

NECHAMA
JEWISH RESPONSE
TO DISASTER

Annual Report 2024-25

ABOUT NECHAMA

NECHAMA – Jewish Response to Disaster, is the only Jewish organization to offer sustained direct services in the US in the aftermath of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and other natural disasters.

NECHAMA - Jewish Response to Disaster emerged from the great Des Moines flood of 1993. Learning of 50 deaths and \$15 billion in damage to the Iowa capitol city, Steve Lear, a Minneapolis financial planner, donated funds to the recovery but wanted to do more. He recruited three friends, borrowed a truck and tools, and headed south to Iowa. That experience started a grassroots movement to create an organization based on the Jewish ethical value of Tikkun Olam – repairing the world by helping others. NECHAMA has grown from a small group of friends and neighbors to a national organization and network of staff and volunteers.

Since its founding, NECHAMA has mobilized hundreds of times in all parts of the continental United States, relying on thousands of volunteers who have provided millions of dollars of labor to support relief and recovery.



MISSION

NECHAMA, rooted in the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, provides comfort and hope to communities by engaging volunteers in disaster recovery work.



A LETTER TO OUR READERS

Dear Friends,

2024 was a hugely important year for NECHAMA - Jewish Response to Disaster. Emerging from COVID and a long-term Hurricane Ida-focused residency in Louisiana, NECHAMA stood at a crossroads. Four years before, our board of directors had established aspirational priorities:

- 1) Humanizing Jews and Judaism in communities shattered by disaster;
- 2) Building the identity and engagement of our volunteers, particularly Jewish volunteers; and
- 3) Providing comfort (the translation of "nechama" from hebrew) and healing for individuals and communities impacted by natural disasters.

Last February, the board hired me to lean into these priorities and actualize all of them.

Programmatically, we deployed a number of times in 2024 as we responded to tornadoes in Oklahoma, floods in Iowa, and multiple hurricanes in Louisiana and Florida. Everything changed on September 26 when Hurricane Helene made landfall. After checking out storm damage in northern Florida, we arrived in Asheville on October 6, planning to stay for six months. Because of the extensive need, we will remain through September. Initially focused on debris and brush removal and mucking and gutting, we have now turned to rebuilding. Over 450 volunteers from around the country have joined us, completing more than 6,000 volunteer hours. Hundreds more will come in the coming months! Please consider volunteering with us by signing up [here](#).

In addition to its physical impact on North Carolina, Hurricane Helene also was a vehicle that allowed antisemitism and hate to spread in its wake. Multiple new online conspiracy theorists claimed, among other things, that Jewish control of the weather caused the storm and Jewish ineptitude at FEMA and unspecified connections to Israel stymied effective recovery. As the same kind of hatred and bigotry emerged in the wake of the California wildfires, clearly this will be a component of future large scale natural disasters.

While NECHAMA has always played a constructive role in introducing non-Jewish clients to Jewish representation, we have just launched a new public affairs project to affirmatively combat antisemitism and promote relationship building in the regions where we work. We will actively connect with influencers in local communities, opening doors for NECHAMA to explain why we are there, share how Jewish values are American values, and encourage non-Jews to work side-by-side with us at our worksites. Continue reading this report to learn more about our new Project to Combat Antisemitism and a second one that advances Jewish education and engagement opportunities for Jewish volunteers, all helping with Jewish continuity.

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A LETTER TO OUR READERS

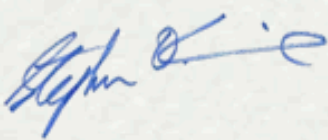
With our organization still-based in the Twin Cities (view our well-received documentary [here](#) that shares NECHAMA's origin story), I have hired a number of new, talented and committed staff members who are effectively advancing our goals. You can see our collective vision and results throughout this annual report. My small but mighty team now works remotely and lives in eight states, including Minnesota. We are also about to focus on a new region. Through our California Wildfire Mitigation Project, we will remove brush and vegetation at at-risk institutions in the greater Los Angeles region to help prevent future wildfires.

NECHAMA's long deployment in North Carolina and our overall expansion require investments. Financially, NECHAMA had a solid year in 2024, with many new individuals, foundations, and Jewish federations joining us as contributors. We achieved a highly entertaining Rockers in Relief Program in New York, NECHAMA's most successful year-end appeal ever, and, most recently, our first crowdfunding campaign. The crowdfunding campaign was our most successful fundraiser ever and has provided us with the resources to replace our 2012 and 2016 primary deployment vehicles. I want to profusely thank all of our supporters for their generosity, engagement, and willingness to partner with NECHAMA.

