In Tribute to
The Original Trustees
of the Jewish Foundation
of Cincinnati
We are highly pleased
to learn that the Israelites of this flourishing city have
made a commencement in the establishment of a
Jewish Hospital.

It is expected that the hospital just begun and with such
small resources will not be suffered to languish for want
of proper support—for every Jew must be anxious to
sympathize with him...by sharing his religious sentiments;
and his hopes of the future.

We trust, therefore, in the deepest sincerity, that the
experiment just commenced in Cincinnati may not fail and that its triumphant success may induce other
congregations to follow so noble an example."

—The Occident. (1850)
Indeed, the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati, established in 1850, was the nation’s first Jewish Hospital. By the time the Burnet Avenue facility was opened in 1890, the Jewish Hospital was considered by many to be the most highly equipped and modern hospital in the city.

“It was a hospital where not only sick Jews could find relief and aid, but where the door is ever open for him or her, who has but to say: I am sick. Take me in.”

—Adapted from Dr. Joseph Marcus, in American Israelite, July 4, 1901 and Mary Ethel H. Sharon, A History and Recollection ...of Jewish Hospital. (Cincinnati, 1975.)

And so, for over 150 years, the Jewish Hospital provided state-of-the-art medical care and services to the citizens of Cincinnati. In 1994, in response to the nation’s rapidly changing healthcare environment and the move toward multi-hospital consolidation, the Jewish Hospital became part of the Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati. It was expected that this cooperative network would help member hospitals compete economically and improve access to care for patients.

After making the contribution of over $200 million to become a member of the Health Alliance, the Jewish Health System (which agreed to close the Burnet Avenue location, move to Kenwood and enlarge the facility there) was left with nearly $70 million in excess assets. A strategy to create a Jewish Foundation with resources to invest in Cincinnati’s Jewish community began to evolve.

In 1995, the assets from the Jewish Health System were transferred to the newly incorporated Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati. The first Officers and Trustees were designated, and the work of the Jewish Foundation was under way.
The Foundation will support, promote, advance, and strengthen the Jewish community and Jewish causes in Greater Cincinnati and throughout the world which the Foundation’s Board of Trustees deems appropriate to support...

**Bob Kanter:** When I joined the hospital board in 1975—20 years before the Jewish Foundation came to be—I stood up to introduce myself and told the story about the first Jews that arrived in New Amsterdam. Peter Stuyvesant said that the 23 Jews could stay, but that they would have to take care of their own and not be a burden to society. The hospital—and now the Foundation—are examples of how we take care of our own, but also of the general population. We accept the double burden.

**Gary Heiman:** In the mid 1800s, the major challenges facing the Jewish community were that Jews could not work at non-Jewish hospitals and Jewish patients could not gain access to quality medical care. 150 years later, we are looking at the major challenges facing the Jewish community today, and we are asking: How can the Jewish Foundation play the same role that the Jewish Hospital played in the 1850s?

**Phyllis Sewell:** To me, one of the most important things the Foundation did in those early years was to create the Israel grants program. We were concerned about the younger generation and its relationship to Israel. Many of us had strong ties and we felt it was important to enable others to strengthen their own personal connections. The Israel trips we funded have had a tremendous impact.

**Sidney Peerless z”l (as related by Jeffrey Zipkin):** Sid Peerless believed in and supported a broad agenda for advancing the Jewish community. He admired the Jewish Hospital for its exceptional quality of care and was very proud of its tradition and role in the general community. As a Foundation Trustee, Sid endeavored to help secure a flourishing Jewish future for all segments of our community.

**Gary Heiman:** We quickly realized that the development of the Foundation was a shift change and a new paradigm for the community. When the Foundation was formed, Cincinnati was a declining community. When the Hospital sold, we had to develop a totally new strategic plan for the Foundation, and since then we have created a “game changing” environment in every one of our core areas of focus; specifically, Jewish Education, affinity with Israel and Jewish Peoplehood through Israel Trips & Overnight Jewish Camping, taking care of the segments of the Jewish community that cannot take care of themselves, and building Jewish leadership and community. We have established the infrastructure to grow and enhance each of these core areas of Jewish life, and we have helped transform Cincinnati’s Jewish community into one that is world-renowned for its innovation and creativity.

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**Gloria Haffer:** When we formed the Foundation, we knew our primary focus had to be on Jewish identity. Young people had to be the starting point with Jewish education, Jewish camping, Israel trips and Judaic Studies at the university level. The Jewish Foundation’s funding of the new Jewish Community Center was the game changer. At last we had a place where everyone in the community could come together, feel a sense of belonging and participate in the community.

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**1998:** The Jewish Foundation provided a grant of $1.5 million to establish University of Cincinnati Judaic Studies Chair and upgrade the Judaic Studies program to a full department consisting of a minimum of five full-time faculty.

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**1999:** The Jewish Foundation provides a $4 million matching grant to upgrade and expand Yavneh/Rockwern’s facilities.
Bernie Dave: Life is a series of constant changes whether we like it or not. We have to adapt to it. The experience of the Foundation is the same; we have gone through many changes and experiences over time. We all got our feet wet at the hospital. And our journey with the Foundation has provided interest, enjoyment, frustration, challenges and now, pride. And though there were certain issues in the community that were divisive, like where the new JCC should be located or how the cemetery issue should be managed, I believe the Foundation helped to resolve those tensions and divisions.

