

**Young Judaea Camp Sprout Lake Strategic Plan**

**Background Information 2014**

This background report was written by Julia Riseman, Mentor, of JCamp 180 and is a compilation of information provided from various sources including: Reports from Camp Director, Helene Drobenare, camp profile report in JData, interviews with key stakeholders, review of Camp marketing materials, Master Facilities Plan from 2007, Day Camp Grant Application, Board Committee Goals 2014, and a Board survey conducted in February 2014. The content for this report was based on questions identified by the Strategic Planning task force members Nancy Littman, Ron Meier, Beverly Stein, and Helene Drobenare as part of the data collection and planning phase of Strategic Planning.

This is not a complete summation of every aspect the Camp, but rather a synthesis of many primary resources to be used as a starting place for The Board of Directors as they begin strategic planning.

**Camp’s Mission Statement**

Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake is a pluralistic community intentionally created for children ages 7-13 years old. CYJ Sprout Lake is dedicated to fostering Jewish Identity, a connection to the State of Israel and a deep sense of Jewish peoplehood. Campers experience an extraordinary summer in a warm and supportive community that encourages individual growth, creates lasting friendships, develops a commitment to *Tikun Olam*, and heightens self-esteem and leadership skills. CYJ Sprout Lake is the summer expression of Young Judaea, the Zionist Youth Movement.

**History**

In 1976, almost 40 years ago, the national Zionist youth movement of Young Judaea established a regional summer camp in Verbank NY, now known as, Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake. This was done so under the fiscal sponsorship of Hadassah. Since that time Sprout Lake has grown from under 100 campers, to over 430 campers in 2013.

**Connection to Young Judaea**

Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake is the summer expression of Young Judaea, the Zionist youth moment. For over 100 years, Young Judaea brought together thousands of Jewish youth from across the country and around the world, of every religious, cultural, and political persuasion, through a shared commitment to Jewish values and love of Israel. With summer and year round programs both in the U.S. and in Israel, from third grade to college and beyond, Young Judaea focused on offering a fun, safe, social environment that included a distinct focus on informal education, leadership, and social action.

The year round Young Judaea youth movement is not as active as it was a generation ago, and is not currently an active feeder of campers to CYJ Sprout Lake, but for many parents who are Alumni of the youth movement, the Young Judaea branding of CYJ Sprout Lake reflects the values they enjoyed in their youth, and drives campers to Sprout Lake.

**Connection to Hadassah Women’s Zionist Organization**

Up until 2012, Hadassah owned the Camp property, and had control of back-office functions, including bookkeeping, payroll, budgeting, risk management, contracting and more. Hadassah Chapters are not actively recruiting campers for CJY Sprout Lake as they did in the past. Also, Hadassah Chapters used to fundraise for scholarships, and institutional allocation of Hadassah scholarships support will be ending soon. At yet, many women of Hadassah are still individually supportive of the Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake’s mission and camp’s purpose.

**Ownership, Control, and the Current Board**

Two years ago, ownership of the property moved to Young Judaea Global, and other back office functions came under the control of the Camp, which has been extremely beneficial to the camp’s business operations, allowing for greater control that has resulted in lower costs to do business. (See chart 1 in Addendum.)

The change in ownership has also required Camp to form its first ever Board of Directors to set, guide and monitor the organization’s strategic development. In the past, A “Friends of Camp Judaea Sprout Lake” Board was created to assist with oversight and promote fundraising. During the six years that the “Friends of” group existed, first informally and then formally, there where highly successful fundraising campaigns, raising over $2 million for much needed capital projects and scholarships. Each year, money was raised to add a new program element each year, for example in 2011, the Friends build the demonstration kitchen for the very popular cooking classes. The Friends board has since merged to become the current Board, and no longer functions.

It is important to note that Young Judaea Global has delegated full responsibly to the CYJ Sprout Lake Board to direct the mission and development of Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake, and to lead its fundraising and development needs. In addition, Hadassah no longer fundraises for scholarships, and the Friends of CYJ Sprout Lake no long fundraises for special projects and capital improvements, and all these functions now are the responsibility of the current Board, and there are no camp staff hired to support fundraising.

