



# COMMUNITY REPORT



Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER HOUSTON

# HINENI SPEAKS

During the fall and winter of 2022-2023, the Federation embarked on "Hineni Houston: Come and Be Heard," a community-wide listening journey that engaged more than 1,200 Houstonians as part of our strategic planning process. **Participants were asked the central and personal question, "What are your aspirations for Houston's Jewish community, now and for the future?"**

We thank all who made Hineni Houston possible. We are extremely grateful to the 1,200 people who shared their voices, ideas, opinions, hopes, and dreams for our community. We are also grateful for our dedicated Hineni Chairs, Dori Kornfeld Goldman and Joe Pryzant, as well as the 50+ community volunteer members of the Listening Lab for leading this project. Our consultants at Insyte Partners facilitated the process, and they also ensured its success.

This report highlights the key findings from this project including the "Bold Aspirations" that are now being used to inform the strategic direction of the Federation. Our core mission of serving Jews here in Houston, in Israel, and around the world endures. As we move forward, your voices will continue to guide us as we lead the way toward a bright tomorrow. We know this is a very proud community, and it is hungry for connection - social connection, spiritual connection, and religious connection. Our work will promote that as much as possible. We will also work to be intentional about inclusion and open the doors to our big tent wide, in ways that make people feel valued and valuable.

The Federation will lead the way, but these aspirations were created by the entire community, and it will be up to all of us to bring them to life. As lay leaders, Jewish communal professionals, board members, clergy, and synagogue members, we must participate to take ownership of our Jewish future. Our children and grandchildren are counting on us.

The work starts now. Thank you for continuing the journey with us.



