, in addition to the subsidies that all campers enjoy, **16 impoverished Jewish children** received additional scholarships enabling them to join their peers for two weeks as campers in the Polish countryside at Camp Atid. The theme was *Brachot* (blessings), with each day centered on a different type of blessing. For example, a Master Chef competition included cooking activities and informal learning on the Jewish tradition of making blessings over food, and a day-long treasure hunt was dedicated to the Jewish traveler's prayer. Campers returned home feeling more connected to community life and eager to continue to take part in their Jewish community. Thanks to the Becker Endowment Fund, they can choose from a range of family camps, youth clubs and classes at the JCC. For children whose families struggle to get by, this sense of belonging and purpose represents a beacon of hope for a better future.

Youth and Children Programs (Bulgaria)

Research has shown that when children have Jewish experiences at an early age, their Jewish identity and connection to Jewish community is strengthened. With this concept in mind, the Beit Shalom JCC hosted many Jewish educational programs for families with young children. These included an ongoing get-together to celebrate the new month, as well as holiday celebrations, each attended by an average of 10 mothers with babies under the age of two. Holidays were a time for special events including a weekend-long series of programs, to celebrate the holiday of Shavuot, each customized to suit a different segment of the Bulgarian Jewish community.

Caring for Needy Jewish Elderly

Welfare NNV (Bulgaria)

According to international data, Bulgaria continues to rank among the lowest in the EU regarding GDP per capita, standard of living, quality of life, health care, education, and freedom of speech. The numbers tell a heartbreaking story. A four-member household in Bulgaria, consisting of two

adults and two children, needs \$1,193 per month to cover the basic living expenses of food and shelter. However, in 70% of Bulgarian households, household income is lower than the cost of living, with 25% living under the poverty line, with a monthly household income under \$202. How can a family of four possibly survive with so little?

JDC Bulgaria and OJB Shalom responded, investing significantly to provide for the welfare needs of the most vulnerable in the community. Your support has been critical to enabling the provision of our flagship efforts, including:

Sustaining Families: The Jewish Family Service provided substantial support to OJB Shalom member families who are struggling financially. Families received food vouchers, utility payments, employment coaching, and scholarships for school and Jewish community activities. Additionally, children who had learning disabilities or suffered from mental illness benefited from medications and therapy, to help them overcome these major life challenges.

Championing the Elderly: In 2019, OJB Shalom provided essential services to 312 retired senior citizens who are not eligible for restitution funding from the Claims Conference. With low pensions of about \$158 U.S. dollars, this generation's income is limited and fixed. Any economic change, including a spike in utility or



medication costs, creates a major hardship. And seniors can no longer rely on their children for support, with so many of them unemployed and facing their own financial challenges. OJB Shalom made sure that elderly Jews had access to lifesaving services including homecare, food vouchers, medical insurance, monthly utility support, medication and psychological support, and financial aid for Jewish community events. Through your generosity, hot meals were provided to 120 Jewish older adults in Sofia and to another 60 seniors able to attend programming at the JCC Day Care Center. Meals were brought to the homes of those who are homebound and to 120 Jewish older adults outside of Sofia. For many, this is their only stable source of nutritious food.



In addition, older adults gathered at the JCC Day Care Center to celebrate each of the Jewish holidays, providing a surrogate family for one another at what can otherwise be a particularly lonely time of year. Approximately 130 older adults attended each holiday celebration, including the Passover seder, enjoying the traditions together with their peers.

Welfare NNV (Poland)

There are families in the Polish Jewish community who are destitute. Some adults have lost jobs or simply don't earn enough to support their families, others suffer from illness, or are disabled. Paying for food, health care, utility bills, clothing, and educational expenses is a constant challenge. They have often had to go without these basic life needs. Fortunately, thanks to your involvement, these indigent children and adults had a resource to turn to for help.

Through a partnership with the Puszke Foundation, a local non-profit, welfare assistance was provided to those community members most in need. The Puszke Foundation has close ties with JCC Warsaw and was formed by young leaders through a grassroots initiative. Your support allowed the foundation to provide the services needed. This endeavor epitomizes the essence of community and the importance of caring for all.

With Deep Thanks



When Jana was just a young girl, the Iron Curtain fell and she slowly became involved in Jewish activities as a child, then as a teen, and eventually as an adult. She remains active, along with her husband and children, in the Jewish community in their hometown of Tallinn, Estonia, including attending Olameinu Mishpacha.

Looking back on her experiences, Jana said, “At Olameinu, we felt connected to a bigger, more global, Jewish community. We saw that families from our community and other Jewish communities shared similar values, and we realized how much fun it was to be part of this big Jewish family.”

Your generosity and commitment made a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of Jews like Jana in 2019.

Many families like Jana’s are coming together to build an extended Jewish family throughout Europe. They are participating in Jewish community events, furthering new friendships, developing an interest in Israel, and sharing exciting educational experiences together. This is what your kindness and caring are accomplishing for countless children, young adults, and elderly in multiple Jewish communities and in broader communities across Europe.

Thank you for your commitment as we work together to ensure that the Jewish community has access to Jewish life, culture and tradition and in this way, to build identity, bolster community, family and mutual responsibility. The Becker Endowment Fund’s investment is ensuring the well-being of each community member, the vital link between generations, and the continuation of Jewish life.



About JDC

JDC is the leading global Jewish humanitarian organization, working in 70 countries to lift lives and strengthen communities. We rescue Jews in danger, provide aid to vulnerable Jews, develop innovative solutions to Israel's most complex social challenges, cultivate a Jewish future, and lead the Jewish community's response to crises. For over 100 years, our work has put the timeless Jewish value of mutual responsibility into action, making JDC essential to the survival of millions of people and the advancement of Jewish life across the globe.

More information can be found at www.jdc.org.

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