

JDC CELEBRATES 95 YEARS

CONSTANCY. COMMUNITY. COMMITMENT.

It all began with a telegram. In 1914, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau sent a cable to philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff asking for \$50,000 to feed starving Jews in Palestine during World War I. Within one month, the money was raised. Through a collaboration of three American Jewish relief organizations, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) was founded. Today, JDC touches hundreds of thousands of lives and transforms communities in over 70 countries around the world. The following ten stories depict JDC's global impact during the celebration of its 95th year:

JDC Programs in the Former Soviet Union for Elderly Jews

JDC serves as a lifeline to Jewish elderly in the former Soviet Union who are so impoverished that they are among the poorest Jews in the world. A network of more than 170 JDC-supported *Hesed* welfare centers and other Jewish organizations provides relief to more than 160,000 destitute elderly Jews in 2,900 cities, towns, and villages.



A client of JDC's programs for elderly in the FSU.

Dmitry lives in Kishinev, Moldova, he says, "We are alive only because of *Hesed's* help and care." Dmitry was born in 1952 in Bendery. After completing school, he joined the army, and worked in construction, spending years in northern Russia. He lives with his son, daughter, son-in-law, grandson, and his wife. The family lives in one room in Kishinev. The one-square-meter kitchen is in a narrow corridor, and the apartment is heated by a stove. All the family members have serious medical conditions, and their monthly income is \$100. Given the difficult circumstances, JDC stepped in to provide critical services and care for the family. They regularly receive food, medication, winter relief, and other critical social services.

IFCJ-JDC Partnership for Children in the Former Soviet Union

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ)-JDC Partnership, founded by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, helps to ensure the material and social well-being of 25,000 Jewish children at risk in the former Soviet Union. Established in 2008, it provides food, medicine, shelter, clothing and social services, creating a long-term response to the unmet needs facing Jewish children and their families throughout the region.



David and Luka benefit from the IFCJ-JDC Partnership.

David, 6, and his brother Luka, 2, live in Tbilisi, Georgia, in a dilapidated three-room apartment with their parents and grandmother. They have only experienced struggle and deprivation in their young lives, as refugees from South Ossetia, following the Georgia-Ossetian War. The boys are growing up in a home with cracked walls, uneven floors, and appliances that don't work. The IFCJ-JDC Partnership has reached out to David and Luka and their family by providing food through a card used to purchase groceries, medical assistance, medicines, hygiene supplies, clothing, warm blankets, and heating fuel to get through the bitter Georgian winters. Their mother says, "It would be impossible, even a tragedy, to live without the help we get from the Partnership."



Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda, A Special Project of JDC

Fifteen years have passed since the mass murder of nearly one million people during the course of 100 days in Rwanda. In 2009, the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda's Eastern Province opened to house 125 orphans. The residential and educational community is modeled after Israeli youth villages which were built to serve children who lost their parents in the Holocaust. Agahozo is the Kinyarwanda word for "a place where tears are dried," and Shalom is Hebrew for "live in peace."



Marcel, a student at ASYV.

Marcel is one of the 1.2 million children orphaned by the Rwandan Genocide. Marcel's mother, father, brothers and sister were all killed. Hope for Marcel came with the opening of the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village. "I feel like it's a miracle to come to the Village to live, because I was in a bad life. I don't have parents. I don't have a family. I was a street child living on the streets. Now I have hope for my life," he says. This living and learning community provides security, structure, and support for young people who desperately need a healing environment.

STRIVE - Israel Collaborates with Harlem-based Nonprofit to Combat Unemployment

JDC's STRIVE program in Israel partners with STRIVE in New York City to share the experiences of Harlem's nonprofit job placement and training organization. Harlem STRIVE has a proven track record and success rate in transforming difficult-to-employ individuals. The collaboration with JDC helps to alleviate Israel's unemployment issues by working to develop the potential of Israel's chronically unemployed. At STRIVE Israel, men and women participate in month-long workshops addressing attitudinal and skills training, followed by an intensive two-year program.



A client of STRIVE Israel.

Iris lives in Israel and comes from a religious family in Tel Aviv. She is married with six children. Because her economic situation was dire and her husband was out of work, she was referred to STRIVE Israel after being unemployed for 16 years. She was a housewife and stay-at-home mother. STRIVE Israel helped Iris balance short-term employment goals with long-term career aspirations and gave her the strength and motivation to find a job as a secretary as she explores her options to study speech therapy.

JDC's Women's Health Empowerment Program

JDC's Women's Health Empowerment Program in partnership with Susan G. Komen for the Cure® is an innovative public education movement that encourages the early detection of breast cancer. The program builds leadership, creates services, strengthens communication, and facilitates partnerships with government agencies and medical communities. Projects have been carried out in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Israel and the Palestinian territories.



A participant of JDC's WHEP program.

Milica from Visegrad in Former Yugoslavia participated in the Komen Race for the Cure® in Sarajevo, two days after her chemotherapy treatment. Neither her illness nor the fact that she had to travel four hours to get to Sarajevo would stop her. She felt empowered by the experience of meeting other women who are struggling with breast cancer. Breast cancer is a leading killer among women in Former Yugoslavia. Milica said that talking to breast cancer survivors gave her the strength she needs to fight her own battle.