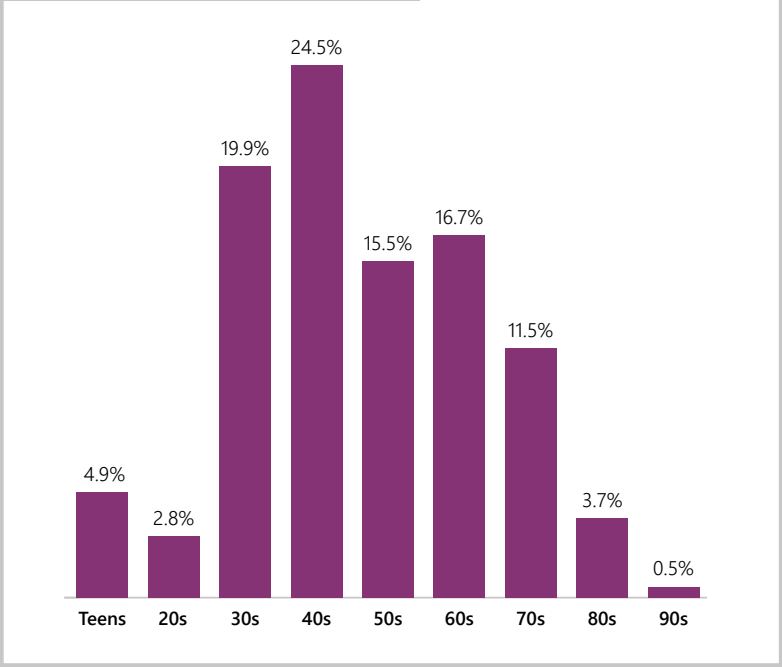
Ben Samuels, Board Chair



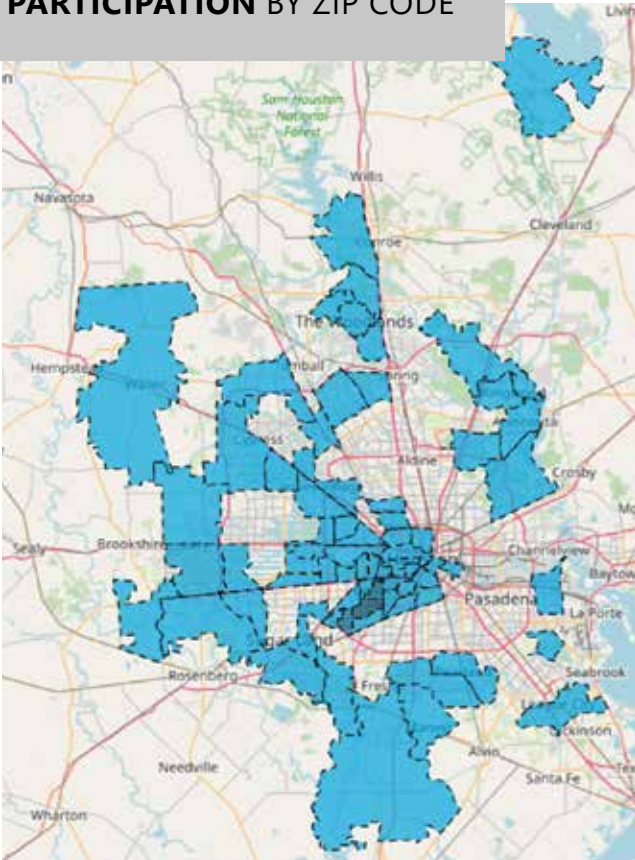
Renée Wizig-Barrios, President & CEO

## Hineni Houston: **Demographics**

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE

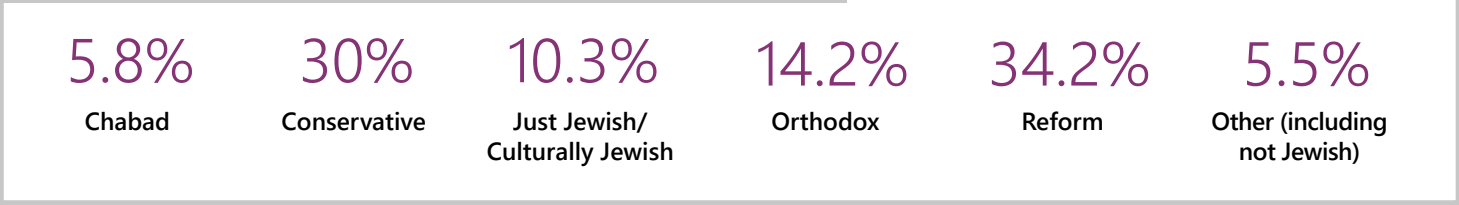


## PARTICIPATION BY ZIP CODE



*Hineni Houston reached broadly across our community. Thank you to those who shared their voices as a part of this process. We appreciate your gift of time and thought.*

## PARTICIPATION BY RELIGIOUS IDENTITY/AFFILIATION



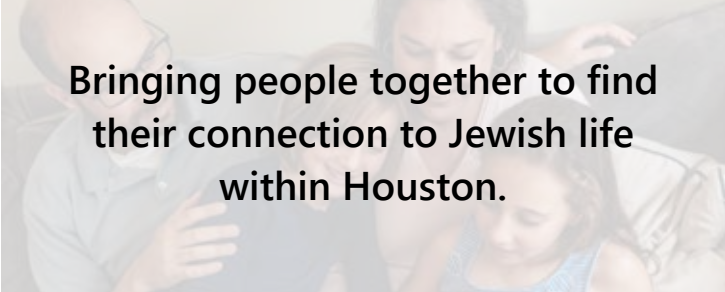
# Hineni Houston: **The Vision**

Hineni Houston was the process that allowed us to collect the input of our community. These collective voices are, in turn, the shamash that lights our menorah. They bring light to our work as we implement strategies that represent the thoughts of Jewish Houstonians who shared their wisdom, time, stories, and hopes for the future that we will create together.

We look to “innovation” to be our guiding principle as we embrace risk taking and build new ways of working together to meet the evolving community needs. We hope that you, too, will embrace the mindset of change and be open to the possibilities these messages present as we work together to strengthen Jewish life in Greater Houston.

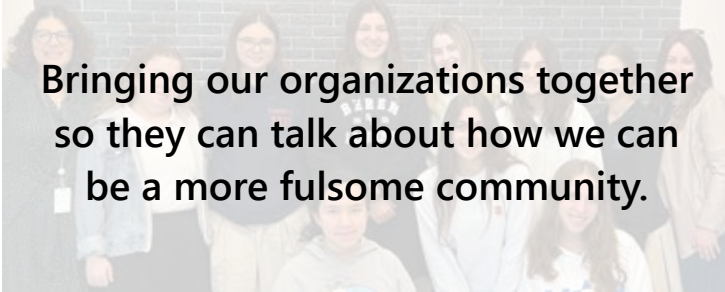
## **Federation Brings our Aspiration to Life through Four Key Roles:**

### *1. CONNECTOR*



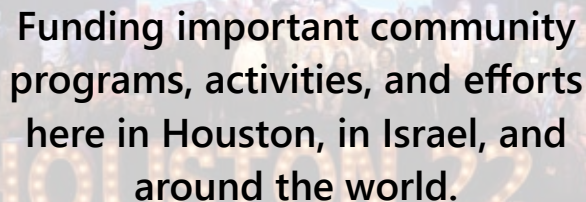
Bringing people together to find their connection to Jewish life within Houston.