Before I close, I want to single out the six extraordinary members of our 2024 board of directors. They have served with distinction and nurtured this organization for many years, often in roles more traditionally held by professional staff members. Beginning this past January, they were joined by six new board members who together are assuming the more traditional roles of fiduciary oversight, policy development, and fundraising. I thank all of them for their dedication and particularly single out Steve Matloff, my board president, colleague, and friend, who deserves our collective deepest appreciation for leading NECHAMA into the future.

I'd love to talk to any of you about NECHAMA's journey and our exciting plans for the future. Please connect with me.

Onward,



Stephan Kline
Chief Executive Officer



NECHAMA DEPLOYMENTS

Iowa

Starting in May of 2024, the Midwest saw some of its worst flooding in decades. It wasn't one massive event, but rather multiple large local events that spanned the spring and summer, overwhelming local and state resources. NECHAMA deployed to Emmet and Dickinson Counties, Iowa in July. Assisting local emergency management with additional capacity and conducting 16 assessments, NECHAMA provided technical assistance in mold mitigation to 6 homeowners, and mucked and gutted 5 homes.



Oklahoma

May 2024 was one of the busiest tornado seasons in recent memory. NECHAMA deployed to Holdenville, OK after a tornado destroyed 14 homes and left 2 dead. While in Holdenville, another devastating tornado hit Bartlesville (2 hours from Holdenville) and we redeployed. Over the course of the week and half deployment we assisted 12 homeowners with brush and debris removal and clearance.



Louisiana

NECHAMA deployed to southern Louisiana after Hurricane Francine made landfall as a category two storm in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. NECHAMA did debris cleanup and gut work for 3 homeowners, but after seeing a massive food need, we partnered with two other NGOs on the ground to facilitate the serving of 1,400 meals in the two weeks after the storm.



Western North Carolina

Hurricane Helene Response

On September 26, 2024, Hurricane Helene made landfall in the Big Bend area of Florida, as a Category 4 storm. The storm caused mass flooding and extensive wind damage in Florida, before moving up the East Coast and creating damage all the way up to Virginia. As the storm hit Appalachia it left havoc in its wake. Due to the size of the storm and its continued strength after landfall, Helene caused hundreds of deaths and was one of the deadliest and most expensive hurricanes ever to impact the United States.

Starting two days after the storm, NECHAMA had teams surveying damage in Florida. Then, NECHAMA recruited and trained several hundred virtual volunteers to work with our NGO partner Crisis Cleanup. These volunteers filled the essential role of conducting remote intake interviews with survivors who were reporting home damage. After consulting with the local government and the wider NGO community, it became clear that NECHAMA was going to be most effective in Western North Carolina.

In early October, once NECHAMA was cleared by the local government and active search and rescue subsided, NECHAMA deployed on the ground. The NECHAMA operations team spent the first few weeks of deployment camping in Black Mountain, NC doing mucking and gutting work before transitioning to a more permanent shelter in Henderson County, NC.

Our initial work focused on homes that had been flooded and needed debris removal and gutting due to both contaminated flood water and black water sewage back ups. NECHAMA teams also worked to clear land that had been inundated with flood debris, sometimes even including whole vehicles washed in by flood water.

Since being on the ground, NECHAMA has developed close working relationships with local NGOs and community partners, who we have collaborated extensively with on projects and resource sharing. NECHAMA has welcomed **NUMBER** of volunteers, as of **DATE**. Approximately seventy percent of our volunteers are Jewish, including local volunteers from around North Carolina, delegations from Jewish day schools, youth movements, synagogues, Hillel and AEPi chapters, and national Jewish organizations. Our remaining volunteers represent a wide cross-section of churches, universities, and individual volunteers.

As we move past the six month anniversary of the storm. NECHAMA has transitioned from debris clearing and gutting into interior home rebuilds. NECHAMA continues to rely on an amazing core of local volunteers and volunteers that travel to work on site with us either as individuals or as part of delegations. NECHAMA plans to be in Western North Carolina NECHAMA plans to be in Western North Carolina through September. Consider signing up to volunteer [here!](#)



NECHAMA PROJECTS



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

NECHAMA's disaster relief efforts go beyond immediate recovery by promoting positive community relations and combating antisemitism. Guided by our core value of Tikkun Olam, we provide disaster relief without religious bias, ensuring a visible Jewish presence in communities that often have limited exposure to Jewish life. By caring for individuals regardless of faith, we not only assist disaster-affected areas but also challenge harmful stereotypes, foster understanding, and reduce the spread of antisemitic beliefs, all while strengthening Jewish ties in rural communities.