Bob Walsh: It was quite a journey. We went from having something glorious to something even better! It was a pleasure to work with such extraordinary people to find such satisfying ways to give back to our shared community.

Phil Cohen: I grew up in a household where volunteerism was just a part of our lives. So for over 60 years, I have been a volunteer...working for the United Way, Camp Livingston, Rockdale Temple, the Jewish Federation and others. But the Jewish Hospital was the love of my life. I served two terms on the board. It was everything to me and my family. And now we have created a situation that the community could thrive through the efforts of the Foundation, and we have helped in so much good work being done.

Warren Falberg: We began in a strong position with our excellent Jewish Hospital; we made the next move by selling the Hospital for the benefit of our community; and now the Foundation is exhibiting leadership through strategy, focus, goals and objectives. Without the Foundation, the community could not have seen the growth and development that flowed from these resources. We would have not had the Israel trips, institutions might have been lost, and our potential to become a first-class Jewish community would have been inhibited.

Gloria Haffer: The Foundation has given over $100 million to the community in 18 years, and we have not forgotten our heritage. We have been careful and disciplined with how the money has been invested and spent. I feel that retiring from the Foundation board is analogous to being a parent who spends their life working very hard and makes his or her mark and fortune, and then turns it all over to their children. The parent hopes their children can follow in his or her footsteps. There is a worry that it won’t be exactly as he or she would have done it...but then again, children often create new and wonderful things that their parents might never have imagined!

1999: The Jewish Foundation initiates Israel experience grants for Jewish High School students and young adults. Grants of up to $6,500 are available for high school students and post-high school grants of $5,000 are available for young adults.

2000: Cedar Village is granted $900,000 to create assisted living units and relocate its dementia center within the facility.

2000: Nearly $1.4 million is granted to the Jewish Hospital for new medical equipment.

2001: $1.5 million is granted to build the International Learning Center at the American Jewish Archives on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
Robert Kanter: My hope is that trustees will always be mindful that this treasure has been earned by and set aside exclusively for the Jewish community of Cincinnati and that the board will always be representative of the entire community so that they can understand and respond to their needs.

Ben Gettler z”l: The Foundation will go on for many, many years after I and the original Trustees are long gone. This Foundation is permanent. It will continue to provide funds to nurture and make possible new and even greater enterprises to improve the life of every member of the Jewish community. It will be there whenever needed in Cincinnati. It will also be available in times of crisis for the Jews of Israel or elsewhere in the world.

2001: Nearly $1 million is provided for remodeling at Cincinnati Hebrew Day School.
2001: $3,546,000 million is invested in Camp Livingston for extensive renovation and remodeling.

2004: $6.5 million is granted to HUC to renovate the Klau Library, creating a major center for research and teaching in Cincinnati.

2004: Xavier University and Hillel at UC are awarded $200,000 to execute A Blessing To One Another: Pope John Paul II & The Jewish People. The international premiere takes place in Cincinnati.

2004: The Jewish Foundation sets aside up to $350,000 to celebrate 350 years of Jewish life in North America by making Cincinnati one of four cities in the USA to host the exhibit, “From Haven to Home.”

2005: A $10 million capital grant is awarded for construction of the new Jewish Community Center.

2008: The Foundation invests $4 million in the establishment of Jewish Cemeteries of Greater Cincinnati, a partnership with local congregations and The Jewish Federation.

2009: $1.2 million is granted to the Beth Tevilla Mikveh Society to support the establishment of the Cincinnati Community Mikveh.

2009: $1.2 million is invested in senior services initiatives, including the Aquatic Therapy Center and New Rehabilitation Services Project at Cedar Village, and the Shalom Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, and Rehab Service at the Mayerson JCC in Amberley. The Senior Services Working Group is formed in order to collaboratively address the needs of seniors in Cincinnati’s Jewish community.

2011: $2.6 million is invested in senior services initiatives, including the Aquatic Therapy Center and New Rehabilitation Services Project at Cedar Village, and the Shalom Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, and Rehab Service at the Mayerson JCC in Amberley. The Senior Services Working Group is formed in order to collaboratively address the needs of seniors in Cincinnati’s Jewish community.

2011: The Foundation initiates an incentive matching grant program for the Federation’s Community Campaign. This results in a dramatic increase in individual gifts to the campaign during a period of economic downturn.

2012: The Jewish Foundation purchases the Losantiville School building for the community. This building currently houses Atara Girls’ High School and Cincinnati Hebrew Day School classes.
2012: The Jewish Foundation invests $3,242,000 in the JFS Barbash Family Vital Support Center, which operates a food pantry and provides social support services for those in need of assistance.

2012: The Jewish Foundation invests $2.2 million over three years in the Jewish Federation-led Shared Business Services initiative to enhance the finance, human resources, and IT functions of our community’s institutions.

2012: The Jewish Foundation commits to funding up to 50% of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber’s 5-year initiative to attract economic development interest from Israel in our region.

