



State of the Southwest District
Jennifer Daley, WRJ Southwest District President

Dear Southwest Sisters,

When I was installed two years ago in New Orleans, I could have never dreamed of the challenges and successes WRJ Southwest District would endure. The President's Report and Camp Reports have always been delivered in person at our Business of the District gathering during our convention. This year, while we will still be together, it will only be virtually. In the interest of saving time during this virtual session, please find the reports below. As a reminder, we will be voting on the following during our Business of the District session (11/6 at 1:00pCT):

[Proposed District Bylaws](#)

[Explanation of Proposed Bylaws Changes](#)

[Budget \('21-'22\),](#)

[Executive Committee Slate \('20-'23\).](#)

Please contact Governance Committee Chair, Nicole Villalpando at nicolevillalpando@gmail.com, if you have any questions about the proposed bylaws changes since we will only have a limited amount of time for discussion.

I'd like to point out some incredible milestones for our district during 2018 - 2020:

- WRJ Southwest District welcomed two new affiliates. Gemiluth Chassodim Sisterhood of Alexandria, LA and Temple Chai Sisterhood of San Antonio, TX
- Innovative and inspiring programming came out of Beth-El Congregation WRJ of Ft. Worth, Temple Shalom Sisterhood of Dallas, Temple Beth-El Sisterhood San Antonio and Temple Israel of Memphis.
- We held a Dallas/Ft. Worth Area Day, where all five sisterhoods/women's groups worked collaboratively for a fabulous event in March 2019. Those same groups also combined in February 2019 for an inspiring WRJ YES Fund event.
- We held our first Southeast Texas Presidents Luncheon Area Day with representatives in attendance from five area sisterhoods/women's groups.
- Our Southwest District Women's Retreat in collaboration with Greene Family Camp was a HUGE success with 94 participants, our biggest Retreat to date, was held in November 2019.
- Visited in-person with 20 of our 38 sisterhoods/women's groups, pre-pandemic.
- After the pandemic hit in March 2020, we immediately established a Virtual Programming Committee, chaired by Phyllis Strasberg. Our district was a shining star during this time, making the pivot to virtual programming and producing creative programming including: Peaceful Prayers in PJ's, Pinot and PJs, Talk Amongst Ya'selves: Coffee in Bed, Outside the Lines: Drawing Zentangle, Sisters and Scategories. We were especially proud of our virtual

fundraiser S'more Support for Camp - Virtual Campfire Song Session, where we raised \$2,000 (\$1,000 to Greene Family Camp and \$1,000 to Henry S. Jacobs Camp).

- Lastly, as you'll notice, we have turned a 4-day in person convention into a virtual convention and was still able to offer a virtual YES Fund Concert with Julie Silver, eight instructional workshops, plenaries on Reproductive Rights, Immigration Justice during the Pandemic and Racism. Under Convention Chair and Incoming President, Cheryl Barenberg, WRJ Southwest District continues to shine bright.

And with the highs, sometimes come the lows:

- The obvious. We are in a pandemic and will miss hugging everyone at our convention this year.
- We sadly mourned two WRJ Southwest District Executive Committee members. Area Director Leslie Kastl z"l, Temple Sinai New Orleans. Long-time Southwest District member and Vice President of Development, Sooz Waxman z"l, Temple Israel Memphis.
- Way too many hurricanes in 2020.

It's been my honor and privilege to support this district and work with this amazing group of Southwest District women over the past two years. May we continue to go from strength to strength.

L'shalom,

Jenn

URJ CAMP REPORTS



Greene Family Camp Report 2020

Rabbi Erin Mason, Camp Director

When the URJ made the decision to close camps earlier this year in response to COVID-19, we felt an enormous outpouring of support. In order to bring our campers together, we created SessionFun!, three weeks of camp at home, including bunk time with counselors and peers, at-home challenges (including a three day Maccabiah/Color War!), daily song sessions, Shabbat and *Havdalah* celebrations, and more. We came together on Sunday nights with Jews nationwide for Campfire on Tour, a concert series featuring some of the best Jewish musicians of today. We received many generous donations. While we couldn't be together in person, we certainly felt the love and strength of our community!