Our initiatives focus on promoting interfaith understanding and combating conspiracy theories tied to disaster relief efforts. By partnering with local organizations like Asheville GreenWorks for Tu B'Shvat, the North Carolina Council of Churches for Yom HaShoah, and Agudas Israel for Good Deeds Day, we work to rebuild both physical structures and community relationships. These efforts ensure that Jewish life is visible, impactful, and helps foster meaningful connections across diverse faiths and backgrounds.

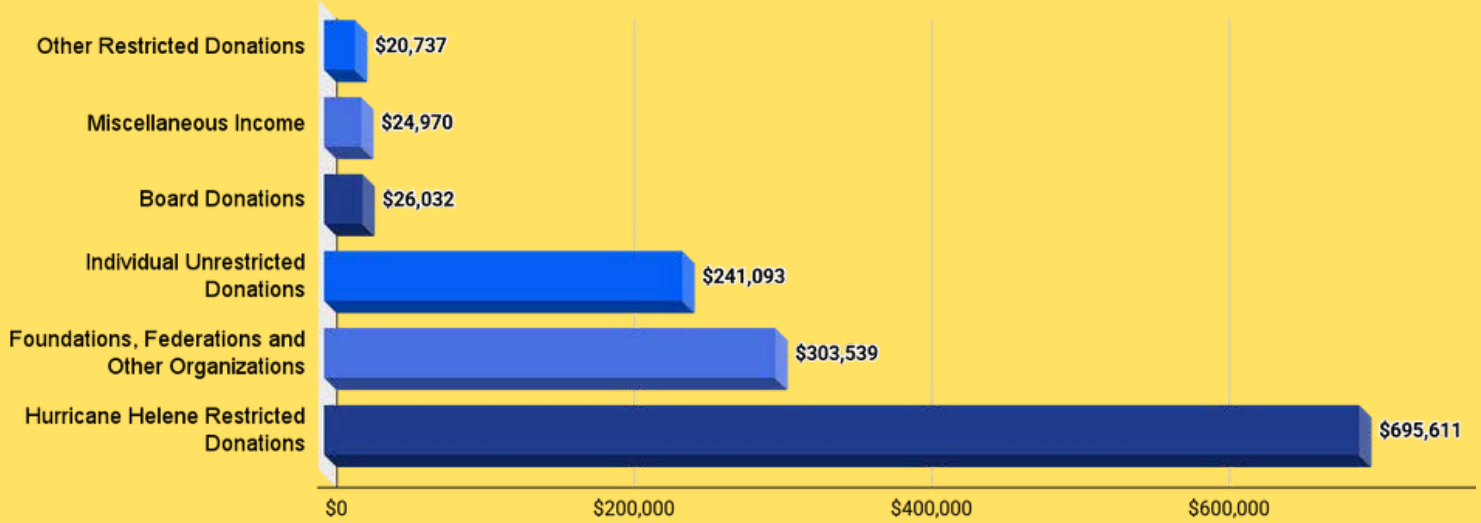
JEWISH EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

The Jewish Education and Engagement initiative aims to embed Jewish values into NECHAMA's disaster response by developing training curricula, facilitating staff workshops, building vital community partnerships, and promoting the nationwide "Resilience Shabbat" initiative. This work will deepen the connection between Jewish values and recovery best practices, fostering learning and collaboration across the organization. Key impacts may include enhanced volunteer and staff understanding, stronger partnerships leading to increased support, meaningful engagement during field deployments, and broader community awareness. Ultimately, this project will strengthen NECHAMA's ability to provide hope and healing in times of need.



