



“Lunch & Learn” Teleconference Summary Notes February 5, 2008

Jewish Youth Philanthropy 101: Hearing Founders/Funders’ Perspectives

Speakers:

Barbara Gervis Lubran, Founder, Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute, Greater DC Area, and Co-Chair, Jewish Teen Funders Network

Ricky Shechtel, Founder, Jewish Community Youth Foundation of Princeton Mercer Bucks and Co-Chair, Jewish Teen Funders Network

Moderator: Stefanie Zelkind, JFN Director of Youth Philanthropy/Jewish Teen Funders Network

Stefanie opened the call by welcoming the 50+ callers from all over the country, and provided a brief overview of the Jewish Teen Funders Network (JTFN). She described the ways in which JTFN serves as a central resource for the field, highlighting in particular the following:

- Training and networking for professional and lay leaders
- Facilitating information exchange, primarily through the Online Resource Center at www.jtfn.org (to be launched shortly)
- “Best Practices in Jewish Youth Philanthropy” Seminar to be held in June 2008

She then introduced the two speakers Barbara Gervis Lubran and Ricky Shechtel.

Barbara Gervis Lubran defined Jewish youth philanthropy programs as “teens ages 13-18 engaged in learning about – and doing – grantmaking, tzedakah, and philanthropy.” She pointed out that the focus is on grantmaking as opposed to fundraising activities, and that the key discussion is about giving. Barbara then described what brought her to youth philanthropy, how at the time of her kids’ B’nai Mitzvah, they wanted to give their money away, but she was left doing all of the research...so she created the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute (JYPI) in the Greater DC area. Barbara briefly described the JYPI program: how the teens go on site visits, review proposals, build consensus, and then come to conclusions as to how they should fund (see more at www.jypi.org).

“Why do I believe so deeply in Jewish youth philanthropy?” Barbara asked.
“Because I know it works. I know that when you treat young people with the kind of responsibility that we give them, and treat them seriously, they rise to that.”

When push comes to shove, what comes out of their mouths and the kinds of decisions they make, make me not at all worried about our next generation of philanthropists. It is up to us to provide them with opportunities and programs to grow.” She added that JTFN is working on figuring out how we can grow as a field, grow our expertise, and make it so that local leaders do not have to reinvent the wheel in developing programs.

Ricky Shechtel then described the Jewish Community Youth Foundation she started in Princeton a few years ago. She wanted to help teens in her area learn how to give, and emphasized that they did not need to be wealthy, or much older, to get involved. Ricky first learned about Jewish youth philanthropy at a Jewish Funders Network conference a few years ago, and she then went on to research the various program models. She tweaked the models and partnered with Jewish federation and Jewish Family and Children Services in Princeton, which now administers and runs the program. Ricky described her program, which runs from 8th – 12th grades, with teens focusing on a different set of issues each year (8th grade – local Jewish agencies, 9th grade – national agencies, 10th grade – arts and culture, 11th grade – advocacy and outreach, 12th grade – Israel).

Ricky spoke about the importance of transparency and information-sharing, so that everyone can learn from each other. She believes that JTFN will help in this effort by making it easy for leaders to share materials, etc. with each other. She closed by pointing out that “we [adults] can learn as much, if not more, from the teens involved in this work as they can learn from us.”

With the presentations over, we moved into a Q & A period. Some of the questions and responses are summarized here.

Question: I’m starting a group in Pacific Palisades, CA. We had our first meeting with 15 kids, and I noticed that the kids (ages 13-17) were ageist. The older kids felt that they didn’t want the younger kids to be part of their founding committee. They were very selective. How can you deal with that?

Responses:

Ricky: When we started out, we divided the kids because we felt the younger kids would speak more freely if they were in their own peer group. Is it possible that you could do two groups? Or grade by grade?

Barbara: I don’t think it’s appropriate to put them together. Developmentally the older kids are right, they shouldn’t be with the younger kids. That said, if someone else has another model, it would be good to hear about. No “right” way of doing this...

Question: What is the time commitment in these programs?

Responses:

Ricky: For our particular program, we have them meet 6 times a year, which includes site visits and presentations to each other about the site visits. We have our meetings on Sunday nights and give them dinner; this seems to have the least impact on their weekend and sports schedules. We are sensitive to how busy teens are, so the amount goes down as they get older because they get busier. Even when we take them out of town, we have them present to one another on their way back because we know setting up another meeting is difficult. By 12th grade, they meet 3 times/year. Each teen contributes \$120, which is matched by our foundation and another, and then gets pooled. Every group of 20 has \$7200 to give away.

Barbara: The 8th and 9th graders have 7-8 sessions a year on Sunday afternoons. The 10th and 12th graders have 4 sessions starting in January. The younger kids give \$500 each (scholarships available) and the older kids give \$200 or so, since they are further away from Bar/Bat mitzvah money.

Question: How do you recruit teens?

Responses:

Ricky: The federation has a list of every kid who has been Bar/Bat Mitzvah'd, so we mail to them. We market in local newspapers and in synagogue newspapers, and now we have word of mouth, siblings etc.

Barbara: When you start out, if you can get the buy-in of a few families and ask them to reach out, it helps.

Next JTFN “Lunch & Learn” Teleconference:

TBD

Check www.jtfn.org for details.