

The Power of

Kehillah





The Promise of Kehillah

Living Our Values

Dear Kehillah:

Crisis has a way of pulling communities together. When COVID-19 struck, many of us were hit hard—but our kehillah rose to the occasion. Schools, parents, and funders alike mobilized to meet emerging needs in the months that followed.

Ahead, you'll read about the 2020-2021 school year programs that persevered in person, and those that seamlessly moved to remote learning. You'll read about the meals brought to school families in quarantine. You'll learn about the tremendous participation in our annual Kehillah Shabbos. And you'll discover the astounding generosity of our Kehillah Fund members, new and old, who steadfastly reminded our schools: we're here for you. In dollars and in actions, we are here—so you can stay focused on providing Torah-based education to the children of our kehillah.

As we finally see a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel—where once there was great uncertainty, now I see only great promise. As I look back on the incredible ways our community lived its values this year, I am overcome by the unlimited possibilities of what we can accomplish when we come together.

Indeed, as Hashem's light warms our community, I am comforted that He has been shining the way for our kehillah all along.

With gratitude,



MAX DAYAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020 Year at a Glance

Our Impact, By the Numbers

A Message from Our Founders

Dear Kehillah:

When we started the Kehillah Fund in 2004, we had a vision: a strong Chicago Orthodox community, unified around a shared commitment to educating our children. Never have we been prouder to call that vision a reality than this year.

Chasdei HaSh-m, the Kehillah Fund has continued to bring our community together, despite a year marked by difficulty and challenge. In partnership with our generous donors and dedicated schools, we kept our promise to make high-quality Torah-based education accessible for every child—even if, chas v'shalom, a parent loses their job or falls ill.

Together, we've created a powerful network of individuals, families and schools who ensure that even when times are tough, our children are not the ones who suffer. It is humbling and gratifying to see so many people uniting to actualize this commitment.

To each and every one of you who joined us in our work this year: thank you. Thank you for being a lifeline to our schools and students.

And, thank you for making our vision come to life.



Joseph A. Walder Elizabeth Walder

JOSEPH AND ELIZABETH WALDER
FOUNDERS AND BOARD DIRECTORS

NUMBER
OF SCHOOLS

11

NUMBER
OF STUDENTS

2,966

DOLLARS
RAISED

1/1/20–12/31/20

\$752,919



TOTAL
DONORS

1/1/20–12/31/20

1,495



FUND ALLOCATIONS

1/1/20–12/31/20

GENERAL FUND
\$669,464

ACHDUS FUND
\$119,500

RESOURCE FUND
\$40,000

COVID RELIEF FUND

\$500,000

A gift of the Walder Foundation to support our schools during the pandemic.

DONOR
RETENTION

88%

AVERAGE
ANNUAL GIVING

\$505



Kehillah Schools Thrive and Grow During Challenging Year

Even a devastating global pandemic couldn't keep our partner schools from pushing forward over the past year. From new performing arts programs to major campus expansion projects, here's what's been happening at our schools.

At Torah Academy of Buffalo Grove, the 2020-2021 school year was one of growth, with several new students transitioning to their unique, child-centered program. "Some kids needed more enrichment, and others needed more support," said Elisa Zehnwirth, Principal, adding that some had felt left in the dark by the public schools' "one-size-fits-all" remote education shift.

Arie Crown Hebrew Day School also took advantage of unexpected opportunities this year by transitioning their annual girls' performance to a multimedia video project. "It's gonna be out of this world," said Rabbi Menachem Kirshner, Limudei Kodesh Principal.

Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov (JDBY) moved forward with the launch of a new curriculum aimed at integrating performing arts across all classes and grades. The program helps teachers "add more 'heart' into the education of students through the performing arts," said curriculum developer Dina Storch.





Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi (YTT) is planning an \$18 million campus expansion. “We’re out of space!” exclaimed Rabbi Menachem Levine, CEO, adding that the school is growing by 80 students annually. “If we keep going in this direction, we’re going to have to do this again in 10 years,” he said.

Shaarei Chinuch Day School, a Montessori school, also achieved an exciting milestone this year, gaining official certification with the Illinois State Board of Education—an important stamp of approval affirming that their policies, curriculum, and more are up to the state’s standards.



“
To us, the appeal of the Kehillah
Fund is the idea of investing in our
future as a united community.
”

—Moshe and Elisheva Siegal,
Veitzner Cheder Parents



At the JCFS Knapp Yeshiva, 2020-2021 marked the first year in many that a single member of the clinical team was dedicated to providing comprehensive support to all 13 students in the kindergarten through 8th grade Knapp Yeshiva. “This strengthens our entire program, improving the connections with students, as well as teachers and families,” said Rabbi David Rosenberg, Coordinator of Jewish Education.