2024 REVENUE

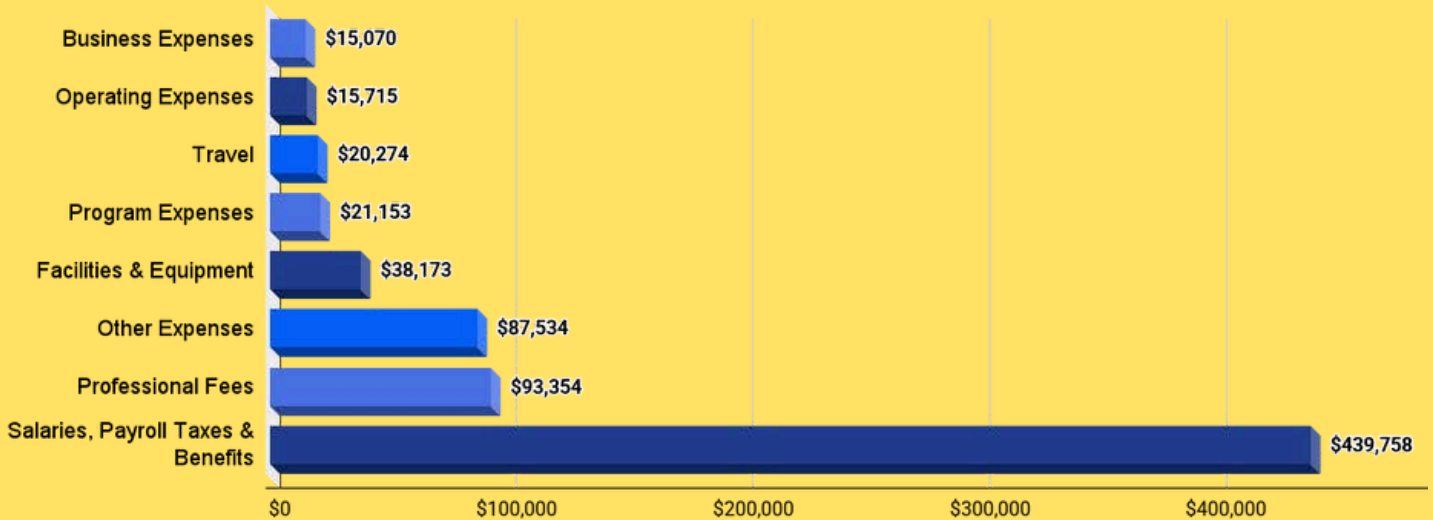
2024 Revenue Through 12/31/24 (Final, Unaudited):



Total Revenue: \$1,311,982

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

2024 Expenditures Through 12/31/24 (Final, Unaudited):



Total Expenditures: \$731,031

2024 EXPENSES

ROCKERS IN RELIEF

On November 13, 2024, NECHAMA hosted our annual benefit concert "Real Estate Rockers in Relief," in partnership with Hunton, Andrews, Kurth LLP. Hundreds of people gathered at Irving Plaza in NYC for a night of great music and to support a great cause! We are so grateful for our partners and sponsors who made this event happen! [Reach out](#) if you would like to join us for Rockers '25!



NECHAMA JEWISH RESPONSE TO DISASTER IN THE MEDIA

[Nechama, MN-Founded Disaster Relief Org, Prepares Volunteer Effort In Asheville While Facing Down Antisemitism](#)



TC Jewfolk / October 15, 2024

[Around the Clock: What Happens Before, During & After a Disaster](#)



Duke Today / February 26, 2025

[Tikkun Olam is a Tool to Combat Antisemitism](#)



eJewish Philanthropy / June 6, 2024

We do this restorative work not because you are Jewish but because we are.

- Stephan Kline

NECHAMA might be, for their entire life, the only Jewish organization they ever interact with. It's a very unique opportunity we have when we show up on site.

- Shlomo Rozenek

[After flood of antisemitism post-Hurricane Helene, relief group Nechama adds program to combat disaster-related Jew hatred](#)



eJewish Philanthropy / January 24, 2025

[NECHAMA Jewish Response to Disaster aids WNC communities with hope and rebuilding](#)