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JDC's Supportive Communities for Elderly in Israel

JDC's Supportive Communities for the Elderly in Israel expand community-based assistance for senior citizens. Supportive Communities are located in urban or suburban centers and run by coordinators, Community Mothers or Fathers. Services include assistance with day-to-day needs and social activities designed to improve the quality of life. With JDC support, seniors can maintain their independence and remain living safely and confidently in their own homes for as long as possible.



Community parents help elderly clients in Israel.

In one Israeli neighborhood, Haim, the local Community Father, helps to meet the needs of seniors in his Supportive Community. He arranges home repairs, escorts pensioners to physicians, and makes home visits to offer assistance and provide support. He says, "More than anything, this is a job that offers a great deal of personal satisfaction. I feel that I am using my skills to make a difference in the lives of the elderly and in the community."

JDC's Programs to Assist Jews in Cuba

Although Jews have lived in Cuba for hundreds of years, it wasn't until the first half of the 20th century, with the threat of Hitler's rise in Europe, that the island experienced a significant increase in Jewish immigrants. The Castro government's decision to grant broader religious freedoms in the early 1990s opened the door for JDC to reach out to Cuba's 1,500 remaining Jews. JDC was the catalyst for an ongoing resurgence of Jewish life, faith and culture, after 40 years of communist rule. From Havana, where the majority of Cuba's Jews live, to smaller communities throughout the island, Jews are observing the Sabbath, conducting Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, and celebrating the Holy Days, with the assistance of JDC's broad array of programs.



Juan David celebrating his Bar Mitzvah.

Juan David, born in Havana, celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in August 2008 with pride in the hearts of his family members and his entire Jewish community. Juan faced many levels of adversity to achieve his dream of reaching his Bar Mitzvah, including the death of his father and a near-fatal car accident. Despite a hurricane that left many islanders without lights and resources, Juan chanted the verses of prayers before a visibly moved congregation. The family was overwhelmed with tears of joy for a promise fulfilled for one family, and for Cuba's 1,500 Jews.

JDC's Buncher Community Leadership Program in Europe

Established in 1989, many Buncher graduates hold major leadership positions in Jewish communities worldwide. JDC's Buncher Community Leadership Program, a JDC partnership with the Buncher Family Foundation and the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh, is dedicated to training Jewish community leaders in Europe, the former Soviet Union, India, Latin America and around the world. Operated by JDC, the program offers a series of seminars and workshops in local communities and in Israel. Mentoring strengthens Jewish identity, affinity for Israel, and commitment to community service.



Simon celebrating Jewish life in Europe.

A Buncher Community Leadership Program graduate, Simon is a 26-year-old CEO of the National Jewish Federation of Lithuania, and Vice President of the Jewish Community of Vilnius. He participated in the Buncher program in 2003 as the youth club coordinator. Today, he has a master's degree in business administration and has dedicated his life to serving the Jewish community. In addition to his role as a key figure in Lithuania, he directs a regional summer camp for over 500 children. He says, "I would like to thank the Buncher program for making a change in my life."



JDC's Baby Help Program in Argentina

JDC's Baby Help Program in Argentina was launched in the aftermath of the country's financial collapse in 2001. JDC set up social assistance programs, including support for vulnerable pregnant mothers and young babies, in cooperation with the local Jewish community. The purpose of Baby Help was to alleviate the poverty and trauma for single mothers and their young children who were devastated by the economic crisis. A bond was formed that led to a greater connection to the Jewish community and tradition. This connection has withstood the worst of Argentina's crisis and remains strong today.



Baby Help clients celebrate Shabbat.

Delfina, 3, Cynthia's daughter, is growing up in Buenos Aires. After the 2001 economic crisis, Cynthia was desperate to put food on the table, and afford clothes and medicine. JDC's Baby Help center is now their second home. Cynthia says, "Delfina explains the Shabbat candles, and she takes me back into memories that I thought were lost forever. But they are still in my heart. To see my daughter grow, enjoy, and learn at Baby Help reminds us of a time when her grandfather suffered as a child in a post-Holocaust refugee camp. To belong to Baby Help means to continue our grandfather's story and to strengthen our values. It is education, and it is peace. Baby Help is to be re-born."

Jewish Day Schools in Tunisia

On the Tunisian island of Djerba, a vital network of Jewish schools, funded primarily by JDC, was created nearly 60 years ago by the schools' principals David and Tsevia Kidouchim. At the Torah v'Hinukh Schools, boys and girls study a top-notch curriculum that has enabled students to excel in international exams. Activities are conducted in Hebrew, and courses in secular subjects supplement their yeshiva education.



Young Tunisian Jewish boy benefitting from JDC educational programs.

At a recent celebration, 13 young girls and boys successfully passed the Jerusalem exams in ancient and modern Hebrew. These demanding exams, administered by Hebrew University in Jerusalem for Jews in the Diaspora, cover the evolution of the Hebrew language from the Tanach (Five Books of Moses, Prophets, Writings) and the Talmud to Hebrew poetry in medieval Spain, the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), and modern Israeli writers. The achievements of these young people marked a milestone for the community and strengthened their hope for the future vibrancy of Jewish life in Tunisia.

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

Since 1914, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has given global expression to the principles that all Jews are responsible for one another. Working today in over 70 countries, JDC acts on behalf of North America's Jewish communities and others to rescue Jews in danger, provide relief to those in distress, revitalize overseas Jewish communities and help Israel overcome the social challenges of its most vulnerable citizens. JDC also provides non-sectarian emergency relief and long-term development assistance worldwide.

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