REACH, a program of ATT that receives Kehillah Fund support, ramped up a major professional development program training teachers to support students with learning challenges more effectively.

Miles away, students at Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School also strengthened connections—with each other, and with nature—at the school’s all-new “Teva Means Nature” outdoor program. Though conceived as a response to social distancing, it’s been such a hit that it may continue even after the pandemic passes.



“ By teaching, I feel I make a difference in the lives of my students, which, in turn, helps to make their world better. If I can make a positive impact on just one child, then I feel I have been successful. ”

—Betty Hainsfurther, Arie Crown Teacher





The Achdus Fund

A Jewish Education for Every Child

Although our community strives to make Jewish education accessible for all, the tuition burden remains formidable for many. That's where the Achdus Fund comes in—a special allocation the Kehillah Fund gives day schools to support families in need.

In 2020, the Kehillah Fund distributed \$119,500 in Achdus funding for 239 students—nearly double the previous year. “It’s a tremendous relief for these families to know that some or all of their outstanding tuition is covered,” said Rabbi Shimshon Malahimov, Administrator/ Executive Director of Yeshiva Ohr Boruch. “It frees up funding to take care of other basic needs, like paying the mortgage or putting food on the table.”

Equally important is the moral support these funds convey, especially during a challenging year. “They’re grateful someone is looking out for them, that they’re not in this alone,” he added.

At Torah Academy of Buffalo Grove, support from the Achdus Fund makes Jewish education possible for families who might not otherwise have considered day school due to the costs. “We don’t turn anyone away for financial hardship,” said Elisa Zehnwirth, Principal. “The Kehillah Fund helps make that possible.”

Sam Medow, Executive Director of Arie Crown, echoed the sentiment. “It is a core value of Arie Crown that no child is turned away because of financial constraints,” he said. “The Kehillah Fund is our partner in that commitment... a partner in action, not just in words.”

Rising to the Challenge

Kehillah Fund Schools Respond to COVID-19

When COVID-19 hit, schools citywide faced the same challenge: how can we continue educating our children, but safely?

One year later, it is with tremendous hakoros hatov that we applaud our Kehillah Fund partner schools in rising to meet that challenge, and succeeding with flying colors.

When our schools were forced to shut their doors, they became “experts” at remote education almost overnight. Some continued learning by phone, while others moved to video platforms. “Online instruction can turn students into passive observers rather than active participants, but our staff used multiple platforms to engage students in exciting and innovative ways,” said Rabbi Yitzchok Wolf, Cheder Lubavitch Dean.

From dropping off craft projects at students’ homes, as Shaarei Chinuch did, to sending a list of ingredients for Keshet students to prepare meals at home with online teacher guidance, each school stepped up with creativity and innovation, whether teaching students or supporting families.

Hillel Torah’s PTA, for instance, delivered meals and care packages to families in quarantine. “They really supported families socially and emotionally through all of this, too,” said Chaya Gordon Burstyn, Director of Communications.

Thanks to the immense effort of school administrators, all Kehillah Fund schools safely resumed in-person or hybrid learning by fall. “Every day of in-person education is important, essential, and priceless,” said Rabbi Menachem Levine, CEO of JDBY-YTT.

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As community members who are personally invested in supporting our schools, we feel that giving to the Kehillah Fund is essential.

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—Rabbi Sammy and Mrs. Tzipora Joseph, JDBY/YTT Parents



Kehillah Shabbos

Highlights Collective Generosity

Echoing Parshas Terumah

On Parshas Terumah, shuls across Chicago participated in the long-standing tradition of Kehillah Shabbos, highlighting the Kehillah Fund and its critical work. As illuminated in the Parsha, Klal Yisroel came together to support the building of the Mishkan. So too, we need the collective generosity of our community to support Jewish education.

On Kehillah Shabbos, many Rabbonim emphasized this message. Rabbi Efraim Twerski of Khal Chasidim relayed to his mispallelim, “Chazal tell us that the world stands on the pure Torah learning of children. Contributing to the Kehillah Fund not only supports Jewish education but it supports the entire world.”

Inspired by this call to action, community members representing 18 shuls joined the Kehillah Fund or increased their contributions. Mrs. Robyn-Lee Rabin, a new Kehillah Fund member affiliated with Darchei Noam of Glenbrook said, “We feel it’s our duty to help any child that needs a day school education.”

Our 11 day schools also partnered in raising awareness of Kehillah Shabbos, sharing the impact of the Kehillah Fund’s critical support with their families and community members.

Elizabeth Walder, Kehillah Fund Co-Founder and Board Director, added, “Dr. Walder and I are gratified to see the community coming together through the Kehillah Fund to provide vital support to our schools and families.”

