

17 in 17

17 things that made me proud in 2017

1. We created an art gallery in our Federation's employee lounge to display the wonderful and inspirational artwork of the clients of our JSDD Wae Center. It's inspirational to view their artwork and appreciate what these amazing individuals with disabilities have created. All of the current paintings that are hanging in our lounge are for sale, with the proceeds being split 50/50 between the artist and the Wae Center. [You should come check it out.](#)
2. Food is the issue. Standing with friends and colleagues from our [Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey the other week as they opened their new Food Pantry](#) reinforced the commitment of our community to fight food insecurity here at home, in our neighborhoods, and our communities. Hair nets and plastic aprons are real cheap – but working with awe-inspiring lay and professional leaders and volunteers to bake bread in our annual [Challah Bake and make a difference in the](#) lives of so many, on the other hand, is priceless. And it's the same commitment.
3. This moment, [as 700 people took their places for our first ever "LIVE 365" event](#), as we raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to care for those in need, to build Jewish community life, to save the world. And as we sat to hear the amazing Ben Platt, and his *menschlekeit* and Jewish dialogue with the wonderful Shari Garelick Berman. This was the moment I loved. As the audience settled in their seats, as the inspiration grew, and the sense of community was so powerful.
4. Our first-ever CRC (Community Relations Committee) mission to DC, meeting with our legislators and representatives, and lobbying for our key issues, [took place last month](#). Advocacy matters, and so does relationship-building. Given the issues at stake, there was no better time to be in Washington. The fact that so many officials made it a priority to meet with us says a great deal about the feelings they have for our Jewish community, and the respect they have for constituents who take time out of their busy schedules to lobby their elected officials. We're grateful to our leaders who traveled to Washington and especially, to my colleague Linda Scherzer, CRC Director, and Mission Chair Steve Klinghoffer, for his guidance and experience.
5. Seeing the impact of our Jewish Federation in Israel as [we opened a new road in our growing partner city Ofakim](#), celebrated [the Murnick Library in Erez](#), watched the [inspiration of the Alma Academy for Female Leadership](#), and the powerful impact of



the [Feinberg Center in Rishon LeZion](#).

6. Raising the lamps, being prophets, and understanding what our JCC's stand for. [They remind us not to take for granted who and what we are](#), that we're not a monolithic society, and that no one holds a monopoly on expressing Jewish identity and community. [And that means that we have to stand up for them too](#). Start or renew your membership. Make a donation there in someone's name. Join a class. Work out. Go for a swim. Know how communities thrive and beat terrorism and threats and evil? By showing up. By being there. By not being intimidated.
7. Repairing the world with our response to Nevada, Houston, and Florida. One of the reasons I believe in the mission of what we do as a Jewish Federation is that no one gets left behind. What we do is for all Jews: caring for elderly Holocaust survivors in Elizabeth, Odessa, and Jerusalem. Funding rescue operations. Protecting kids in need. Building leadership programs. [Do we always get it right? No. Do we cover everyone? Not nearly enough. But our values are proudly on display for all to see, ringing loud and clear](#). Just [pick a random week](#) and feel the sense of pride in what a federation can do to implement your values.
8. [Remembering those we lost](#).
9. Standing with my colleague at the Kotel and remembering what we stand for. That [American Jewish values of diversity, of mutual respect, and of tolerance](#) should be upheld. It means that you must say what you mean and mean what you say. And it also means that [you need to be aware of the power of your words](#).
10. Celebrating the awesomeness of [communal legacies and philanthropy](#) and professionals [who give 100% - literally](#) – to who we are and what we stand for. And how we count – [and recognize – their achievements and legacy](#).
11. Rallying against hate and [standing with our community members](#) for peace and [against evil and bigotry and racism](#).
12. If you want to hear an award-winning, side-splitting joke (supplied by my colleague [Penny Miller Arons](#)) [watch this short video](#). [But the point was really that it was a thrill and an honor to](#) tour our partner [JCC Camp Deeny Riback](#), a program of our [JCC MetroWest](#), and see the awesomeness of Jewish life and camp; to see our terrific *shlichot* (Israeli emissaries) from [The Jewish Agency for Israel](#); to see my colleague Rebecca Abramson Wanatick and hear of the incredible inclusion programs we help provide; and to see the pride, energy, and vision of community life.
13. Riding to school, singing [and running Day School Karaoke](#) ... quite possibly the most wonderful video you'll watch today.
14. [Giving out our 300,000th PJ Library book in the community](#) – a partnership between our Jewish Federation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation – and seeing the impact that a

book makes in people's lives.

15. This year we launched [an emergency alert system designed specifically for our partner agencies, synagogues, and other Jewish community organizations](#). This system now enables us to provide timely information on multiple platforms in the event of an emergency that specifically and urgently threatens our community. Hopefully the system will never have to be used, but if necessary, it will allow us to quickly disseminate valuable information about threats against our community.

16. The power and inspiration of leadership – from [our Past Presidents, who gathered to welcome our new Federation President, Scott Krieger](#), to the celebration of our immediate Past-President, [Leslie Dannin Rosenthal, with this lovely video](#). And [this Campaign video, for the inspiration of who we are, what we do, and why we do it. Stop here. Watch the video](#). Then come back for the last point.

17. For you. For the generosity. For the values. For community. For what we do: to **care** for those in need. To **build** Jewish community. And to **save** the world. One person at a time. Thank you for 2017.