WHAT IS THE LONG TERM IMPACT?

Jewish teen foundations have now engaged thousands of teens for more than ten years, with alumni raving about the powerful, and often transformative, experience of participating in a collective Jewish grantmaking process. Building upon decades of success of secular youth philanthropy efforts, we believe that this early introduction to philanthropy sets the stage for a lifetime of giving through a Jewish lens.

WHAT IS A JEWISH TEEN FOUNDATION?

Groups of roughly 25 teens come together to explore Jewish values, create a mission statement, learn the fundamentals of grantmaking, review grant proposals, make site visits, build consensus, and award grants to non-profit organizations in their communities, in Israel, and around the world.

The Jewish Teen Funders Network supports and connects more than 100 Jewish teen foundations, operating in synagogues, schools, federations, community foundations, JCCs, summer camps, and other communal organizations.

Current data concerning teens indicates a desire to engage in meaningful and gratifying charitable work. Most members of Generation Z aspire to be drivers of change, and are eager to gain skills at a young age in order to make “giving back” a strong component of their futures. In this way, Jewish teen philanthropy has found itself ahead of the curve and primed to fill a growing demand for practical, hands-on experience that serves teens well into the future.

The recent release of several long-term impact reports confirms what those involved in the Jewish Teen Funders Network have long believed:

participating in a Jewish teen foundation has a profound effect on a participant’s outlook with regards to her/his Jewish identity, leadership potential, and commitment to giving – present and future.

WHO IS GENERATION Z?

Ambitious. Informed. Socially-conscious. Born after 1995, Generation Z is coming of age in a time of unprecedented access to information, rapid changes in technology, and exposure to global issues. These teens are poised to transform the ways we give.
Recent surveys of American Jewish life reveal a steady, generational decline in Jewish communal involvement. Jewish teen philanthropy strengthens a teen’s connection to her/his community/ies, beginning with a curriculum based in Jewish values and often ending in grants awarded to Jewish organizations. At the Jewish Community Youth Foundation of Princeton, NJ, 95% of alumni say their Jewish identity was enhanced by participating in the program. Learning about different kinds of needs, along with the myriad of organizations working to address them, helps teens understand what it means to be an active part of their communities. We surveyed hundreds of teens in JTFN’s “Think Outside the Tzedakah Box” Camp Philanthropy Program, and 84% of alumni reported an increased sense of responsibility towards their local Jewish communities.

Alumni of Jewish teen foundations often distinguish themselves in leadership roles in college and beyond, having learned essential skills by participating in an intentional, and intensive, group grantmaking process. At the Jewish Teen Foundations at the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, CA, 83% of teens reported that they continue to apply leadership skills learned in other areas of life. The teens carry real responsibilities, just as adult philanthropists do, as they review proposals, ask tough questions of potential grantees, and work together to make important decisions.

While recent studies have indicated a drop in Jewish giving amongst American Jews, the exploration of what “Jewish giving” means is a powerful, core element of Jewish teen philanthropy programs. At the Rose Youth Foundation in Denver, CO, 90% of alumni experienced a deepened connection specifically to Jewish giving. Jewish teen foundation participants draw on their personal and collective passions, priorities, and purpose – and then translate them into acts of giving.

In 2013, the Michigan Community Foundations’ Youth Project released a 20-year study demonstrating the power of youth philanthropy to kick start long-term philanthropic and communal involvement.

By providing this generation of inspired Jewish teens with an early start in collective giving through the lens of Jewish values, we pave the way for them to be well-informed givers, knowledgeable leaders, and active members of the Jewish community – now and long into adulthood.


For full evaluation data, visit www.jtfn.org/impactreports