



MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

History of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

For more than one hundred years, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation has worked to build a strong Jewish community in Milwaukee, as well as to strengthen the bond among Jewish people throughout the world.

By 1900 there were one million Jews in the United States. Organizations to help the immigrants multiplied, as did competition for funds. Such competition gave birth to the idea that it would be sensible to raise money collectively rather than competitively. Jewish Federations were established throughout the country, including Milwaukee in 1902.

New organizations were established, joining Milwaukee's first social service agency, the Hebrew Relief Society known today as Jewish Family Services. Mount Sinai Hospital came into being in 1902. The 1900s saw creation of The Settlement, which became the Abraham Lincoln House. It was renamed the Jewish Community Center in 1931 (now the Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center). The Hebrew Free School for Jewish Education was started in 1904 and the Hebrew Sheltering Home opened in 1909. The Federated Jewish Charities raised money to support these and other organizations, developing methods to coordinate resources.

During the Great Depression the Federated Jewish Charities foundered and discontinued their operations in 1937. Problems facing Jews in Europe and the need to absorb refugees fleeing from Nazi Germany impelled our leaders to reorganize a central fund-raising instrument, the Jewish Welfare Fund. The Welfare Fund took the initiative in creating agencies. Burgeoning anti-Semitism both in Europe and here at home resulted in creation of the Milwaukee Jewish Council in 1938 (now the Jewish Community Relations Council). The need to locate jobs for refugees resulted in creation of the Jewish Vocational Service (now the Milwaukee Center for Independence) also in 1938.

In 1944, the Welfare Fund created a committee to coordinate educational services that became the Bureau of Jewish Education, now the Coalition for Jewish Learning. During 1946, the Welfare Fund joined the United Jewish Appeal to raise \$100 million to help the remnants of our people in Europe, aid those making their way to Palestine and help Holocaust survivors come to America and Milwaukee.

The Welfare Fund changed its name to the Milwaukee Jewish Federation in 1972. Through the decades, the Federation has adapted to meet the growing needs of the community through social planning,

creation of leadership programs for young men and women, and a women's division (now Women's Philanthropy) that began as a means of educating women about human services and Israel.

Money to meet community emergency needs often was provided by the Federation. This gave rise to the creation of the Federation's endowment development program, the Jewish Community Foundation, in 1972. Since that time, the Foundation has grown to \$140 million, helping create financial security for the Jewish community.

The Federation purchased and remodeled Camp Interlaken and Camp JCC operated by the Jewish Community Center. It built the Golda Meir House, the Maurice S. Surlow Senior Residences, the Helfaer Community Service Building, and it obtained property that made possible the building of the Jewish Home and Care Center at its present location. Thanks to the vision of our community leadership, the Karl Campus provides a home for the Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center, The Academy (Hillel), Milwaukee Jewish Day School, BBYO-Wisconsin Region, and Jewish Beginnings Lubavitch Preschool.

The Milwaukee Jewish Federation continues to pursue its evolving mission of securing a vibrant Jewish community now and into the future.

For more information, visit MilwaukeeJewish.org or contact Jeff Jones, Marketing & Communications Manager, at JeffJ@MilwaukeeJewish.org or 414-390-5783.