### *2. CONVENER*



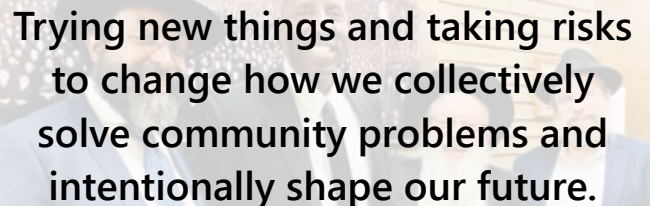
Bringing our organizations together so they can talk about how we can be a more fulsome community.

### *3. FUNDER*



Funding important community programs, activities, and efforts here in Houston, in Israel, and around the world.

### *4. INNOVATOR*



Trying new things and taking risks to change how we collectively solve community problems and intentionally shape our future.

We are stronger together. The Federation has begun implementing lessons from Hineni based on the Bold Aspirations found on the next pages. We will also be working with organizations throughout the community on ways to further partner in this work.

## Launching Now: Local Impact Fund

The Federation is launching the **Local Impact Fund** this spring to address the emerging needs of the community. This competitive grant process will allow for new, innovative, and collaborative programming. All programs or initiatives funded through the Local Impact Fund must be sponsored by a Jewish nonprofit and serve the Jewish community.

**Grants will be awarded before the end of the calendar year 2023.**

**Programs should fit within at least one of the three priority areas:**

### **1. INCLUSION**

Programs that engage and support outreach to youth and adults with special needs, LGBTQIA+, interfaith families, families in the suburban areas of Houston.

### **2. ENGAGEMENT**

Fostering Jewish community and building Jewish identity, both socially and spiritually, in an innovative way for elementary and middle school age children and families, adults (including seniors), inter-Jewish community partnerships, and community-wide programs across Greater Houston

### **3. EDUCATION:**

Innovative programming for formal and informal Jewish education for congregational school programming, service learning and volunteer opportunities, combating antisemitism, and building bridges between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

## Moving Forward: Implementing Hineni Committees

**The Federation has formed new committees to operationalize and prioritize the key concepts that emerged from Hineni Houston.** Each committee has a Chair - who is a JFGH Board member - whose role is to convene the committee, provide thought leadership on the subject matter of the committee, and engage in collaborative working relationships with the Federation professional staff.

Strategies will continue to grow as we lean into best practices from others in our Jewish community and across the globe, and we will pilot things along the way to continue the journey of building a vibrant community together.

As this journey continues, we will update you on the progress of each committee and the Bold Aspirations. There will be opportunities for the committees to engage the community along the way.

### **COMMITTEES**

Affordability

Communications

Education

Inclusion

Leadership





# UNDERSTANDING *our* SHARED VISION

**ACTIVATE & NAVIGATE**  
JEWISH LIFE IN GREATER HOUSTON

**SHALOM Y'ALL**

FRONT DOOR & COMMUNICATIONS

easy ACCESS to JEWISH LIFE

**LIVE PROUDLY**  
and OPENLY as JEWS

JEWISH IDENTITY  
CIVIC RELATIONSHIPS  
COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM

**BROADEN**  
the BIG TENT  
INCLUSION



WELCOMING ALL VOICES

**FOSTER LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING**

EDUCATION

HANDS-ON LEARNING



MANY PATHS to LEARNING

**CONNECT**  
to JEWISH EXPERIENCES  
ACROSS AGE, STAGE  
and PLACE  
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING



**PRIORITIZE AFFORDABILITY**  
and ACCESS in JEWISH LIFE



**LEAD JEWISHLY**  
from STRENGTH  
to STRENGTH



**UNITE**  
as ONE COMMUNITY  
through COLLABORATION

COLLABORATE on COSTS

ORGANIZATIONS  
SHARING  
KNOWLEDGE,  
EXPERTISE and  
RESOURCES



SYNERGY

**HINENI**



Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER HOUSTON



**BOLD ASPIRATIONS**

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston is to ensure a thriving, vibrant, and engaged Jewish community locally, in Israel, and around the world.

