

# Knoxville Jewish Alliance 2025 Annual Report



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[jewishknoxville.org](http://jewishknoxville.org)



The mission  
of the Knoxville Jewish Alliance  
is to serve the Jewish people locally,  
in Israel, and throughout the world.

Through coordinated fundraising,  
community-wide programming,  
social services, and educational  
and other activities,  
the Knoxville Jewish Alliance seeks to:

- Build community in a welcoming and dynamic space
- Provide assistance for those in need
- Promote Jewish culture and identity
- Develop effective Jewish leaders
- Enhance community relations locally, regionally, nationally & internationally
- Operate and maintain the Arnstein Jewish Community Center





Louise Lindsey

Chief Planning & Operations Specialist

Tara Bain

Director of Community Engagement & Hillel at UTK

Erin Gaines

Early Childhood Director, Preschool at AJCC

Anna Iroff-Bailey

Director of Judaica & Preschool Family Engagement,  
PJ Library Professional

Ed Hunter

Director of Finance

Andrea Martindale

Office Administrator

Shannon Martindale

Director of Programming

Nicki Russler

Archivist

Nora Sweat

Director of Jewish Family Services

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

President: Judith Rosenberg

Vice President-Campaign: Eric Mayer

Vice President- Community Engagement: Noa Barak

Vice President- Jewish Community Services: Karen Ferency

Secretary: Debbie Abrams-Cohen

Immediate Past President: Bryan Goldberg



## **AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBERS**

Renee' Hyatt

Kaleigh McVety

## **COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Allocations: Bernard Bendriem

Community Relations Committee: Karen Robinson

Facilities: Chip Rayman

Hillel at UTK: Helene Sinnreich

Israel Committee: Marc Forman

Jewish Family Services: Nancy Britcher

Long Range Planning: Scott B. Hahn

Programs: Ilanit Harre

## **AUTOMATIC BOARD MEMBERS**

### **BY VIRTUE OF COMMUNITY POSITION**

Chabad of Knoxville, Advisory Committee Chairman: Andrea Cone

Hadassah Knoxville-Oak Ridge, President: Barbara Mintz

Heska Amuna Synagogue, Chairman of the Board: Mark Siegel

Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge, President: Jim Bogard

Knoxville Jewish Community family of Funds, President: Stephen Rosen

Knoxville Jewish Day School, President: Gina DiSalvo

Temple Beth El, President: Dan McLaughlin

As I wrap up my second year of serving as KJA President, I am starting with THANK YOU.

Thank you to our dedicated, passionate staff who have helped facilitate and coordinate so much in 2025. Creative new programs; a top-notch preschool program for nearly 100 students; a summer day camp and aquatics center that's the talk of the town; an efficient and welcoming facility in an aging building that keeps them on their toes...the list could continue for pages. Thank you to our donors, whose philanthropy and commitment to our mission and community allows this work to continue. Thank you to our Executive Committee and Board of Directors, their expertise, and the unbelievable amount of time they devote collectively, in so many ways and places, to making Knoxville a really nice place to live Jewishly.

This past year has reminded me repeatedly that, despite challenges or setbacks or frustrations or tragedies...we keep going. We keep going as a community, as Jews, and as an organization that welcomes EVERYONE (just like the sign on the street says). I believe our future is bright, and I believe that there are a lot of people out there who want to be part of the KJA.

In 2026 I look forward to our growth. To new faces, old friends, bold ideas, and remembering where we came from – as we also reach out to the people we don't even know yet. I can't wait to see what they'll contribute to the ongoing story of Jewish Knoxville.

I invite you to be part of our work, on any level that feels comfortable and right for you. Let me know if you want to talk about how to do that. I hope to see you often in 2026!

*Judith Rosenberg*

Judith Rosenberg, Knoxville Jewish Alliance President





KJA Booth at Knoshville



Farewell to Noa Gilan

In 2025, the KJA connected our community through our programs and events for people of all ages. We connected socially through art classes and pool parties. 2025 kicked off with a Winter Prom at the AJCC. We then gathered culturally for Knoshville: A Jewish Food Festival, Sundown in the Sukkah, Shabbat at the Pool, and for A Southern Fried Hanukkah. Over the summer, we gathered for Adult Pool Parties and Farewell to our Shinshinim. We gathered in remembrance for Yom HaShoah and in honor of those lost on October 7, 2023. In September, we welcomed Shannon Martindale as our new Director of Programming and we look forward to creating more opportunities for our community in the coming year!