abc13 News / Jan 1, 2025

STAFF & BOARD

STAFF

Lori Alemán

Director of Finance and Administration
lori@nechama.org

Max Manasevit

Director of Operations
max@nechama.org

Shlomo Rozenek

Director of Development and Communications
shlomo@nechama.org

Rabbi Scott Klein

Jewish Education and Engagement Consultant
scott@nechama.org

Tzlil McDonald

Project Director, Combating Antisemitism
tzlil@nechama.org

Isa Sloan

Hurricane Helene Team Lead
isabelle@nechama.org

Stephan Kline

Chief Executive Officer
stephan.kline@nechama.org

Thom Pegg

Operations Coordinator
thom@nechama.org

Robyn Wasserman

Volunteer Engagement Coordinator
robyn@nechama.org

BOARD

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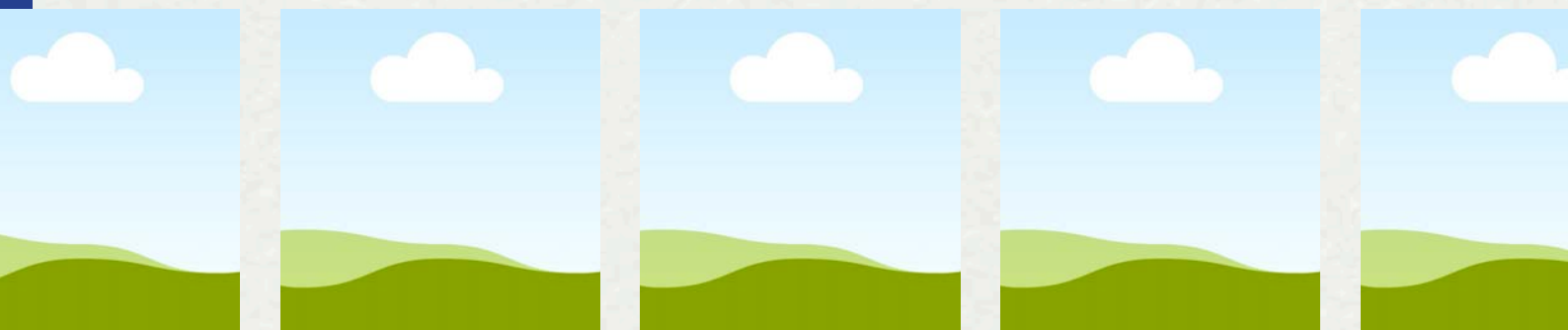
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OUR KEY SUPPORTERS

We would like to offer a special thank you to our key 2024-2025 funders!

\$150,000+

Community Foundation of
Western North Carolina

Jack, Joseph, and Morton
Mandel Foundation

Leon Levine Foundation

\$50,000-\$149,999

Jewish Federations
of North America

Posner Foundation
of Pittsburgh

Tzedek Social Justice
Foundation

\$25,000-\$49,999

Community Foundation of
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Diane and Guilford Glazer
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S. Mark Taper Foundation
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\$10,000-\$24,999

Alpha Epsilon Pi
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Wheeler Family Foundation

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Saxon Family Fund

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Star Family Charitable Gift Fund
Temple Beth El: Boca Raton, FL
Temple Emanu-El: Dallas, TX
Wendy Morris

JEWISH COMMUNAL PARTNERS

A special thank you to the Jewish communal organizations nationwide who made NECHAMA's work possible this year, whether through sending volunteers or supporting our work.

Adamah	Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun: Milwaukee, WI	Jewish Federation of Greater Oklahoma City	Mt. Zion Temple: St. Paul, MN
Adas Israel Congregation: Washington, DC	Greater Miami Jewish Federation	Jewish Federation of Greater Washington DC	Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Agudas Israel Congregation: Hendersonville NC	Hillel International	Jewish Federation of Los Angeles	North Carolina Hillel
Agudath Israel Etz Ahayem: Montgomery, AL	History @ Hand	Jewish Federation of Portland	North Louisiana Jewish Federation
Alpha Epsilon Pi	Holocaust Speakers Bureau, NC	Jewish Federation of Tulsa	Orthodox Union Relief Missions
Asheville JCC	JCC Association of North America	Jewish Federations of North America	Shaare Shalom Congregation: St. Louis Park, MN
B'nai B'rith International	JDC Entwine	Jewish Foundation of Greensboro	Shomrei Torah WCC: Wayne, NJ
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation	Jewish Communal Fund of New York	Jewish Heritage North Carolina	St. Paul Jewish Federation
Beth David Reform Congregation: Gladwyn, PA	Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles	Jewish Leadership Collaborative of WNC	Tampa JCC & Federation
Brevard Jewish Community	Jewish Community Legacy Project	Jewish Secular Community of Asheville	Temple Beth Zion: Buffalo, NY
Camp Judaea	Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Asheville	JPro	Temple Beth-El: Boca Raton, FL
Camp Sthetl	Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana	Judea Reform Congregation: Durham, NC	Temple Emanu-El: Charlotte, NC
Carolina Jews for Justice	Jewish Family Services of Western North Carolina	Leo Baeck Temple: Los Angeles, CA	Temple Emanu-El: Dallas, TX
Charlotte Jewish Foundation	Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge	Mem Global	Temple Israel: Charlotte, NC
Community Synagogue: Sands Point, NY	Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte	Mid Kansas Jewish Federation	Temple Mt. Sinai: El Paso, TX
Congregation Ahavas Chesed: Mobile, AL	Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville	Minneapolis Jewish Federation	Temple Rodef Shalom: Falls Church, VA
Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel: Boise, ID	Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans	Minnesota JCC	Jewish Secular Community of Asheville
Congregation Beth HaTephilia: Asheville, NC			UJA-Federation of New York
Congregation Beth Israel: Asheville, NC			UJA-JCC Greenwich
Congregation Beth Or: Ambler, PA			Western North Carolina Jewish Federation
			Wilshire Boulevard Temple: Los Angeles, CA



Donate to NECHAMA! Your donation will ensure we can continue deploying after disaster strikes and contributes to Tikkun Olam nationwide.

nechamadonate.funraise.org



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