

Distinguished SJCS Alumni Serving the Jewish Community

Of the 572 School of Jewish Communal Service alumni who are providing visionary leadership for the North American Jewish community in a broad range of agencies and organizations, several are highlighted here to demonstrate the distinguished contributions these hundreds of communal professionals are making every day. In reflecting on their HUC-JIR studies and careers, they stressed the invaluable, ongoing mentorship of Gerald Bubis, founding director of the SJCS, and Steven Windmueller, SJCS Director.

Ruth Friedman



**Howard Charish
(Certificate '70)**
*Executive Vice President,
UJA Federation of
Northern New Jersey*
Specializing in commu-
nity mobilization, fund
development, and pro-
fessional development,

Charish has served UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey for three years and previously worked in Philadelphia at Metrowest. His Federation has direct impact on many of the approximately 100,000 Jews in Northern New Jersey through its programs and grants. Charish cites receiving his "honorary doctorate from HUC-JIR, mentoring colleagues, directing an absorption project in Israel, and leading the national UJA system in mobilizing for the needs of Argentinian Jewry" as the professional achievements of which he is most proud.

**Jonathan Cohen
(MAJCS/MSW '91)**
*Director, URJ Henry S.
Jacobs Camp, Utica,
Mississippi*
Cohen has served as
Director of Jacobs
Camp for over five
years, but has been
associated with the
camp for over twenty-
seven years, back to
the time when he
attended as a camper.
Specializing in youth
work, he has served for
over fourteen years as
part of the Youth

*Jonathan Cohen and campers at the URJ Henry
S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi*



Division of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) in varied roles, including Director of Junior and Senior High School Programs and NFTY. Previously, he worked as the Assistant Director of the URJ Greene Family Camp in Bruceville, Texas and as Regional Advisor to NFTY's Texas-Oklahoma Region.

The SJCS helped him understand how the Jewish community worked: "I understood the history and background that made organizations act the way they did. I grasped the difference between 'lay' and 'professional,' and how those relationships should be developed for maximum success."

"As the first SJCS graduate to hold a professional position at the URJ (in 1991), I am proud to have played a role in demonstrating to the URJ leadership the value of Jewish Communal Service professionals and the great resource that the SJCS Program could be for them." One of three HUC-JIR alumni in Mississippi, he mentors many campers with the hope of encouraging them toward Jewish professional careers and study at HUC-JIR.

Terry Cohen Hendin (Certificate '74)
Director of Student Services, NFTY in Israel
Since making *aliyah* to Israel, Hendin has served the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) for over fourteen years, in addition to her previous positions in Israel at MATNAS, the Israel Association of Community Centers, Hebrew University, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and Project OTZMA. She is part of a team creating educational opportunities for teens and young adults on Israel programs, in



Terry Cohen Hendin (holding flag at right) with NFTY teens in Israel.

which she concentrates on facilitating meaningful contact with Israelis through home hospitality experiences, teen interactions, visits to Israeli Reform congregations, and community service opportunities. She cites her "role in ensuring the continuity of quality 'NFTY in Israel' programs at a time when so many had been reluctant to visit Israel or to enroll their children in Israel-based programs, while maintaining the highest level of security possible" as one of the professional accomplishments of which she is most proud.

Her NFTY work is based at the HUC-JIR/ Jerusalem School. She organizes opportunities for North American Reform high school students participating in Israel programs, particularly the NFTY Eisendrath International Exchange (EIE) semester in Israel, to meet with Rabbi Ellenson and the

faculty of the College-Institute as well as to celebrate *Shabbat* and holidays with HUC-JIR students. "These opportunities are invaluable in strengthening the ties between the College-Institute and its most significant target group of future students." Hendin praises HUC-JIR's "spirit of tolerance and pluralism. The SJCS instilled in its students a sense of Jewish communal responsibility so that they gained the ability to see 'the greater agenda of the Jewish people' as opposed to our own personal agenda or that of the agencies we serve, which is something I believe distinguishes those fortunate enough to have studied at the SJCS." Hendin also facilitates networking opportunities for SJCS alumni and students in Israel.



