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**FEDERATION FOCUS**  
YOUR JEWISH COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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# FEDERATION FOCUS

## YOUR JEWISH COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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Welcome to Federation Focus, the quarterly supplement about your Jewish Federation, its partner agencies and their impact on Jewish life. Federation Focus keeps you informed and connected with important issues in our community, ensuring that everyone knows where to find a helping hand and where to extend one.

## Annual Campaign Funds Enable Jewish Connections

*It's no secret that the Lower Mainland is a very expensive place to live – and growing more so every year. The repercussions of that reality are impacting our community in myriad ways. Housing costs are pushing an increasing number of families to areas farther and farther from Vancouver's Jewish epicenter – beyond the reach of most of our community institutions. Those who do stay near our traditional core often find the cost of doing so limits their ability to afford the very elements of Jewish life that keep them here.*

Jewish Federation is working to address these widespread issues through its Annual Campaign and in partnership with its beneficiary agencies.

More than 850 children now live in underserved areas beyond the borders of Vancouver, and few are receiving any Jewish education. With community support, Jewish educators can develop innovative programs via which these kids can access that education, sharing fully in the richness of our traditions and

strengthening their Jewish identities.

And recently, in collaboration with the Jewish Community Centre, Jewish Federation funded a pilot project to enable Jewish children living in the Tri-Cities to attend Jewish summer day camp. By providing funds for transportation and fee subsidies, 22 children were able to have fun and memorable Jewish summer camp experiences.

Likewise, with your help, Federation is building meaningful and lifelong connections for teens

and young adults. Taglit-Birthright Israel provides participants with a profound, life-changing experience: a first trip to Israel with their peers – touring the birthplace of our people while building connections and making memories that will last a lifetime. Your gift to the Federation Annual Campaign helps to keep these trips free, so that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity remains open to all local Jewish young adults.

The expense, however, of other powerful programs

has proved a barrier to many. *March of the Living* is a two-week journey that takes participants from the once-vibrant Jewish communities of Poland to the horrors of death camps, and then to Israel to reflect on our history and celebrate our survival. Participants come back committed to Holocaust education and speaking out as Survivors age. Your gift to the Federation Annual Campaign funds scholarships so that no one is turned away from *March of the Living* and other Israel experience programs.

In addition to making Jewish education and experiences accessible, Federation helps those who are struggling simply to find housing in our very costly area. Construction is



*Taglit-Birthright Israel provides participants with a profound, life-changing experience: a first trip to Israel with their peers.*

beginning on 42 new rental homes in Vancouver and Richmond, managed by our partner, Tikva Housing Society, a non-profit organization committed to safe, affordable housing for low-income Jewish families and adults. With 16% of our community living in poverty, including 635

children under the age of 15, the need for affordable housing is significant and it is urgent.

Together, we can ensure that no one in our community goes without – whether that means educational or cultural opportunities or the basic necessity of a safe and secure home. Your gift to the Annual Campaign is an act of *tzedakah* (charity or justice) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) that supports initiatives like these, and that strengthens us all. Make your gift today at [jewishvancouver.com](http://jewishvancouver.com).

*By providing funds for transportation and fee subsidies, 22 children were able to have fun and memorable Jewish summer camp experiences.*



## Adults join *March of the Living* as Survivors' Families Find Personal Connections

Since the first *March of the Living* was held in 1988, over 200,000 participants, from 52 countries, have walked in solidarity down the same three-kilometer path leading from Auschwitz to Birkenau on *Yom Hashoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, and an act of defiance in the face of bigotry and hatred.

In 2016 adults will have the opportunity to join in this profound experience. While they will travel separately from the teen and young adult delegations, everyone will come together for the march itself between death camps.

Because so many Survivors' children and

other relatives have shown a deep interest in their family histories, this year's adult *March* will include educational components specifically created around those personal connections, though that content will be open to all participants. More details will be available over the coming months.

The program starts in Poland, with visits to concentration camps, as well as cities, towns and villages that were once vibrant centers of Jewish life and learning. Then, on *Yom Hashoah* all participants will walk from Auschwitz to Birkenau, honouring all those who perished. But even while contemplating the pain of the past, there is reason to

look forward as you meet a new generation of Polish Jews who are committed to keeping Judaism alive in their country.

Then it's on to Israel (optional for the adult

*March*) where participants will spend the next week connecting with their Jewish roots, and the country's ancient history and dynamic present, in places including Jerusalem,

Masada, and Tel Aviv. Participants will take part in special *March of the Living* events, and stand in solidarity to observe *Yom Hazikaron*, Israel's Remembrance Day,

followed the next evening by the celebration of Israel's Independence Day, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

For more information, contact Shelley Goldberg at 604-257-5100.



## A Lifeline for Isolated and Lonely Seniors



For many seniors, the "golden years" are anything but, filled with long days of inactivity, boredom and loneliness. It is often a gradual slide into social isolation as friends and family members pass away, move, or simply lose touch. The effects of this isolation are real and can be devastating, from depression to cognitive decline and increased risk of physical deterioration.

In 2010, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver produced a report on the issues facing seniors in our community, and ways to help them

age in place with dignity.

Among the themes that emerged was the need for informal support networks to ease the loneliness and isolation that many seniors feel. Jewish Seniors Alliance (JSA) recognized that universal need and over the past few years has developed an array of peer support programs.

One such program is the "Friendly Visitor" program in our community.

Seniors receive home visits and regular telephone check-ins provided by trained volunteers, older adults themselves – providing companionship,

stimulation and purpose for both those involved. As part of the process, JSA considers the compatibility of volunteer and client and works to make the best possible matches.

"We are sometimes the ear and the heart to people who have no one else," says Charles Leibovitch, JSA's peer support coordinator. "I see the benefits every day. We listen and use empathetic communication skills to help older adults identify goals and make positive changes."

Volunteer callers in the Shalom Again phone program undergo many hours of training, prior to contacting lonely or isolated seniors. The purpose of the calls is to keep in touch through conversation, and possibly learn vital information about the older person which may prove helpful when building a support system. For the person answering the phone,

the calls can be a lifeline – providing a critical connection and sense of inclusion and community.

In the in-person visitor program, specially trained senior volunteers make regular visits to the elderly at risk of isolation. They spend a leisurely time together – talking, going for walks, playing games and just developing a relationship. Most of the visits take place in clients' homes, but sometimes include outings. While

these visits are social, the volunteers also monitor the older person's living conditions and general well-being. If necessary, JSA provides the client with different assistance options.

The beauty of these programs comes not just from knowing the recipients of the calls and visits are helped, but also from the skills training and renewed sense of purpose experienced by the volunteers. It's a win-win for everyone.

Right now, the program serves approximately 150 people, but the community's needs have outstripped the program's current capacity, and increased funding is needed. The demand will only continue to increase, as our seniors' population is expected to double by 2030. Your gift to the Federation Annual Campaign supports programs like these on which thousands of community members rely.



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