

# Spring Newsletter



## Stories of impact: JOIN Israel’s Our Own Way initiative... community building & resilience in Sderot

JOIN Israel's Our Own Way initiative (OOW), based in the city of Sderot, began as an innovative at-risk youth program and has burgeoned into a community-wide supportive network for a full array of vulnerable populations. OOW identifies at-risk youth, elderly, single mothers, new immigrants, and impoverished living in subsidized housing, enlists lay-leaders, and introduces support groups. Group participants are encouraged to formulate ideas to improve their communities.

OOW acts as a forum in which pressing issues and concerns of these groups are brought to the fore, and then works together with the Municipality to address them. Knowing that there's someone that represents them and communicates their needs to the city is assuring and empowering for these communities.

As Pnina Meyerowitz, director of the program, explained:

“Our big thing is building a sense of community belonging, and community resilience. Everyone has something to give and everyone can be a pillar and a strong part of the community.”

Situated on the border with Gaza, Sderot is subject to the most bombing out of any city in Israel. In response, the program created a network of “building activists” among volunteers, who are trained to offer support in their building when Sderot is under attack. The building activists receive training in first aid and leadership skills to identify when someone is in distress and needs more serious attention.

*Click here to read more ...*





## Sunset Benefit: A Night of Unity on Yom Ha'atzmaut

More than 125 philanthropists from the Tri-State area came together Tuesday, May 14th for JOIN Israel's Sunset Benefit celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut, gathering for A Night of Unity to support terror victims in Israel following October 7th.

The funds raised by the event will go towards the organization's Emergency Campaign to provide resources for Southern Israelis in need. Anna and Jonathan Knoll hosted the event.

The event was held at Elsie Rooftop, and featured keynote speaker Shai Davidai, Assistant Professor at

Columbia Business School, who gained notoriety for bringing attention to the school's failure to address rampant antisemitism on campus following the October 7th terrorist attacks.

The headliner was stand-up comedian Talia Reese, who has been featured on talk shows, Sirius XM, and in publications such as The Wall Street Journal and The Jerusalem Post. Shahar Regev, Israeli singer and cellist, did a special performance of Hatikva.

The fundraiser featured a silent art auction, with exquisite art created by Israeli and Jewish artists.



### Vodka & Latke

Together, JOIN Israel's Young Leaders spread light amid the darkness, and raised funds for JOIN Israel's Emergency Response in Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot and Southern Israel.

Guests enjoyed an open bar with Hanukkah themed cocktails, a kosher Latke Bar and dessert table. The annual fundraiser was hosted in the West Village of Manhattan.



### Vishniac with Aspen Film

JOIN Israel continued its partnership with Aspen Film with a Film Screening of Vishniac in Aspen, Colorado.

Prior to the screening, attendees gathered for a reception at Gallery Maximillian.

The event included a discussion with Beth Kean, CEO of The Holocaust Museum LA, and Susan Wrubel, Executive Director of Aspen Film.

The funds raised from the event will provide emergency aid to the elderly through JOIN Lifeline.



### Welcome to the Team

We are excited to welcome Libby Bergier-Pesin to the JOIN Israel team in her role as Development Assistant.

Libby went to Muhlenberg College, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Music.

Libby has a passion for Israel and helping others and spent a semester in Northern Israel teaching English to disadvantaged Israeli elementary school students.



## 🌟 Celebrating Simchas! 🌟



Young Leadership Board Member Catherine Weingarten's engagement to Jason Levick

Board of Directors Neil Wessan's son Eric Wessan's marriage to Brittany Kabakov

Board of Directors Rick Smilow's son Griffin Smilow's engagement to Rachel Goldman



## JOIN Lifeline

Meet Chaim, an 87 year old Holocaust survivor. He lives off a modest pension of only 2,500 NIS per month.

He unfortunately had to go to the Emergency Room without a referral. His health fund refused to pay, so JOIN stepped in to help subsidize the expense.



## Outdoor Training

Outdoor Training is a series of group challenges which promote group building, and self-development to learn to manage life's challenges.

For students, it teaches self-exploration, leadership development, and connects struggling students to their peers, educators and school.



Your \$150 donation can give an at-risk child a safe and fun summer at JOIN Day Camp with new friends and caring counselors.



## Welcome new Board of Directors



### Natalie Eisen

Natalie is the founding partner of the Adrian | Natalie Team. The real estate team which has sold over \$300M since its inception in 2018.

Natalie is enthusiastic about helping underprivileged elderly individuals in Israel through JOIN Lifeline. She is excited to contribute to improving JOIN Israel's fundraising initiatives.



### Selig Sechzer

Selig Sechzer, PhD, has had a distinguished career in economics & risk management for top financial institutions and as an International Economics Professor.

Dr. Seczher is excited to bring his years of experience to support JOIN Israel and start JOIN's corporate sponsorship initiative.

### Condolences to

Board of Director  
Lauren Rieder on the  
passing of her mother



### How to Donate

**Credit Card:**  
[www.joinisrael.org](http://www.joinisrael.org)

**Check:**  
135 Rockaway Turnpike,  
Suite 101  
Lawrence, NY 11559

**Venmo:** @joinisrael

**Stock & other donations:**  
Contact FJC (212) 714-0001  
or [fjc@fjc.org](mailto:fjc@fjc.org)

**EIN Tax ID:** 13-3643245

**CLICK HERE TO DONATE**

**Staff:** Stephen Bisk (Executive Director), Alex Schieber (Director of Development), and Libby Bergier-Pesin (Development Assistant)

**Board of Directors:** Bryan Weingarten (President), Maurice Dayan (Vice President), Doug Cohen, Natalie Eisen, Daniel Goldberg, Linda Greenblatt Gordon, Jeffrey Keswin, Jeffrey Kleinhaus, Anna Knoll, Daniel Nir, Lauren Rieder, Selig Sechzer, Rick Smilow and Neil Wessan