

## The Center Stage

There I was, limping with a swollen ankle, slightly exhausted from the adrenaline of meeting after meeting, networking, schmoozing and briefing.

And it was totally worth it.

This week was the GA – the General Assembly of our Jewish Federations from across North America. I've no idea how many people turned up – and frankly I don't really care. I don't care about the quantity of participants. I care about the quality. About who shows up, and why they come. And in terms of quality, this GA was outstanding! It had great speakers, terrific networking, and excellent learning.



The overarching theme was the changing nature of community.

Why? Because now, more than ever before, the GA, where our Jewish Federations come together, serves as the primary venue to address the central pressing issues we face as diaspora Jews. And anyone can come – everyone is invited.

There are plenty of opportunities where engaged Jews can do important and necessary and meaningful work. And you should do it. You should do all of it. But participation in the General Assembly gives you the ticket to discussing, learning about, and grappling with the core issues facing our community today – religious pluralism, Israel engagement and advocacy, rescue and relief work, building strong communities, and day schools and literacy. You can get some parts of some of those in some places. But when Jewish Federations get together, that's where all the action is, the center stage.

In the space of a few hours at the GA...

I heard Israeli President Rivlin grapple with who we are as tribes with separate identities.

I listened to our own Mark Wilf chair a session on the incredible work our Federations have done to provide support and caring for thousands of Shoah (Holocaust) survivors across North America.

I met with colleagues from our awe-inspiring partner agencies, the Jewish Agency, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, World ORT, Birthright Israel, PJ Library, Israel Action Network and more – all doing life-saving and community-building work because of your support for our Federation’s UJA Annual Campaign.

I met with colleagues and volunteers from the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, who thanked our Greater MetroWest community for our financial support during Harvey, and we discussed next steps and ideas to continue our help.

I watched our own awesome Paula Saginaw explain the work our Federation does on the ground in Israel with religious pluralism and programs that promote diversity and tolerance and a shared society.

I met with the top Consuls-General from the State of Israel and we discussed collaboration, the Kotel, conversion and who we are as a People.

And I looked on, inspired, as I saw current and future generations of professional and lay leadership learn together.

Yes, in a few hours. You read that right. Imagine what I did in a few days. Imagine what you can do at the next GA, in Israel, in a year’s time. It’ll take place immediately after our [Greater MetroWest CommUNITY mission](#) – your chance to have an unprecedented visit to Israel in October with hundreds of our friends and family, with exclusive access and life-changing experiences. Join us, and take your place on center stage.