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Federation 2021 Annual Campaign Planning Underway as Co-Chairs Are Announced

By Shira Firestone

Just as a successful annual campaign is critical to support more than 70 Jewish agencies and programs locally and worldwide, having the right leadership is critical to the campaign. As planning is underway for Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's (JFGC) 2021 Annual Campaign, that leadership has been selected. Jake House and Sara Kulbersh will co-chair what will be a unique campaign for unique times.

As the second milepost on the Road to \$5 Million, the goal for 2021 is \$4,750,000. While there will be special challenges this year, both Jake and Sara are confident that the community will respond again as it did in 2020 when they not only donated more than \$4,500,000 to



Jake House

the Annual Campaign, but also contributed over \$500,000 to the JewishCharlotte Emergency Response Fund. Sam Bernstein, chief development and marketing officer for JFGC points out that, "While last year the Emergency Response Fund sustained our agencies during the height of the shutdown, the needs related to reopening still exceed their usual operating expenses. The increased goal for this year's Annual Campaign reflects those expected needs."

Jake came to Charlotte eight years ago to lead a statewide education nonprofit. After catching the entrepreneurial bug and launching his own successful business, he returned to the world of nonprofits and is currently CEO of Smart Start of Mecklenburg County. A friend of his suggested that he get involved with Federation, and before long, he was on the Allocations Committee and going to Cuba with the Ben Gurion Society.

Sara is also an eight-year resident of Charlotte, moving here from Los Angeles. She jokes that when planning her move with her husband, Jon, she could not have pointed to Charlotte on a map! But after visiting multiple cities, she knew that Charlotte



Sara Kulbersh

was the best choice. At first, becoming involved with Federation was a way to meet new people in a new city. She served on the Women's Philanthropy Spring Lecture committee and became heavily involved in the work of JFGC from that time forward, including serving as co-chair of the Lion of Judah Society. Not only did she meet new people, she made some of her closest friends through her Federation involvement. The coming year will bring unique challenges to the way in which the Annual Campaign is run.

The Main Event, which is the formal kickoff of the Annual Campaign, is the most widely attended event of the campaign season. Last year's event with Mitch Albom sold out. In 2021, the Main Event will be virtual for the first time. But after ten months of learning how to program virtually, the committee co-chairs are confident that the Main Event will be inspiring and memorable.

In addition, it may be more difficult to have the kind of in-person, meaningful conversations with donors that usually take place. Jake notes that these conversations about donating money can be quite personal and that it is easier to meet face-to-face with someone to talk about how their support will enable JFGC to continue meeting the needs of our community. But this year, many aren't going to want to sit down and talk in person.

These challenges don't intimidate Jake or Sara. In fact, quite the opposite. Sara points out that the challenges are just

a call for creativity, an opportunity to brainstorm, plan, and execute in untraditional ways to engage with donors. Both co-chairs expressed great faith in the employees and lay leaders of JFGC, but most of all, in the generosity of Charlotte's Jewish community.

Jake and Sara are excited to work with the other leaders of the 2021 Annual Campaign including Major Gifts chairs: Larry and Dale Polsky, Men's Division chair: Brian Bernhardt, Family Division chairs: Bill and Angie Zimmern, Women's Philanthropy Leadership chairs: Lisa Levinson and Debra Van Glish, Community Campaign chair: Jason Tanenbaum, Super Sunday chairs: Jonathan and Rachel Friedman, Thank Chair: Jill Blumenthal, and NextGen chairs: Luis Yaquian and Mark Roth. It's not too early to make your gift to the 2021 Annual Campaign. You can donate at www.jewish.charlotte.org or call 704-944-6757.

Street Art, Painting Jewish Identity in Charlotte and Beyond

By Rabbi Judy Schindler

Charlotte learned the power of street art this summer as 22 artists came together to paint a Black Lives Matter mural on South Tryon Street between East 3rd and East 4th Streets. Each letter was its own piece of art expressing the artists' messages combatting racism, illustrating protest and pain, and promoting healing and hope. In the midst of global racial justice protests, the work aimed to inspire social change.

Jewish street art brings Jewish content to the public eye and like secular street art is democratic — accessible to all. Yitzchok Mouly, dubbed the Pop Art Rabbi (whose #WeAllBelong mural was created with Charlotteans at Chabad's Friendship Circle), describes Jewish street art as "bringing it to the people. All my work has deep kabbalistic meaning. It's a way of communicating. It's



Street art Chanukah menorah painted by Yitzchok Mouly in Jersey City, just 12 days after the 2019 attack in a Jersey City kosher grocery store that killed three people.

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