



Camp Spotlights

Rabbi Isaac Saposnik, Executive Director, Havaya Summer Programs “Be You Boldly”: A Community-Wide Philosophy

Question: We've noted here that camp is about our bigger mission, our sense of why. Tell us about Havaya's "why." How is everything you do to engage your community grounded in your values?

Havaya is about inclusivity and authenticity, the ability to show up as you are.

We draw from ideas about belonging—that “incredible feeling of being welcome, perfectly authentically.” Our tagline is “Be You Boldly”, because building that sense of belonging allows campers—and all stakeholders—to be their best selves.

We strive to create this kind of community and opportunity for all campers, families, donors, and any stakeholders.

- At significant Jewish holidays and in significant moments, we gather major donors and close stakeholders and study Jewish texts, related to our mission and vision and to the holiday or moment. The texts we choose anchor heartfelt conversations about who we are and how we move in the world, intertwined with Jewish ideas, and led by camp’s year-round leadership.
- Last summer, as part of our work toward supporting our staff’s spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being, we created a two-hour workshop for them on personal growth. We emphasized that it was a session for personal learning, not necessarily meant to be applied to their work. We created one opportunity for program staff and one opportunity for operations staff—and found the speaker leading the operations session in Spanish. It was a true opportunity for every staff member to focus on themselves.

What are some key learnings that you'd like to share?

- Spend time with your Board and other lead stakeholders, mapping your camp’s philosophy and vision. Go through a process; put it in writing.
- Translate your vision into practical strategies that engage different cohorts, year-round. The new work may be in work with stakeholders other than campers, but there may also be moments during the summer to help the vision play out as well.
- The lead professionals and volunteers need to exemplify camp’s vision and lead from it continually. Big and small decisions, those planned and those made in the moment, need to be made from the vision.
- When your vision takes you there, be vulnerable and be counter cultural. Your camp’s vision is important because it adds something valuable and missing to the world. It may be hard because it calls for unusual behavior, but living it authentically is important.



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Philanthropy as Lifelong Engagement

Terri Grossman, Director of Major Gifts, Camp Sabra

Question: Let's focus specifically on philanthropy as engagement. Camp Sabra facilitated an initiative where campers themselves raised funds for camp. Can you describe the project?

“Sabra Campers Give Back” invited all campers to participate in raising funds for Camp Sabra. We wanted to help campers understand that they have agency to change their world. We wanted to demonstrate that they don't need organizational leaders or their parents to take action; they can do it. And we wanted that, when they reach adulthood, they will have given to and solicited for camp, every year. It would be in their DNA.

We launched in the spring, sending a letter to all parents, asking if their children wanted to participate and also asking them not to give funds directly to their children. With their permission, we sent a letter to campers directly, reviewing how to solicit and suggesting that they set an individual goal (\$18).

Over three weeks, we wrote again, giving them ideas for raising funds. Each week we assigned one of our camp's values to this effort - courage, then creativity, then community mindedness.

Thirty campers raised \$2800 and, with a donor match, raised almost \$6000.

We used the funds for an indoor games area at camp, for something that they could see directly.

Next year, we will make some changes.

- We'll seek to give the campers the opportunity to decide what to do with the funds raised.
- We'll start earlier, with more marketing.
- We'll integrate the project into the summer, connecting the project to their summer experience.

What are some key learnings that you'd like to share?

- Parents will receive this well.
- Campers will receive this well. They will step up, and they will understand building a story and making asks.
- Work with campers can be year-round.
- Philanthropy can start early—seeds can be planted early and they'll pay off later.
- We are making a covenant with our campers that if something means something to you, you can contribute your own sweat and soul.
- Involving campers helps to build a culture of philanthropy for all ages.



Camp Spotlights

Camp at the Center of Community

Ari Vared, Executive Director of Camps and Youth in the West and Southwest, Union for Reform Judaism (Thank you Ruben Arquilevich, Vice President for URJ Camps, NFTY, and Immersives, for filling in at the conference!)