The current Board has recently set up a committee structure and defined committee goals to provide the Board with strategic direction. (See addendum 2).

**CYJ Sprout Lake’s position in the Market**

Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake is known as a supportive environment in which young Jewish youth explore, grow, and mature. The programming is marketed clearly as strengthen Jewish identity, foster a connection to Israel, create lasting friendships, encourage individual achievement, and heighten self-esteem, connected to community services, and developing leadership skills. Marketing is focused on highly personal, word of mouth marketing, house meetings, and individual recruitment. Every new camper family is personally visited by the Camp Director or Assistant Director.

The Jewish camp network respects Helene as a huge strength of CYJ Sprout Lake, for her on-going and professional leadership as Camp Director over the past 15 years. The Camp is also known for its nurturing, inclusive, pluralistic, Israel focused programming. Given the changing American Jewish experience, some see CYJ Sprout Lake as offering an attractive option for many families. Challenges noted include the lack of an established feeder system for campers, and Young Judaea Global as it and the other programs in the YJ system develop.

No market focus groups have been conducted for CYJ Sprout Lake’s overnight camp to more deeply understand CYJ position. Interested families that visit Sprout Lake during the summer compare Sprout Lake to other Jewish Camps in the area included Camp Ramah in the Berkshires and Camp Kinder Ring. Families primarily recruited from New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, Eastern Pennsylvania, and some years even as far away as California, Washington, Oregon, and Hawaii.

See Addendum Chart 3 for JData camp comparative information that shows CYJ Sprout Lake compared to other Jewish Camps of similar size in the Northeast and other pluralist and Jewish Community Camps of similar size across the country. This information was pulled from JData, a database of all Jewish Overnight Camps affiliated with FJC and JCamp 180. Assuming that CYJ Sprout Lake entered in good data, relative to comparative Camps, Sprout is operating with a smaller summer staff, lower tuition, and smaller operating budget.

**Programming**

CYJ Sprout Lake is known for creating safe, inclusive, and joyful Jewish experience for each and every camper through the camp’s programming. Staff training is intentional about seeing every interaction as having the potential to be rooting in Jewish experience and a pride of Israel. For example, Hebrew and English words are found throughout Camp.

The Camp prides itself in offering fresh, fun, challenging, and safe programs for Campers to choose among, including Sports & Athletics, Arts, Jewelry Making, Woodworking, Video Making, Performing Arts, Outdoor and Challenge Adventure Activities, Kosher Cooking Classes, Nature Activities, Swimming, Horseback Riding, Pinat Chai/ Petting Zoo, Culinary Arts, Out of Camps Trips, Off-site Community Service Projects. Each year something new is added, to ensure the continued interest among returning campers.

The program includes developmental and educational goals defined for each summer for every age group, with accommodations for children with special needs. The staff supervisory structure has been created to include daily check-ins with the Camp Director on status each and every child at camp, ensuring the nurturing and small camp feeling for every camper.

Different than all other Jewish Overnight Camps, Campers at Sprout Lake and the other Young Judaea Camps age-out of the program at grade 8th, and are then encouraged to attend Tel Yehudah, Young Judaea's Senior Leadership Camp for 9th-11th graders. This allows the program to focus on the needs of younger children and to create a nurturing environment. And yet the transition away from Sprout Lake’s campus is also potentially problematic. Research shows that the positive impact of Jewish Overnight camping in strengthening the lifelong identity of adults increases with the number of years attending overnight camp, the experiences in the teen years, and the leadership opportunities as young adult staff. Therefore, based on age, CYJ Sprout Lake campers have some of their most transformative experiences not at Sprout Lake, assuming they do not drop out of the Young Judaea program. This makes Alumni engagement, outreach, and fundraising much more challenging for CJY Sprout Lake as compared to other Jewish Overnight Camps.

