



Ben Hart

Finding His Place: Ben Hart's Journey to Jewish Giving

Ben Hart will be the first to tell you he's still figuring it out.

"There are gaps in my understanding of what the Jewish Federation is," he admits. "I'm a 'show-upper.' I'm still learning where I belong."

But honesty is exactly what makes Ben's story so relatable. Like many younger donors, his path to the Federation wasn't linear. It started with small steps: a return to synagogue, a daughter at Jewish camp, an Israel trip, and a chance to start a Jewish dad's group through an Ignite grant.

Somewhere along the way, the pieces started connecting.

"I'm starting to see things I had never seen before," Ben says. "Federations provide value: places, people, connection."

For Ben, giving isn't transactional. It's spiritual. It's tied to Jewish tradition, the kind of giving that happens after funerals, that comes from the heart, that feels right even when the amounts are small.

"It feels good," he says simply.

He credits Jay Birbaum with helping him understand the Federation's role: the partnerships, the ecosystem, the way local and global Jewish life intersect. Those structured conversations gave him grounding and context.

Now Ben is asking bigger questions: Where do I fall on the philanthropic spectrum? How much am I giving in time, not just dollars? How do we make sure funding goes where it's most needed?

He wants communication that's meaningful: coffee meetings, thoughtful emails, events that bring people together. Not pressure. Not flash. And incremental appeals. This generation engages sporadically across denominational lines and participates in multiple Jewish institutions at once.

"If we are invited to build programs and participate, young people will show up and bring a friend. Some appeals feel tacky, and some giving is tacky and self-serving. I don't have a rigid calculus to describe it, but I feel it sometimes. So let's all do our best not to be tacky, wherever you draw those lines," he says with a smile.

Ben Hart represents a new generation of donors: curious, engaged, and looking for connection over transaction. He may still be finding his place, but he's already helping shape what Jewish community looks like.