2012: The Jewish Foundation invests $5,225,000 over six years to fund the TJF Fellows Program and Office of Recruitment and Community Engagement, two new initiatives intended to reposition HUC’s Cincinnati campus as a vibrant, engaged, and significantly enhanced asset of the Cincinnati Jewish community.

2012-2013: The Jewish Foundation co-sponsors several dynamic cultural collaborations with community partners, including a special event featuring Elie Wiesel and hosted by CHHE and Xavier; The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the Cincinnati Museum Center; and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra’s innovative “One City One Symphony” performances and community outreach initiatives.

2012-2014: The Jewish Foundation invests significant resources in capacity-building, tuition grants and academic enhancements at Rockwern Academy and Cincinnati Hebrew Day School.

2013: The Jewish Foundation makes its first major investment in incentive grants for Overnight Jewish Camping. Grants of up to $1,800 are now available for first time campers.

2013: The Jewish Foundation contributes $350,000 to the Wexner Foundation to bring the Wexner Heritage Leadership program to Cincinnati. 20 volunteer leaders form the first Cincinnati class.

2013: The Jewish Foundation grants $2.1 million to the Jewish Federation over four years in support of the “Strengthening Individual Giving Program” to enhance community fundraising efforts, and increase supplemental and planned giving.

2013: The Jewish Foundation funds the establishment of the SAFE Cincinnati Community Security Initiative, which is administered by the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati.

2013-2014: The Jewish Foundation initiates new investment in Cincinnati’s congregations. The initial phase supports supplemental school education, while the second phase supports congregation-specific strategies for excellence through capacity building, engagement and sustainability.
The Jewish Foundation Israel Travel Grants Program

In the 1990’s, there was a growing concern—shared by many here in Cincinnati—that Jewish youth in America felt less connected to the broader organized Jewish community and to the State of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish People. The original Trustees of The Jewish Foundation acted on that concern by creating a groundbreaking initiative to encourage more young people in our community to participate in Israel educational programs, which had already developed a track record as critical Jewish identity-building experiences.

Since 2000, more than 1,600 Jewish young people from Cincinnati have traveled to Israel to develop stronger, more personal connections with Israel and their Jewish heritage. Cincinnati holds the distinction of sending more Jewish youth, per capita, on these Israel programs than any other Jewish community in North America.

The program is a collaborative effort between the Foundation, which provides 100% of the funding, and the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, which is responsible for marketing the program, vetting applications, administering the grants, and facilitating post-trip engagement programming.

Achieving Lasting Impact

As a result of this unprecedented investment, more than half of the Cincinnati Jewish community (52%) has traveled to Israel—a much higher percentage than the national Jewish communal average (35%). The impact of this is clear in the results of the 2008 Cincinnati Jewish Community Study, which found that the majority of younger respondents stated that they feel a closer identification with the State of Israel, feel a closer connection with the Jewish People, and are better advocates for Israel. Overall, the percentage of younger Jews in Cincinnati who reported being very emotionally connected to Israel (42%) was much higher than for all other age groups (32%).

The Cincinnati Jewish Community and the beneficiaries of this initiative are grateful for the vision and leadership demonstrated by the original Trustees of the Jewish Foundation.

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to thank you very much for my recent opportunity to travel to Israel. I am so privileged to be from Cincinnati and have the experience both in high school and college to travel to Israel. The Cincinnati Young Leaders Journey was incredible and unlike any other experience I had in Israel. Thank you again for this opportunity!

- Ariel Leininger

Brian and Sharon:

I should be writing a formal letter, but I am so joyful right now I just wanted to share immediately!

I just received an email from NFTY indicating the balance for my daughter’s trip to Israel. Bottom Line: I have a $5.00 credit! (I overpaid my deposit!)

I have invested in my children’s future, and they have been absolutely incredible and the trip means the world to them. I can only imagine their experience and I couldn’t be more proud.

I have invested in my children’s current and future growth.

Sending two kids to overnight camp and helping form and strengthen their Jewish identity at home or religious school likely isn’t possible for the average family. I am thrilled that this is possible and that they have helped out too, but the vast majority of our community is not able to do this.

As a result of this program, our kids have more opportunities than the average family. They have the experience of a lifetime!

Without you, I would not have had this experience, let alone an amazing trip.

In Israel, I made new friends, learned about the history and culture of Israel, and spiritually connected better to my religion.

Sincerely,

- Carol Berman

Dear Jewish Foundation,

Thank you for funding my trip to Israel. Without you, I would not have been able to experience such an amazing trip.

In Israel, I made new friends, learned about the history and culture of Israel, and spiritually connected better to my religion.

Sincerely,

- John P.

Dear Jewish Foundation Trustees,

Thank you so much for your generous grant, allowing me to participate in the 19th Maccabiah Games this summer in Israel. I wholeheartedly thank you for offering this extremely special “once in a lifetime” experience. I will be leaving a lot of the facts behind, while leaving Israel with fellow athletes. I cannot wait to compete as well as meet new friends from all around the world and explore Israel together!

Sincerely,

- Sarah A.
Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati
Board of Trustees
October 30, 2014

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