



Jewish Federation[®]
of Greater Rochester



(Left to Right) Jennie Schaff, Debbie Goldberg

Jennie Schaff: A Legacy Rooted in Service

When Jennie Schaff moved to Rochester in seventh grade, she had no idea the Federation would shape the trajectory of her life. Her mother worked in public relations for the organization, and that single connection opened a world of Jewish engagement for their entire family.

"It was a huge part of our childhood," Jennie recalls. "We marched in Washington for Soviet Jewry. We watched the Israeli soccer team play in Rochester. My mom did interfaith work. Growing up, I talked with Holocaust survivors. It's no surprise to me that my work today is in the Jewish community."

That early foundation, built through Federation programs and her mother's example, planted seeds that would bloom across decades.

From Academia to Jewish Leadership

Jennie left Rochester for college, where she stayed connected through Hillel and worked at the Jewish Home as a certified nursing assistant in the summers to spend time with her great aunt. She earned her PhD in education and built a career in higher education.

But Rochester called her back. Family was here. And so was her purpose.

Her social justice work led her to Jewish Family Services, where she eventually became the CEO. When the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation sought a CEO with K-12 education and Jewish community expertise, Jennie's background made her the perfect fit.

The Next Generation

For Jennie, the Federation's impact didn't end with her own childhood. It continued through her children.

[PJ Library](#). Peer Leadership. [IsraelNow](#). The Zikaron BaSalon trip. Her kids experienced it all.

This philosophy shapes both her personal giving and the Farash Foundation's priorities: youth opportunities, combating antisemitism, community security, and strengthening local Jewish infrastructure.

A Vision for Our Community

When asked what she would wish for Rochester's Jewish community, Jennie doesn't hesitate.

"A place where we can talk together. A safe space to have hard conversations, even when we disagree. A place that says: It's safe for you to be here. We embrace you. We will model our Jewish values."

She pauses.

"I wish we could return to our Jewish values. And model them. Without them, our survival is at risk."

Legacy

People often see Jennie through a single lens as the CEO of the Farash Foundation. But her identity runs deeper.

"My legacy isn't my title or my work. It's my children, and the world we leave them: one where they are safe, where they can thrive, and where they are proud to be exactly who they are, Jewish and everything beyond."

For Jennie Schaff, community isn't a career. It's a calling passed down from her mother, nurtured by the Federation, and now entrusted to the next generation.