

From the Desk of Judy Halper

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Dear Friend,

Most everyone agrees about the importance school plays in a child's life. I'm a big fan of all the dedicated teachers out there who give their hearts and souls to educating our children and preparing them for work, leadership, and thoughtful endeavors. Without question, however, children need a break from the classroom (just as their teachers do!), and summer vacation provides the perfect "laboratory" for continued growth and learning.

That's why Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis is so proud to play an important role in helping more children each year attend summer camp. Whether it's day camp or overnight, Jewish culture or activity or hobby-driven, camping inspires children with so many developmental opportunities to stretch and grow. Developing skills, independence, and confidence at camp are probably as essential as knowledge acquired in classrooms.

JFCS provides summer camp scholarships enabling hundreds of children to have a summer camp experience. We work with families who want their children to have an enriching summer, but struggle to afford this "luxury." Providing day care and coverage for young children over the course of summer vacation is budget-busting for even two-parent households with two incomes. Thanks to funders like the Pohlad Family Foundation and Tankenoff Families Foundation, JFCS has applied for and received thousands of dollars each year to distribute to qualifying families. These funds not only cover the cost of camp, but oftentimes extend to purchasing necessary items that campers require such as sleeping bags, backpacks, and transportation to and from camp. Treasured JFCS donors contribute generously each year to this cause as well. Without those dollars, many fewer children would have a camp experience.

Getting a child to camp also requires the time and resources to investigate the right camp for each child. Stressed families are often unable to manage this, nor fill out the forms, apply for scholarships, comply with medical requirements, access resources for supplies, and so on. Again, this is where JFCS helps out. Our Intake and Resource Connection staff, Counseling staff, and staff in our school-based and home-based programs support families to meet these

challenges. Our approach is child-centered and family-centered because we know the value of camp for kids, and appreciate the respite that is needed for families under stress. Summertime should also be a time for renewal for families!

I hope everyone has a pleasant summer, and even if you're too old to go to camp, get outside and soak up this cherished, short Minnesota season!

Judy Halper
Chief Executive Officer