A Message from Our Rabbinic Advisor

Dear Chicago Jewish Community,

I hope that this newsletter finds you and your families well.

The greatest moment in world history was the giving of the Torah at Sinai. It was a fulfillment of the purpose of creation, and it symbolically represents the goals and aspirations for the future development of our children. To scale the “mountain of life” and achieve success with the Torah as our guide.

We know that the original Kabbalas Hatorah (receiving of the Torah) was only possible because we stood “k’ish echad b’lev echad” (“one man with one heart”). Our sources teach us that if just one person would have declined or been absent, we would not have merited receiving our national treasure.

This message underscores the core mission of the Kehillah Fund; if we stand united as a community, we can provide the highest quality Torah education to every child. If we work together and care for the needs of others, we can make certain that our schools’ doors stay open to all families, regardless of financial means.

With wishes for the continued growth of all our children in happiness and good health!

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yaakov Robinson".

RABBI YAAKOV ROBINSON
RABBINIC ADVISOR

The Kehillah Fund allocates dollars to our schools through three primary funds:

GENERAL FUND — Reliable monthly distributions provide a baseline of support to our schools. Funds are allocated based on the total number of students enrolled in kindergarten through 8th grade.

ACHDUS FUND — Financial support to bridge the gap in our schools for families who cannot afford to meet their tuition commitment. Funds are allocated per request to each school on an annual basis.

RESOURCE FUND — Supplemental aid to support students with specialized learning needs (i.e. adaptive materials and technology, teacher training, salaries, and more). Funds are allocated annually based on the number of enrolled students in kindergarten through 8th grade

Our People

The Kehillah Fund Team

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Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Elizabeth Walder, Founders

Kehillah-Wide Survey Yields Valuable Insights

Nearly 400 Community Members Share Their Thoughts

Everyone knows the old adage: two Jews, three opinions. Well, we wanted to hear them all! To better understand and serve our constituents, the Kehillah Fund recently collected feedback from over 350 members of our kehillah on topics such as core values, giving habits, familiarity with our work, and more.

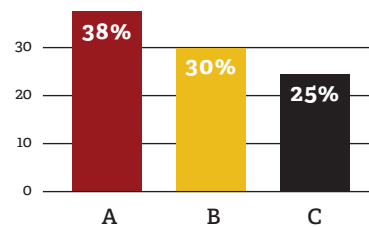
The results confirmed that Jewish education is an extremely important and closely held value in our community—as well as a commitment to taking care of our own community’s needs first.

Clearly, our work supporting more than 3,000 local Jewish children in 11 area schools is right on target!

Thank you to everyone who participated in this critical initiative. We appreciate you lending your voice to strengthen our efforts to meet the needs of every child and family in our kehillah.

Top 3 Personal Values of Our Kehillah

- A. Your children/grandchildren’s day school or your alma mater
- B. Jewish day school education across the Chicago Orthodox community
- C. Care of those in the community



Total Survey Respondents: 357





Ways to Give

Help Keep Our Kehillah Strong

Become a Monthly Member

Giving monthly is the best way to support our kehillah. Become a member of the Kehillah Fund family by scheduling your monthly gift at kehillahfund.org/monthly.

Increase Your Monthly Gift

Consider increasing your monthly donation to amplify your impact at kehillahfund.org/increase.

Make a One-Time Gift

Make a difference by scheduling your one-time donation at kehillahfund.org/onetimegift.

Other Gift Opportunities

Life insurance, real estate, stock gifts, will gifting and other tax strategies are available at kehillahfund.org/plannedgiving.

Sponsor a Day of Learning

Honor a loved one, commemorate a yartzeit, honor a parent, teacher or leader, add significance to a simcha, or create a zechus for a loved one's refuah. Learn more at kehillahfund.org/dayoflearning.

Employer Match Program

Many employers match employees' charitable contributions. Gifts from spouses and retirees may also qualify for a match. Visit kehillahfund.org/employermatch.

Corporate Giving

Learn how your business can show support for our community through a gift to the Kehillah Fund at kehillahfund.org/corporategiving.

We also welcome gifts by check to Kehillah Fund, 5215 Old Orchard Road, Suite 450, Skokie, IL 60077. All donations are tax-deductible. EIN 26-3948613

To learn more, visit kehillahfund.org/donate, or contact Max Dayan, Executive Director, at mdayan@kehillahfund.org or (224) 470-2927.

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We were inspired to give when we realized there was an opportunity to help ensure that our community youth get a solid Jewish education.

— Jenna and Adam McKenna, New Kehillah Fund Members

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5215 Old Orchard Road, Suite 450 | Skokie, Illinois 60077 | www.kehillahfund.org