Rick Meyer
(MAJSC/MSW '79)
Executive Vice President,
Milwaukee Jewish
Federation

Specializing in executive leadership, management, and fundraising, Meyer has served at the

Milwaukee Jewish Federation for over twenty years and previously worked at the Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Service. The Milwaukee Jewish Federation funds twelve local constituent agencies, six direct service departments, two overseas beneficiary agencies, and its Partnership 2000 Israel community. Beneficiaries include Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Children's Lubavitch Living and Learning Center, Hillel Academy, Jewish Home and Care Center, Yeshiva Elementary School, Jewish Chaplaincy Program, Jewish Historical Society, *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, Jewish Agency for Israel, and the Joint Distribution Committee, among others.

Meyer chose Federation work because it offered him "the broadest opportunity to work in a communal setting." HUC-JIR provided him with "a strong base of understanding about how the field operates, organizational expectations, lay/professional relations, the skill sets to research areas in which I would be directly practicing, which gave me some comfort to know I could succeed in a full-time professional setting." He

remains connected to HUC-JIR by helping with alumni activities and recruitment efforts.

Among the professional achievements of which he is most proud, he points to providing a variety of programs "contributing to the growth and well-being of the Jewish communities I've been fortunate to live and work in," and receiving the Council of Jewish Federations (now United Jewish Communities) "Campaign Director of the Year" award for outstanding professional achievement.

Joy Sisisky (MAJCS/MPA '00)

Assistant Director, National Women's Philanthropy, United Jewish Communities
Sisisky manages the Lion of Judah Endowment (LOJE) program, where 2425 women have endowed gifts representing over \$350 million to their local Federations in perpetuity. Having served at UJC for almost two years, Sisisky has also worked on programming for the 2004 International Lion of Judah Conference, which 1400 women attended and raised over \$18 million for Federations. Seeing the growth of women's foundations as a way to involve Jewish women in philanthropy, she also works to develop National Women's Philanthropy as a resource for Jewish women's foundations around the country. She researches and writes about trends in women's philanthropy and helps to develop advocacy opportunities for UJC leaders. Before coming to UJC, she worked at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Israel Policy Forum (IPF).

HUC-JIR helped prepare her for her professional career by presenting her with varied career options and the opportunity to meet

Joy Sisisky with a student in the special needs program of the Adain Lo Jewish Family Center in St. Petersburg, Russia.



with alumni in the field. Classes on management, budgeting, and fund raising, and, most importantly, student internships, proved to be invaluable. Her HUC-JIR internship at AIPAC led to a full-time position there. "It was an incredible opportunity, thanks to HUC-JIR, and an extraordinary jump-start at the beginning of my career."

While she worked at AIPAC in southern California and Arizona, she managed local fund raising, grassroots community organizing, and advocacy development. She notes that she is proud of this work because she had the opportunity to work with her grandfather who was serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. "I always felt it was a privilege and rare opportunity to work with him on behalf of the issues we cared about as a family. Today I am proud to work on another Jewish agenda that empowers women as decision makers, philanthropists, and leaders in the Jewish community."

Lee Wunsch
(Certificate '76)

Chief Executive Officer,
Jewish Federation
of Greater Houston

Wunsch has served the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston for eighteen years, seven of which have been as CEO, and his areas of expertise include fund raising and community planning. Previously, he served the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization in Seattle, Washington, and Houston, and worked for three years in the private sector.

He praises the professional preparation that HUC-JIR offered him, noting that it "increased my level of maturity; exposed me to issues, ideas, and teachers that I otherwise would not have come into contact with; and broadened my perspective and vision of Jewish community life." Wunsch attends HUC-JIR alumni events at the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly, keeps current with HUC-JIR news through alumni newsletters and listservs, and felt honored to receive the Doctor of Jewish Communal Service degree, *honoris causa*, on the 25th anniversary of his graduation. ■