Question: Camp Newman invites hundreds of guests to every Shabbat. Tell us about that.

We're at most a two hour drive from most Bay Area towns. It lets us invite into the heart of our community countless stakeholders—donors, but also the congregants of rabbis on faculty, alumni and their families, partner agency leaders, anyone curious about camp.

850 guests celebrated Shabbat with us this past summer. They go from, "Oh yeah, I've heard about camp," to "This is the single most magical experience that exists."

To make this happen:

- The development team is central.
- Everyone plays their part. We have to work completely in sync.
- We don't do extra. There is no show.

Stakeholders become bought in. They move from buying something to co-creating something.

Camp becomes something relevant not just to campers but to the community.

- For most camps, the facility is a tremendous asset that is dormant for most of the year. A different business model uses the facility year-round and brings camp into the center of the community: the community comes to summer camp, and camp serves the community during the year.
- Everything that camp accomplishes for campers, it can accomplish for adults. Adults also want immersive experiences, to expand their comfort zones, close community, and nature.
- A year-round, multi-decade lens on building camp—rather than just hitting reset every September—creates enormous potential for growth.

What are some key learnings that you'd like to share?

- Stakeholder visits don't need to be formal, something extra. Stakeholders can enter the best part of camp seamlessly.
- A little goes a long way. Stakeholders are at camp for three to five hours—just on Friday night. It works. Friday nights don't work for every camp, but every camp can think about its audience more expansively.
- No need to be judicious with invitations. Everyone won't be able to respond to the invitation and even if they do, the more, the merrier.
- The work of stakeholder invitations and follow up must be shared, across the professional and lay teams, and also across the camp operations staff. The project itself needs to be seen not as an extra but as an integral part of the summer, everyone's responsibility.
- A big vision is more compelling than a small one.



Camp Spotlights

Jewish Experiences: Summer, Weekend, Year-Round **Mollie Breger, Associate Development Director, Camp Tawonga**

Question: What's "down the mountain"?

We run year-round programs for people of all stages of life. Right now, that falls into three categories:

- Summer Camp at Tawonga
- Weekend adult programs and Family Camp at Tawonga
- And year-round experiences Down the Mountain.

When families come into the Bay Area from camp, they come down out of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. When we were thinking about ways to express "Take Tawonga home with you," "Down the Mountain" seemed right.

Just over ten years ago, we went on a listening tour, and we heard that people wanted more Tawonga. We built a three-pronged vision that served as our clear guiding light.

- Maintain Tawonga's excellence as a summer camp. This is our bread and butter and will always be the focus and main component of who we are as an organization.
- Develop year-round and life-long programs. This means opportunities for people of all ages to engage with Tawonga's mission both "up" and "down the mountain."
- Center the margins of our community and foster a sense of belonging for everyone.

We've had to grow in a number of extraordinary ways.

- In 2012, we were only using our site during the summer. We went through a massive construction process to winterize and upgrade our buildings to be able to use them year-round.
- In 2012, we raised about \$300,000 annually. We now have ~800 families donating to our annual campaign and we raised \$2 million this past year. We now have a four-member fundraising team.
- Our staff team has grown from about ten year-round members to 35 today.
- We built a fundraising board, with clear board giving expectations and a matrix of skills and expertise we need from board members.
- We award over \$1 million in financial aid each year, have built accessible buildings and supports for those with mental and physical disabilities, have all-gender cabins, sponsor a Jews of Color family camp weekend, and more.
- We built or strengthened organizational partnerships as we found a new place in the community.

What are some key learnings that you'd like to share?

- Each camp has something unique to offer its community—know who you are, and then big thinking can help identify the mix of each camp's expertise and the issues a community faces.
- Patience and extraordinary focus on a goal will get you to big change.
- It may be slower than you'd like—it's easy to be a mile wide but an inch deep. Prioritize, and get good at one thing before moving onto the next.
- Don't be afraid to move outside of traditional roles. We aren't (only) a summer camp (We now truly see Tawonga as an organization that fosters life-long Jewish engagement). The structure of summer can be limiting.