Greene Family Camp welcomed Rabbi Erin Mason as our new director earlier this year. Our long-time executive director, Loui Dobin, will retire at the end of this year. We are so thankful to Loui for

his leadership and for all that he has done for GFC. Be on the lookout for ways to honor Loui in the coming months!

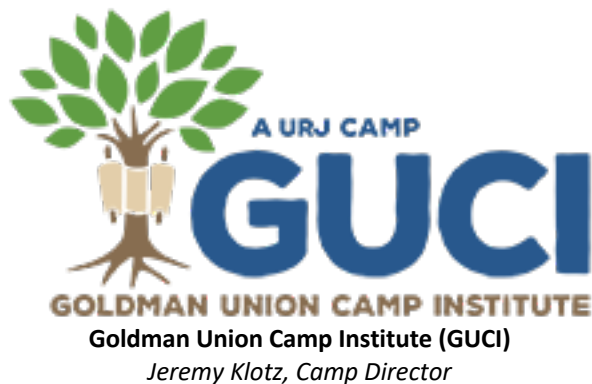
Registration opened at the beginning of October and we have had a steady stream of campers enrolling. Our campership application is already open. We have already begun planning for next summer. We are looking forward to a wonderful Summer 2021 at GFC!



Henry S. Jacobs Camp
Anna Herman, Camp Director

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jacobs Camp had to pivot our programming and fundraising approaches to respond to the new environment. We knew that the world was in crisis and camp needed to be there immediately for our community to offer Jewish Joy and much needed connection. Therefore, in March, Jacobs Camp immediately launched HSJ 365, a hugely successful remote programming experience for campers. Our goal was to innovate from the normal program, while still providing meaningful connections that our community craves along with the excellent programming. HSJ 365 continued into the summer with a shift to a more cabin environment to mimic the traditional summer experience. In terms of fundraising, Jacobs Camp needed to raise funds fast to offset the losses from cancelled camp. Thanks to the generous donors to the Sustainability Campaign, HSJ raised \$981,460.49.

We are so grateful to everyone, including WRJ Southwest District, who donated and helped us exceed our goal! Without the support from our incredible community, Jacobs Camp would not be on the Road to Welcome Home for in person camp next summer! We are so excited to Welcome Home our Jacobs Camp family in 2021 – our future is so bright!



Well, it's been one crazy year, hasn't it? The Union for Reform Judaism's Goldman Union Camp Institute, located in Zionsville, Indiana has been serving reform Jewish campers and staff since 1958. Summer 2020 was the first time since its inception that kids were not on the premises in the

summer; a fate that permeated the camping community nationwide. With coordination and cooperation with our sister URJ camps, GUCI was able to pivot quickly to create and provide engaging virtual programming to a variety of constituents, including campers, prospective campers, alumni, donors and stakeholders, etc. Throughout the summer, we delivered over 60 programs and ritual experiences to our community. These programs provided a timely feeling of community, optimism and hope for the future, allowed campers and old friends to see one another, or reunite after many years. GUCI also engaged in substantial sustainability fundraising and successfully obtained donations from families and foundations that covered nearly an entire year's worth of operating expenses in the face of losing all summer revenue. The outpouring of support and encouragement from the community is a testament to the value and importance of the work Jewish summer camps do to engage children and to help ensure a bright future for the Jewish people.

We are thrilled to report that GUCI opened registration for summer 2021 a few weeks ago and already has 263 campers enrolled! We are deeply engaged in scenario and contingency planning to manage COVID-19 issues, and are hopefully optimistic that our engaging and welcoming community will be able to gather in Zionsville for an amazing summer at camp!



WRJ Southwest District Convention
November 5 - 7, 2020