As a leading Jewish philanthropic organization in Houston, the Jewish Federation is the convener, connector, and funder for the Jewish community. It acts as the symbolic menorah for Jewish life, building the foundation of collective Jewish community and shining a light on Judaism in the most diverse, geographically spread, 4th largest city in the United States.

The "Bold Aspirations" represent the key themes voiced during the six-month, volunteer-led Hineni Houston process in which the Jewish Federation heard from more than 1,200 people about their hopes for the Greater Houston Jewish community, now and in the future. With this input, we are adapting our strategy and look forward to talking with all partner organizations and learning how the information moves our community forward.





## 1. SHALOM Y'ALL: ACTIVATE AND NAVIGATE JEWISH LIFE IN GREATER HOUSTON

### *Front Door & Communications*

#### What This Means

Jewish Houstonians feel welcomed, informed, and empowered to easily access Jewish Life. The community has a central portal to Jewish life in Greater Houston. We increase the visibility of Jewish life in Houston. Newcomers and established Houstonians have access to human connection and centralized communication tools. We offer a network of wayfinders who help navigate the Jewish community.



## 2. LIVE PROUDLY AND OPENLY AS JEWS

### *Jewish Identity, Civic Relationships, and Combatting Antisemitism*

#### What This Means

Greater Houston's Jews live proudly, securely, and connectedly to Houston's multi-faceted community. We openly observe our faith and culture in the ways we choose, without fear of antisemitism. Institutions, homes, and persons are physically secure. The Jewish community is also a full participant in the civic and cultural life of our diverse city. Our community is constructively engaged with global Jewry and the people of Israel. We fully support Israel as the Jewish homeland and seek to create informed, yet diverse, conversations about Israel and its policies.



## 3. BROADEN THE BIG TENT

### *Inclusion*

#### What This Means

The Greater Houston Jewish community embraces its place in the most diverse, geographically spread city in the United States. We design programming that creates an ease of participation for those near and far that enhance the small town feel of Houston. We actively welcome all Jews - all levels of religious observance, race, politics, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, heritage, and stage of life. We include the voices of Jews who historically have not been heard, and we ensure our Jewish social service programs are meeting the evolving needs of the most vulnerable in our community. We strive to build a trusting, inclusive, diverse, and pluralistic culture.

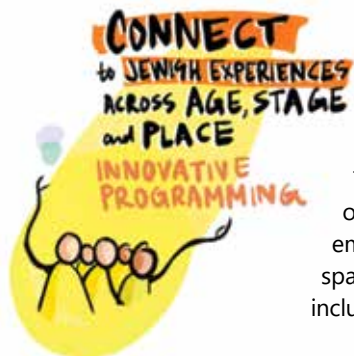


## 4. FOSTER LIFELONG JEWISH LEARNING

### *Education*

#### What This Means

In this community, Jewish education is valued and innovative. There are many pathways to quality Jewish learning for all ages and abilities, which are offered both formally and informally. We build bridges and connections among Jewish youth through community-wide programming. Educators are compensated generously and are well-supported with professional development. We build capacity to bring inspiring Jewish educational content to all Jews and their loved ones, fostering lifelong Jewish journeys.



## 5. CONNECT TO JEWISH EXPERIENCES ACROSS AGE, STAGE, AND PLACE

### *Innovative Programming*

#### What This Means

The Greater Houston Jewish community creates innovative and collaborative programs that provide opportunities for the entire community – including niche groups of all ages, stages, and neighborhoods. We embrace gathering for spiritual, educational, and social experiences in traditional and non-traditional Jewish spaces, and stand united as a supportive community that loves to come together. At our core, we are strong, inclusive, welcoming, and vibrant.



## 6. UNITE AS ONE COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

### *Organizational Collaboration*

#### What This Means

Jewish organizations share resources and work together to meet the needs of the entire Jewish community now and in the future. The organizations that make up the Greater Houston Jewish community work collaboratively to build energy and create synergy under the shared responsibility of supporting Jewish life. With mutual respect for each other, these organizations work together to build a scaffold of support, collaboration, and connectedness.