We look forward to seeing you all in 2026!



Yom HaShoah with Rabbi Mark Schiftan

Mayor Indya Kincannon at Knoshville



**Social & Cultural Programming**



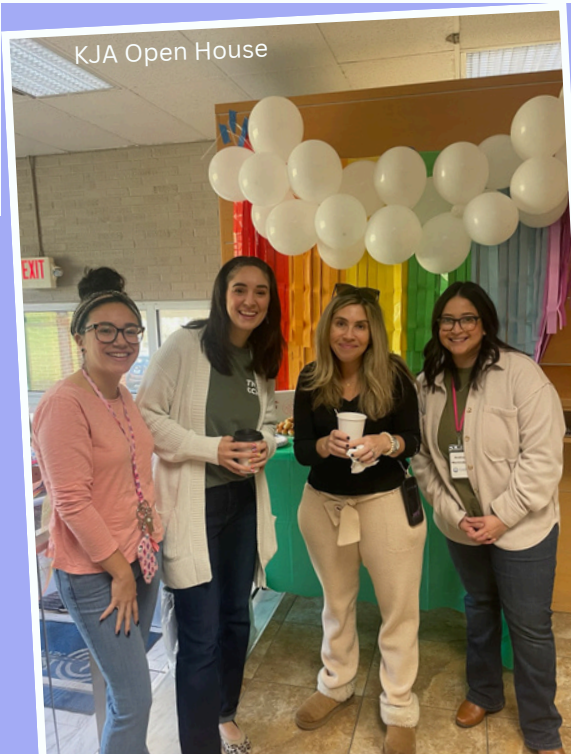
Archives Watch Party of Former Member Interviews



Drawing for Garden of Celebration Swing



KJA Open House



KJA Open House



Evan Bernstein with Hillel at UTK



**Children & Youth**

Milton Collins Day Camp.....	\$ 208,562
PJ Library.....	\$ 24,456
Preschool at AJCC.....	\$1,167,766
Smokin Salmon Swim Team.....	\$ 21,275

**\$1,422,059**

**Community Engagement**

Media & Communications .....	\$42,299
Cultural/Social Programming.....	\$39,073
Knoshville.....	\$ 8,854
Shinshinim.....	\$ 19,247

**\$109,473**

**KJA EXPENSES**

**Jewish Community Services**

Archives.....	\$ 7,977
Hillel@UTK.....	\$28,449
Jewish Family Services.....	\$20,856

**\$57,282**

**Arnstein Jewish Community Center**

Facility & Campus.....	\$162,100
Offices.....	\$148,433
Allen Rosen Aquatic Center.....	\$83,299

**\$393,832**

## Grants received

- Solomon Dutka Fund (Hillel at UTK) -----\$5,000
- Harold Grinspoon Foundation (PJ Library) -----\$10,173
- Hillel International (Hillel at UTK) -----\$10,742
- Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle TN (Hillel at UTK)-----\$6,000
- KJCFF - KJA Controlled Funding-----\$10,508
- KJCFF Funding-----\$27,573
- Our Daily Bread (Preschool at AJCC)-----\$31,539
- TN Dept. of Safety & Homeland Security (for 2024)-----\$147,136
- United Way of Greater Knoxville----- \$349
- Nashville Foundation-----\$250
- Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee-----\$3,981

Total: \$253,251

**Annual Campaign  
Raised**

**\$223,244**

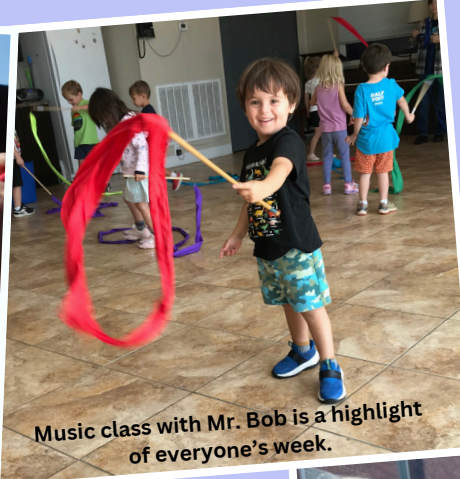
\*as of 12/17/25

**Capital  
Improvements  
Total:**

**\$32,701**



Jewish values and culture come to life at our annual family Rosh Hashanah party.



