

Julia Riseman

From: Gary Kibort, Herzl Camp <gary@herzlcamp.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 25, 2019 11:15 AM
To: Julia Riseman
Subject: Let's catch up on Camp!



Good Morning! Happy Hanukah! Merry Christmas!

Whether you are gathering around the menorah, the tree, or heading to the movies, I hope this email finds you with family and friends...and hopefully with some time to catch up on **the most wonderful time of year - SUMMER!**

This fall, I shared the story of why I wear an orange hat... If you missed it, spoiler alert, it's not because I'm color-blind...

No, I wear the orange hat because I made a promise to a camper a decade ago that if he needed a friend at camp, he could always find me. Being a smart kid, he right away said, "But how with all these people?"



So I pointed to the hat I was wearing and said, "I'll be wearing this hat." And I have every day at camp since.

To me, the hat has become a symbol. I put it on because I'm all in and I'm ready to help.

And so are you! I see you wear an orange hat, too... well, at least symbolically. When camp calls, you answer! You contribute, you share ideas, you show up...Time and time again. Because of you, Herzl continues to grow and thrive - 75 years and stronger than ever!

2019 was a big year for camp. **We're closing the decade in great shape because of you.**

Here's a few of the milestones now in the rearview mirror and a glimpse of what's coming in 2020...

- We dramatically **expanded the waterfront**. It was the talk of the summer! Waterskiing, sailing, paddleboards, tubing, windsurfing... Plus all the beach games and hang out space on the Tayelet as you enter the waterfront. It all added up to so much fun!
- Far less exciting to the average camper (but pretty fantastic for camp!), we were able to raise \$1 million dollars to eliminate our old capital debt. **We are starting 2020 debt-free** something that hasn't happened since the 1990s!
- We were able to start on our plan to add neighboring undeveloped property, **purchasing 24 acres** on our north side.
- The **first wedding** took place on a beautiful fall day on the Mercaz, bringing old and new friends together to celebrate in their "second home."



And, of course, while all that good stuff was happening...

- **733 campers** were making friends, discovering passions, and adding to Herzl History.
- **243 family campers** came together to explore camp and Judaism as a family.
- Our **alumni from the 60s and 70s** came back for a weekend to reconnect with camp, each other, and their Jewish spirit.
- Over 500 camp friends and alumni gathered in Minneapolis and New York to **raise funds (and fun)** to make all these things possible.

Looking ahead to 2020, the excitement continues...

To most of us, it feels like nothing ever changes at camp. Kids make friends. Ruach overflows. Shabbas finds us dressed in white at the Mercaz...

But when you look closely, lots of things change - it's the feelings that stay the same.

Here are the changes that we know are coming in 2020...

- More **options and choices** for younger campers! If you're in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade, you get to choose the session length that's right for you! One, two or three week options help camp fit into your family's schedule.

- An exciting new **aerial park** to challenge our most adventurous campers and give the rest of us something to strive for...



- **Specialty camp** options are expanding - Water Sports for the lake kids and Creators Camp for the DIYers are coming in 2020 in addition to HUC (Ultimate Frisbee), Teva Adventure (wilderness trip), and Mitbach Masters (cooking).

- Joining a nationwide trend, we are adding a Jewish camp experience for young adults. **Aggadah Camp** will welcome 20s and 30s to camp to create community and build friendships in a ruach-filled weekend next August. Registration opens soon - spread the word!

- And **big, big news** coming in January. Be on the lookout for a big announcement (splash!) about a partnership to bring an amazing experiential educator to camp. We've been working on this news for YEARS(!) - can't wait to share it with you...

Along with the excitement, the challenges will also continue in 2020. Here's some we can identify now and are getting to work on...

- A **booming economy** - I hate to be a grinch (though today is an appropriate day for it!) but labor shortages are hitting us hard particularly with the 80 or so summer staff we hire to work on our kitchen and maintenance teams. Competition for workers is driving up wages and making it hard to attract local folks to camp. Bringing in workers for kitchen and maintenance from abroad is a possible solution but it brings us to Challenge #2...
- 10 years ago, there were 2-3 "adult" staff - people with families and pets who spent the summer leading camp. Now, with the growth of camp and need for skill-building programming, we have a dozen **staff with families**. Bringing experienced professionals like teachers, school social workers is putting pressure on our staff housing. Bottom line, we don't have enough or the right type for our staff with families (a family of 5 in a two bedroom cabin does not make for a good summer job for a teacher...) Expect to hear from us on some capital needs for family housing.
- Speaking of buildings...We've got over 100,000 square feet of facilities of all types and ages. A few buildings are over 100 years old, some are from the 50s, some the 1980s, and, believe it or not, our brand-new

cabins are now 10 years old! What that adds up to is a lot of maintenance needs. **Roofs, furnaces, and windows** - oh my! It's not exciting but keeping 70 buildings on 150 acres in good shape is more than a full time job and it's not cheap.

- So every great thing tends to add a challenge too. Last summer we brought dozens of **Israeli staff and campers** - enriching our skill-building programs, adding a real cultural exchange for campers and staff. It was great! And, we realized we need a big network of host homes for days off and transportation help. We've got a solid group of wonderfully hospitable volunteers but we need to grow the group... Let me know if you have room in your home and heart for a young Israeli staff person!
- This last challenge is also an exciting opportunity. Our neighbors in Webster are aging and changing, giving us more opportunities to acquire neighboring woods. We expect **a parcel or two to go up for sale** this year and we hope to be in position to purchase them. Preserving the woods around camp is a priority - we want to be sure that Herzl is always surrounded by quiet, peaceful woods...

So as we take stock and look ahead to the new decade, I just want to thank you for all you do for camp!

None of these great accomplishments and exciting news would be happening and none of these challenges could be met without our Herzl Family. Your ideas, your passion, and your generosity are driving us to grow and succeed. Thank you!

And thank you for taking some time from your day to talk camp with me - As you can see, if you've stuck with me through this long email, I could talk camp with you all day! It really is the most wonderful time of the year!

But, the girls are worried we are going to miss the previews, so I've got to get going!

Enjoy your holiday and stay in touch - **camp is never far away!**



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