**Program Innovation**

Under Helene’s leadership, CJY Sprout Lake has actively pursued grant opportunities for funding of new program innovation and has actively marketed camp to serve new, immerging, or under-served Jewish communities. This includes efforts to market and recruit Russian Jewish American children and the inclusion of Special needs kids – areas of more potential growth and development.

In addition, a new Day Camp has been funded and is planned to start in summer 2015. See Day Camp Grant Report for more detailed background information. This will be a huge benefit for the Overnight camp as a means to both establish a feeder system for overnight campers, develop a new source of revenue, and engage more CYJ Sprout Lake young adults as staff and provide leadership opportunities.

**Facilities**

Between 2005 and 2007 a long-range master facilities plan was created with suggested phases of capital improvement projects. This guided the “Friends Of” Board in setting priorities to guide capital campaign fundraising, which at the time was required by Matching Grant opportunities from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. (See addendum 3 for a copy of the report). Since 2007, some of the major projects outlined in the plan have been completed. Some major capital projects completed include, a new health center, two additional and two replaced bunks, new program space, including a kitchen.

The remaining projects, goals, sequencing, and priorities need to be revisited, and the current capital campaign for the new aquatics center remains to be completed.

In addition, a much needed master maintenance plan has just about to be completed, with a comprehensive look at the deferred and on-going maintenance needs of the site and facilities. This will greatly help with planning and budgeting, and allow for the ongoing care of the mix of older and newer buildings.

Most buildings at Sprout Lake are not winterized, and the facilities are not used year round for rentals or retreats. There are no plans are in place at this time to invest in the property, buildings, or staff required to create possible additional income.

**Resource Development and Financial Position of the Camp**

Over the past two years, the camp has developed new habits of fiscal control and management, and the first Audit has been completed, showing that the camp continues to operate with a balance budget. There is a healthy reserves fund that helps to manage cash flow, a potential challenge for many camps. It should be noted that some of the reserves are restricted for the Aquatics Center Capital Campaign, and cannot be spent on operating expenses.

There is no established revenue from rentals or year-round programming at this point in time. There was a active Legacy program that asked supporters to remember camp in their estate plans, and there are 68 members. Their future bequests will be used to recreate a future endowment, assuming these members are stewarded over their lifetime.

**List of Addendums**

1. Business Improvements

2. Board and Committee Strategic Goals

3. JData Comparative Information

4. Financial Assistance by type 2013

5. Trends in the Field of Jewish Camp over the past 5 years

6. Jewish Camp Year Round Staffing Examples

7. Small Working Group Assignments

8. Small Working Group Strategic Planning Template

**Table 1: Business Improvements since independence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre 2012 | Post |
|  |  |
| 1. Up to 30 days for payments on accounts | 1. 3-4 day turn around on accounts |
|  |  |
| 1. Legal contracts process cumbersome and very lengthy | 1. Legal contract reviewed within a week of request |
|  |  |
| 1. Inability to understand day to day financials | 1. Access to all bank accounts and financial statements |
|  |  |
| 1. Could not open up account to receive stock, bonds and gifts | 1. Opened up account to receive gifts |
|  |  |
| 1. No access to our payroll process (even in the summer) | 1. Complete over haul of the payroll process and all access granted |
|  |  |
| 1. In ability to apply for UJA grants | 1. Applied and received a UJA grant |