Music class with Mr. Bob is a highlight of everyone's week.



We planted sunflowers in loving memory of Ms. Robin, the "baby whisperer."

Preschool at AJCC continues to be a play-based learning center for ages 8 weeks to 5 years, guided by Jewish values and culture. We are proud to be operating near maximum capacity and to maintain a respected reputation in the early childhood community as a place that provides a safe, joyful environment where our youngest families are not only cared for but genuinely nurtured and welcomed. Our eight classrooms continue to explore and benefit from the full AJCC campus, especially the gymnasium, playgrounds, pool, garden, and outdoor pavilions. A major highlight of 2025 has been our strong staff retention - for the first time in many years, we did not need to hire new teachers for Fall 2025!

This year also brought several leadership transitions. Our long-time Vice President of Children & Youth, Martha Iroff, stepped down, and Preschool Director Louise Lindsay moved into the role of KJA Chief Planning & Operations Specialist. We are thrilled to have Erin Gaines move from Assistant Director to Preschool Director and to have Anna Iroff-Bailey step into an assistant director role as the Family Engagement Director. Unfortunately, the VP position remains unfilled, which has presented some challenges.

Nevertheless, our halls and classrooms are full of laughter, curiosity, learning, and friendship. We invite you to come see the program for yourself - come for a tour, volunteer to read to a class, or join us for Shabbat party on Friday mornings!

## ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

96

children

77

families

39

full and part-time staff



Rosh Hashanah Fall Bash at Deep Well Farm



Hanukkah Family Education at JCOR



Havdalah at SkyZone for Kids Night Out with KJDS & Temple Beth El

### ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

196 subscriptions for ages 0-8 years

41 subscriptions for ages 9-12 years

88 families attended at least one PJ Library program this year

PJ Library is the flagship program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As the local implementing partner, KJA shares the cost of sending free Jewish children's books to families every month for children ages 0-12. The mission of PJ Library is to help people connect to Jewish values, traditions, and culture while building vibrant Jewish communities. In addition to the books, PJ Library offers family engagement events to all Jewish families, and this year we have continued our partnerships with local Jewish organizations especially Heska Amuna Synagogue, Temple Beth El Religious School, Knoxville Jewish Day School, and Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge to offer high-quality, low-barrier Jewish programming to families throughout the Greater Knoxville area. Until recently, HGF offered grant funding to offset the cost of staffing, programming, and subscriptions. As their funding model is changing, we are looking for local donors to support and hopefully endow our local PJ Library Program. If this type of Jewish family engagement speaks to you, please reach out!



BBYO is the leading pluralistic Jewish teen movement aspiring to involve more Jewish teens in more meaningful Jewish experiences. Knoxville's Winick AZA and Weinstein BBG programs are open to students the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year through high school.

BBYO-Connect is open to middle schoolers for social, recreational, athletic, cultural, and Judaic activities. Thank you to our Shinshinim for creating fun, innovative programming!

Not connected? Contact [shinshinim@jewishknoxville.org](mailto:shinshinim@jewishknoxville.org).



In 2025,  
the Milton Collins Day  
Camp had  
over 1,054 registrations!



The Smokin' Salmon swim team enjoyed a successful and rewarding season. Our roster included a diverse group of swimmers, from beginners to experienced competitors, all of whom proudly represented the team at City Meet. Dedicated volunteers played a vital role throughout the season, providing consistent support at practices and meets. Each meet offered meaningful opportunities for swimmers to compete in multiple races, build confidence, and grow their skills. The progress of both the swimmers and the program was truly impressive. We're already looking ahead to summer 2027, with a parent committee now forming—interested parents are encouraged to contact the office for more information.

-Archives founder Barbara Bernstein hosted a party for Archives committee members and others in the community with digital viewings of interview snippets and various events from the 1940's forward, as well as a sampling of a few artifacts, photos, and records. Around 25 people attended.