## 7. PRIORITIZE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS IN JEWISH LIFE

### *Affordability*

#### What This Means

Community reduces financial barriers so that all Jewish individuals can afford to participate in a full and meaningful Jewish life. We offer a variety of clearly publicized, easily accessible, and confidential financial tools that are readily available to people of all incomes. Promote and prioritize Jewish philanthropy to meet the vision of an inclusive and vibrant Jewish community.



## 8. LEAD JEWISHLY FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

### *Leadership*

#### What This Means

Leading Jewishly is rewarding and impactful. We grow, connect, and activate lay and professional leaders who reflect the diversity of the Greater Houston Jewish community to meet community needs. We cultivate a strong pipeline of people with leadership potential to collaborate and enrich our community through service to our organizations. As a community, we work together to develop leadership collaboratively and create a stronger Jewish leadership ecosystem for this generation and generations to come.



# Hineni Houston: Charting Our Work

**The Federation is committed to working through our committee process to grow programmatic and funding efforts to meet the vision of Hineni Houston. There are areas of opportunity in each of the Bold Aspirations.** We have charted where our current work reflects the Bold Aspirations, and the voices of the community will continue to inform how this work emerges and evolves in new ways.



**Here is the current work of the Federation mapped to the Bold Aspirations:**

## 1. Shalom Y'all: Activate and Navigate Jewish Life in Greater Houston

### What We Do

- **Community Calendar and Communications**  
Events listed on Federation website and key news shared via email.
- **Newsletters**  
For Jerome Robinson Young Adult Division (YAD) and PJ Library.

### What We Fund

- **Area of Opportunity**

## 2. Live Proudly and Openly as Jews

### What We Do

- **Security**  
Proactive security support of Houston's 75 Jewish institutions that includes conducting trainings, assessing threats, and liaising with law enforcement when incidents occur.
- **Public Affairs**  
Connections forged around legislative issues that impact the Houston Jewish community.
- **Connecting the Community with Israel**  
Providing multiple trips to Israel for community members, educators, and teens (through Kehillah High). Hosting local Shlichim (Hebrew for Emissary) who culturally connect our community with Israel through experiences and events. Facilitating Partnership2gether, a program in partnership with the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) that connects Houston officially with the Israeli city Petach Tikvah.

### What We Fund

- **University Life Support**  
Hillels and Chabads at the University of Texas, Texas A&M, and Houston (Rice and University of Houston).
- **BBYO**  
A Jewish teen movement intended to build the identity of Jewish teens and offer leadership development programs.
- **Birthright Israel**  
Allows Jewish young adults to experience Israel.
- **Moishe House**  
Provides young adults with the opportunity to live together and build community.
- **NCSY Jewish Student Union**  
Clubs for Jewish students in non-Jewish schools.

### 3. Broaden the Big Tent

#### What We Do

- **PJ Library Community Connectors**  
Conducting outreach to families with children in suburban areas of Houston to keep them connected with Judaism and Jewish community.
- **Honeymoon Israel**  
A program that connects multi-faith couples with Israel and Judaism.
- **Matan**  
Utilizing an outside group to conduct an assessment of special needs and opportunities for Jewish schools (Pre-K through grade 12) to better serve students with disabilities and their families.

#### What We Fund

- **Friendship Circle**  
Supporting families with loved ones who have special needs.
- **Celebration Company at the Alexander JFS**  
Provides training and job connection to individuals with disabilities.
- **Area of Opportunity**

### 4. Foster Lifelong Jewish Learning

#### What We Do

- **Yom Limmud**  
Host yearly a Jewish day of learning for the community.
- **Early Childhood Teacher Degree Program**  
Provides forgivable loans to educators seeking advanced degrees.
- **Professional Development for Teachers**  
Provide trainings for teachers at all day and congregational schools.
- **Networks for All Schools**  
Educators from 38 Jewish day and congregational schools participate in conversations, information and resource sharing, and problem solving.