**Addendum Table 2: Board Committee Strategic Goals for 2014**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Board Roles** | **Goal #1** | **Goal #2** | **Goal #3** |
| **Whole Board (Norman)** | **Strategic Plan:** Adopt and implement 3 to 5 year Strategic Plan | **Communication**: Improve committee reporting in advance of meetings. Provide more time for strategic discussions | **Board Goals:** Clearly define Roles, Goals, and Responsibilities |
| **Governance Committee (Beverly)** | Recruit and orient **new Board members**, and non-board member to Board committees. Create a Board handbook. | Create **Calendar** of meetings for the year, contact information and bios for each Board members, help ensure Board information and reports are shared in advance of meetings. | Review **Board Policies** that are in place and policies that are currently missing |
| **Finance Committee (Philip)** | Create **3 year projected Budget** with assumptions, in alignment with Strategic Plan | Review **Audit** | Make recommendations regarding **reserve funds** |
| **Site Committee (Norman)** | Review **Master Site Plan**, with assumption of costs and priorities for phased construction | Create **Master Maintenance Plan** with Budget | Provide **pricing** and designs for the new Pool |
| **Fundraising Committee (Noah)** | Review current needs and create **Fundraising Plan,** and set goals for scholarship, Capital, Legacy, and Alumni Outreach | Involve the Board in **thanking donors** | Plan and implement **Capital Campaign** for Pool, with budget |
| **Day Camp Working Group (Liz)** | Recruit members, define **scope of work** | Review Day Camp plans, establish **Benchmarks** for success, review budget, and report on progress to the Board | Help with **recruitment, and marketing** |
| **Strategic Planning Committee (?)** | Draft a **Strategic Plan** to provide Camp and Board with direction over the next 3 to 5 years. | Review **Mission Statement** and create **Vision Statement** for the Board’s consideration | Review **current condition**, including competitive market, Capital Campaign needs, Master Site Plans, and Camp’s financials. |

**Addendum Table 3: JData comparative information**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CYJ Sprout Lake** | | **Northeast (n= 59)** | | **National Pluralist & Community (n=53)** | | |
| **Size of Camp** | 2010 | 360 campers | 500+ | 29 % | 500+ | 32 % | |
| 2011 | 387 | 400-499 | 15 % | 400-499 | 19 % | |
| 2012 | 406 | 399-300 | 14 % | 399-300 | 13 % | |
| 2013 | 436 | 299-200 | 15 % | 299-200 | 21 % | |
| 2014 | 416 | >200 | 27 % | >200 | 16 % | |
| **Number of Full time management staff** | 3: Camp Director,  Associate Director,  Registrar | | N= 15  Camp size 300-499 | 3 | N=16  Camp size 300-499 | | 3 |
| **Total Summer Staff**  **2013** | 100 | | N=16 | Mean: 169 paid staff | N=17 | Mean: 120 paid staff | |
| **Capacity Utilization** | 42%  (number of beds filled across weeks of operation) | | N=15  Camp size 300-499 | 80% | N=17  Camp size 300-499 | 78% | |
| **Retention Rate** | 75% | | N=16 | Mean 83%  Median 87% | N=17 | Mean= 84%  Median=86% | |
| **Maximum Weekly Tuition** | $1,100 (2012) | | N=15 | Mean $2,203  Median $1,200 | N=17 | Mean $1,600  Median $1,171 | |
| **Total operating expenses** | $1,300,000 | | N=11 | Mean $1,980,000  SD $685,000 | N=15 | Mean  $1,625,000  SD $750,000 | |

**Table 4: Financial Assistance by type for summer 2013**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Dollars | Number of recipients |
| Needs based financial aid | 100,000 | 100 |
| Discounts | $25,000 |  |
| First Time Camper Incentives | $78,000 | 74 |
| other |  |  |
| **Total** | **$203,000** | **174** |
| *Average Award* | *$1,164* |  |

Addendum 5: **Trends in the Field of Jewish Camp over the past 5 years**

**Families**

* Increased completion from secular specialty overnight camps
* More interest in shorter session
* Increased parental demands for greater customization and individual attention
* Increased number of campers arriving with special needs and medication requiring extra support and increased staff training and support
* Parents feeling that teenagers need to prepare for college with specialized skills and training, and not attend or work as staff at camps
* More families selecting camps that are “best for this individual child” over “best for all the children in our family”
* Growing numbers of intermarried and secular Jews
* Since the recession, more families of all backgrounds requesting financial aid, less stigma around requesting aid, and more comfort with submitting tax information
* First time campership incentives lowering the expected price point of camp overall
* More use of smart phones and 24/7/365 expected communication with camp
* Among highly popular Jewish camps, an increased interest in year-round and life-long camp programming and engagement among Alumni and families