-The Archives was a sponsor and hosted one of the events of a weekend of events put together by Archives Co-chair Mary Ann Merrell in her role as co-trustee of the Middlesboro (Kentucky) Jewish Cemetery. Over 100 people attended events throughout the weekend that featured author Deborah Weiner who spoke at four events during the weekend of the cemetery's re-dedication, celebrating the cemetery's placement on the National Register of Historic Places and, thanks to a grant, its remarkable cleanup which has greatly improved the gravestones' beauty and legibility.

- Archives added new committee members.

- Two committee members attended the Southern Jewish Historical Society conference held this year in New Orleans

-The Archives worked to establish internships for local community college students

-“The Way We Were” submissions to each issue of HaKol continue to intrigue community members and former community members.

-Archives presented an opportunity for community members to identify photographs at Knosville.

-Cohosted the October Hadassah meeting, displaying all the Hadassah scrapbooks the Archives has, as well as a slideshow of photographs, to a group of around 20.



## Jewish Family Services

The JFS Committee met six times throughout the year to plan and oversee programs and services. These included First Friday Shabbat gatherings at Sherrill Hills, with services and refreshments provided for residents and guests. Volunteers also visited residents in their facilities, delivering challah and holiday gift bags to help mark Jewish holidays with warmth and connection.

In addition, Jewish Family Services hosted nine Learn & Live programs for the broader community, each drawing between 20 and 30 participants. This year also marked the launch of a Jewish Young Adults group, engaging community members ages 23–40.

Throughout the year, the Jewish Family Services Director responded to 20 confidential calls, providing referrals, access to community services, and emergency financial assistance as needed.



Sherrill Hills Shabbat



Evan Bernstein at L&L



Young Adults Group

# Shabbat Campfire



Hillel at UTK, a registered student organization within the Division of Student Life, engaged 92 Jewish students in 2025, creating meaningful opportunities for connection, learning, and leadership. With support from KJCCF, the Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville, Hillel International, and generous donors, Hillel at UTK offered:

- 14 Shabbat and holiday gatherings
- 10 First-Year Students of Hillel study groups and outings
- 11 Nights Out and Bagel Breaks
- 17 high-impact leadership opportunities
- The 5th Annual Shabbaton in the Smokies focused on Shabbat and Israel
- 5 campus-wide educational and interfaith programs
- 20+ one-on-one or small-group student meetups

In 2025, Hillel at UTK strengthened its financial foundation by cultivating a new donor relationship, increasing participation in the University's Big Orange Give, and raising \$10,000 through Hillel Global Giving Week, including a matching gift.

This year, more than 1,100 households received HaKol. We have been grateful for our advertisers who have been with us for many years. Thank you to all who support our community's bimonthly magazine!

In 2025, KJA Connection averaged its readership at 1,260, which is an increase of 15% from 2024. Our open rate averaged 53%, an increase of 2% since 2024.



# Todah, Noa & Tsur!



From January through July, we were honored to continue our Israel connection with our first Shinshinim, Noa Gilan and Tsur Kushnir, who brought energy, creativity, and a deep connection to Israel to Knoxville. From revitalizing BBYO-Connect and engaging students across schools and programs, to leading meaningful cultural, educational, and memorial initiatives, Noa and Tsur built lasting relationships and brought Israel to life in Knoxville. Todah rabba, Noa and Tsur, for your dedication and the impact you leave behind. We miss you!

In August, we were thrilled to welcome our new Shinshinim, Avigail Giber and Yaheli Pikali! As recent Israeli high school graduates spending a service year in our community, they bring remarkable energy, creativity, and a heartfelt connection to Israel that enriches Jewish life across Knoxville. They lead an Israeli-culture class in the AJCC Preschool, support Hebrew classes at KJDS, and teach weekly Israel-focused lessons at Temple Beth El's Sunday School. Avigail and Yaheli have also shared a special presentation about their lives in Israel with JFS's L&L program, helping our community better understand everyday Israeli experiences. In addition, they created an exhibit in remembrance of October 7th, honoring the victims and ensuring their stories are not forgotten. We are so grateful to have Avigail and Yaheli here with us—and look forward to spending more time with them in 2026!



# Shalom, Avigail & Yaheli!



*Thank  
you!*

**for the memories and experiences of 2025!  
We look forward to creating many more  
together in 2026!**