#### What We Fund

- **Day School Support**  
Financial support provided to each of Houston's Jewish day schools based on enrollment numbers.
- **Kehillah High**  
Collaborative high school program and learning for students continuing Jewish studies after confirmation.
- **Financial Support for Early Childhood Programs**  
Provide childcare and early exposure to Jewish life for young families in our community.
- **Area of Opportunity**

### 5. Connect to Jewish Experiences Across Age, Stage, and Place

#### What We Do

- **Israel Experiences**  
Providing multiple trips to Israel for community members, educators, and teens (through Kehillah High).
- **PJ Library**  
Provides families with small children with monthly mailed access to Jewish books and music as well as planned community activities.
- **Jewish Professional Networks**  
Networking groups for professionals to connect & share ideas.

#### What We Fund

- **J Support**  
General support for the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center so it can provide community programs.
- **Maccabi Games**  
Specified an allocation to support the Maccabi Games at the J.
- **Seven Acres**  
Provide general support for Seven Acres Senior Care Services to help it care for the elderly in our community.

## 6. Unite as One Community Through Collaboration

### What We Do

- **Collaborative Networks**  
Fourteen (14) Collaborative Networks sharing best practices and resources across organizations throughout the community.

### What We Fund

- **Core Support for Key Jewish Institutions**  
These include the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, Joan and Stanford Alexander Jewish Family Service, and Seven Acres Jewish Senior Care Services.
- **Area of Opportunity**

## 7. Prioritize Affordability and Access in Jewish Life

### What We Do

- **Camps and Israel Travel Scholarships**  
Provide scholarships to keep people connected to Jewish experiences.
- **Marvin Barish Right Start**  
Provides tuition vouchers for families enrolling their first child in a Jewish early childhood program.

### What We Fund

- **Elder Care Support and Financial Hardship Assistance**  
Help the vulnerable in our community through the support of Alexander JFS Promise of Hope (impoverished persons), Holocaust Survivor Support, and Case Management as well as Seven Acres, and ERJCC Senior Services (including JRide).
- **Disaster Relief**  
As needed, provide leadership and support for those impacted by manmade and natural disasters.
- **Area of Opportunity**

## 8. Lead Jewishly from Strength to Strength

### What We Do

- **Jerome Robinson Family Young Adult Division (YAD)**  
Provide social connections and leadership opportunities for Houston-area Jewish young adults.
- **FED U**  
A leadership cohort specifically cultivated to learn about the Jewish community, develop as leaders, and become volunteers for Jewish institutions.

### What We Fund

- **Area of Opportunity**







## STAYING CONNECTED

We all have a role to play in continuing to enhance our Jewish community as we collaboratively move forward. Continue this journey with us: visit [houstonjewish.org/stayconnected](https://houstonjewish.org/stayconnected) to volunteer and share your interests with us. You can follow the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston on Facebook and Instagram.



houstonjewish



jfedhtx





## HINENI HOUSTON LISTENING LAB

Renée Wizig-Barrios, CEO

Ben Samuels, Board Chair

Dori Kornfeld Goldman and Joe Pryzant, Hineni Chairs

Diane Adler  
 Danielle Alexander  
 Taryn Baranowski  
 Daniel Barvin  
 Josh Barvin  
 Harel Bassan  
 Lauren Kaufman Blachman  
 Emily Blau  
 fred Bleeker Franks  
 Debra G. Cohen  
 Hilary Cohen  
 Laykie Donin  
 Mike Drob  
 Sherrie Eisenman  
 Emily Feinstein  
 Natalie Ferguson  
 Audrey Fersten  
 Rachel Findley  
 Jen Fink  
 Jackie Fisherman

Elyse Freed  
 Danny Gavin  
 Jay Goldberg  
 Raquel Goldberg  
 Luis Gomar  
 Kim Gowan  
 Jenny Gustufson  
 Marilyn Hassid  
 Suzanne Jacobson  
 Elyse Spector Kalmans  
 Hilary Kamin  
 Debbie Karakowsky  
 Alisha Klapholz  
 Lisa Klein  
 Diane Kraitman  
 Bobby Lapin  
 Norri Leder  
 Amy Lerman  
 Rachael Levy  
 Rebecca Lindenbaum

Barry Mandel  
 Stephanie Marshall  
 Marna Meyer  
 Talia Saghian Morrow  
 Mari O'Leary  
 Hyman Penn  
 Steven Plumb  
 Leigh Rappaport  
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