

Jewish Service-Learning: A Foundation and a Future

From the Guest Editors

Repair the World is thrilled to present the very first issue of the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* dedicated to Jewish service-learning (JSL). With the creation of this landmark issue, we celebrate the great work of those building the growing JSL field, expand our collective knowledge about existing opportunities, trends, and best practices and introduce it to newcomers. The articles herein tackle a variety of timely subjects authored by the JSL experts: those who are helping build the field themselves.

This year, for the first time, the *Journal* is available in both print and online, with a digital supplement of shorter pieces on **RepairLabs**, Repair the World's blog devoted exclusively to providing resources and a community to the field's practitioners. Abstracts for the digital supplement are highlighted throughout this issue, with the complete articles available at RepairLabs.org/JJCS. We encourage you to share what you learn and join the conversation on [twitter@RepairLabs](https://twitter.com/RepairLabs).

As a platform dedicated broadly to inspiring American Jews and their communities to give their time and effort to serve those in need, Repair the World has been paying close attention to the JSL field since we were established in 2009. To foster the field's growth, we provide grants, technical assistance, leadership, and support for educators. To inform the field's development, we also conduct research and evaluation. For example, in 2010-2011, we released several reports including *The Worth of What They Do: The Impact of Short-Term Immersive Jewish Service-Learning on Host Communities—An Exploratory Study*, *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report on Jewish Young Adults*, and *Year 2: Refining the Pedagogy of the Group Leadership Training Institute for Immersive Jewish Service Program Leaders*—all of which have provided important insights into this emerging space.

So what is Jewish service-learning? JSL can be defined much like secular service-learning: an act combining direct service that responds to real community needs, within and outside of the Jewish community, with structured learning and time for reflection. In JSL, we take it one step further, wrapping the experience within a context of Jewish education and values—like our commitment as individuals and communities to *tikkun olam*: repairing the world.

JSL programs can be recurring or occasional **local Jewish service-learning** opportunities in one's own community while others are **immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL)** experiences—full-time direct service for at least seven days, often involving travel outside of one's community. Still other programs work inside out, embedding service-learning in **academic courses**, either in a K–12 setting or in **higher education**, including through Jewish Studies courses on university campuses, or via Jewish day school programs that engage students in service-learning as part of their curricula.

At best, local JSL enables individuals, Hillels, synagogues, JCCs, and other groups to make long-standing connections with the organizations with which they partner and with their community's long-term efforts to become more caring and just. And, in all instances, JSL service must be authentic, it must support

the needs of the community being served, and it must effectively align its learning program to the work itself.

We are extremely grateful to the dozens of people who helped make this *Journal* issue possible. Thanks to Jennifer Hoos Rothberg, Rafi Rone, Jennie Rosenn, and John Ruskay for joining us in a roundtable moderated by Repair the World Board member, Liz Jaffe, to discuss the motivations behind their organizations' support of the field. (A transcript is included on page 8.)

We thank our devoted Editorial Committee (listed in the masthead) who lent their expertise and time to curating this incredible edition of the *Journal* by participating in a double-blind review of each article submitted. In addition, we appreciate the reading, editing, and guidance of Susan Shevitz, Lyn Light Geller, Gail Naron Chalew, and Brenda Gevertz of JCSA.

This project would not have been possible without the support of our *Journal* co-sponsors and our partners in building the JSL field: the Jim Joseph Foundation and our colleagues there, Chip Edelsberg and Adene Sacks; and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and our colleagues there, Lisa Eisen and Roben Kantor. Please see page 3 for an article by Lisa Eisen, Adene Sacks, and Jon Rosenberg, which makes the case for Jewish service-learning's value for the community served, the individuals participating in JSL, and our Jewish community.

Finally, we offer our sincerest thanks to JSL practitioners and the authors of articles in both the *Journal* and its digital supplement. Your knowledge, expertise, and stories speak for themselves. Thank you for sharing them and for sharing of yourselves as we work together to build this field and repair the world.

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