

## Mishpacha – Family and Camp

The Camp Interlaken JCC journey never ends – look no further than Debbie and Aaron Bernstein for proof.

Debbie began attending Family Camp at the Steve & Shari Sadek Family Camp Interlaken JCC in Eagle River before she was old enough to attend as a camper. She eventually went from camper, to K'far Noar (teen village) to Ozo (staff-in-training) to staff. Her husband Aaron attended Interlaken as a camper through K'far, where the two met (see photo, right). After bringing their children to Family Camp for four summers, their boys began their camp journeys. Noah, 11, has attended camp the past four summers. Max, eight, spent his first two-week session at Interlaken this past summer.

Family Camp was an important juncture for Debbie and Aaron's Interlaken journey. They had not been back to camp since their teen years. The first Family Camp cabin the Bernsteins stayed in was Levi, where Aaron had stayed as a camper. They found Aaron's name written on one of the walls.

According to Aaron, Family Camp was a chance to “look at camp critically as parents.” The experience led Aaron to volunteer on the Camp Interlaken committee, where he's served for the past three years. “I was enthusiastic [about Interlaken] and wanted to be vocal about what I liked,” Aaron said about why he got involved.

Debbie and Aaron's camp journey became especially meaningful this past summer, when they shared their Interlaken stories with the teens in K'far Noar. This impactful Alumni Initiation event arose from the guidance of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's JCamp 180 program, which encourages alumni engagement. After determining that K'far marks the end of “Camper” and beginning of “Alum,” Interlaken Director Toni Davison Levenberg launched an inventive program, inviting Interlaken alumni to visit camp to speak to the “K'farnicks” around the campfire about their personal camp stories. The emotional evening includes a presentation of Interlaken Alumni pins.

The Bernsteins shared their camp stories with the teens. They explained that for some campers, this might be their last summer at Interlaken, while others may come back as Ozrim and staff. But, they added, even if this is the end of their “physical” camp journey, Interlaken will always be a part of their story. What Aaron found interesting was that until that moment, it hadn't occurred to the teens that this could be as far as they go with camp.

“It's a smart idea to get them thinking about what role camp will play in their lives,” Aaron said, “but they should also know that camp is there for them down the road.”

Debbie agreed, telling the teens they'll continue to see campers after camp ends, or they may meet alumni later in life. “I actually ran into an alum while I was in Interlaken, Switzerland, of all places!” Debbie said.

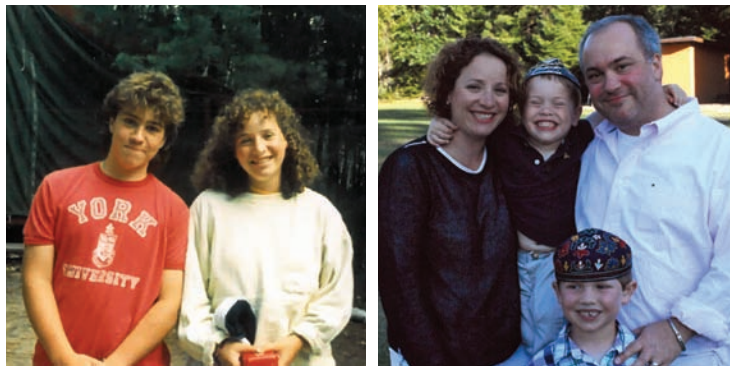
During their K'far weekend, the Bernsteins made one more meaningful gesture to strengthen their connection to Camp Interlaken: they made a Legacy promise to camp. Another pioneering program of JCamp 180, the Camp Legacy Initiative guides Jewish camps in seeking after-lifetime giving from alumni, parents and friends. The Bernsteins had discussed leaving a Legacy for some time.

“Just as we wanted our boys to go to Interlaken, we also want the camp to still be as great for them when they send their children to

Interlaken years from now,” Debbie said. She said they explained this to the K'far teens.

“And they said, ‘Thanks,’” Aaron said.

*For information on leading a K'far Noar Alumni Initiation, please contact Camp Interlaken JCC Director Toni Davison Levenberg at [tdavison@jccmilwaukee.org](mailto:tdavison@jccmilwaukee.org) or (414) 967-8223. To discuss a Legacy promise to camp or the JCC, please contact JCC Chief Development Officer Harriet Rothman at [hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org](mailto:hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org) or (414) 967-8239.*



Debbie and Aaron Bernstein were in K'far together, although they went their separate ways after that summer. They did not start dating until many years later. In true Interlaken fashion, it was a camp alum that set them up on their first date.