**Jewish Community**

* Increased attention on the value and proven impact of Jewish Overnight Camps and increase donor interest in supporting camps with philanthropy
* Increased Federation and Foundation support of Jewish Camp and interest in funding new initiatives
* Increased awareness of “pockets” of Jewish children under-served by Jewish Camps, including Russian speaking American Jews, and children with special needs

**Organizationally**

* Increased efforts to strengthen Jewish content and programming at camp
* Greater use of non-profit best practices for Governance and business management
* Higher degree of personalization in marketing and recruitment with house parties and thus increased travel time required of Camp senior staff during the year
* Increased investment in staff professional development at all levels

**Development**

* Increased use of social media and technology to recruit and retain campers and to promote Alumni/Family engagement
* Growing number of Jewish Overnight Camps embarking on multi-million dollar comprehensive fundraising Campaigns
* More camps investing in professional fundraising and trained communications staff
* Increased staff time devoted to maintaining donor databases with efforts to increase the amount of good contact information for Alumni and camp families to ensure a base of support for fundraising and sustain connection to Legacy members
* Increased Alumni and Family engagement
* Increased number of camps developing endowment campaigns and strategies

For more information about trends in Overnight Camp Industry in America, see <http://www.acacamps.org/media/aca-facts-trends>. Here is a small selection of trends listed:

$2.8 billion industry (2012 ACA Business Operations Report)

**Enrollment Trends:** 65% of ACA camps report enrollment that stayed the same or increased within the past five years, while 12% of camps reached capacity level and 35% of camps are reportedly 90-99% full. (ACA Fall 2012 Enrollment Survey)

According to ACA’s 2013 **Emerging Issues survey**:

* In the past two years, camps have added programs such as adventure camps/programs (40.7%); family camps/programs (35.2%); nature/environmental education programs (31%); and gardening programs (28.3%).
* Other new programs include college planning programs; health, wellness, and fitness programs; service learning / community service programs; and cooking with food from the camp's garden.

**Addendum 6: Jewish Camp Year Round Staff Structure**

Sprout Lake Senior Staff Positions

1. Camp Director
2. Associate Director
3. Registrar

Other types of camp positions not filled with a specific staff member

1. Executive Director
2. Assistant Director
3. Business Manager
4. Marketing/Communications Director
5. Development Director
6. Program Director
7. Special Needs Director
8. Alumni Relations
9. Parent Liaisons

**Addendum 7: Small Working Group Assignments to draft parts of the Strategic Plan**

**Areas for Strategic Direction**

1. Mission and Vision for the future

*Poetry Committee (Chair: ?, members?)*

* 1. Agree upon mission and future vision for camp

1. Program Implementation, Innovation and Opportunity

*Strategic Planning Committee Members together with Day Camp Task Force Members (Chair:)*

* 1. Clarify program goals and priorities connected to mission and vision over the next 3 to 5 years

1. Facilities Planning and Prioritization

*Site Committee (Chair: Norman)*

* 1. Align Facilities development to serve program goals, mission and vision

1. Fiscal Management and Long-Range Projections

*Finance Committee (Chair: Philip)*

* 1. Develop long-range business plan to accomplish the goals above

1. Fundraising and Income Development

*Fundraising Committee (Chair: Noah)*

* 1. Commit to a fundraising and develop plan to meet the goals above
  2. Commit to the outreach and communication needed to connect with Alumni, Friends and supports.

1. Board Development / Leadership / Succession Planning

*Governance Committee (Chair: Beverly)*

* 1. Identify the staff and lay leadership needed to succeed in the goals above

**Addendum 8: Small Working Group Strategic Planning Template**

**Organizational Issues Template**

**Name of issue (Bucket):**

**Current Status:**

**Strategy moving forward:**

**If implemented, what would be the expected impact in the future?**

**Recommended Tactics or Action Steps:**

* **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound)**
* **Proposed Timeline for moving forward:**
* **Resources needed to proceed (money, staff, volunteers, other)**
* **Which staff and which lay leadership has lead responsibility? Who needs to be involved?**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategy | Tactics/Action Steps | Timing | Resources needed? | Who leads / who needs to be involved? |
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