

## **Message from Gary Miller, CEO of Jewish Family & Career Services –Atlanta, GA**

Recently my wife and I moved from our Sandy Springs home to an in town high rise. I now view life on a perch from 16 floors above our city. Metaphorically speaking, it is from this bird's eye perspective that I share these thoughts.

Reflecting on the last quarter century, I have been in a word...lucky. I was recruited from Montreal to lead a very small Jewish nonprofit and it has been an extraordinary experience. We are now a nearly \$14 million operation. My overarching observation is this: Regardless of the size of the organization or the community it serves, we are all transformed by global events. And as much as we may hope to behave like a "village" in serving our community, we are impacted on a granular level by forces from near and far. These events have helped shape both our world and our agency.

Case in point: In my early years in the States I was in Los Angeles for a conference, where I witnessed the Rodney King riots. Returning to my home and small agency in Atlanta I knew we had a larger role to play in our community. I led our organization to adjust our mission to serve our community on a nonsectarian basis. When Katrina ravaged New Orleans, we received hundreds of storm worn refugees. The gift in this experience was seeing hundreds of volunteers rush to our doors to help. Our response manifested in personal ways from organizing a wedding for a young couple whose plans were drowned by the storm, to finding homes, transportation and medical assistance for hundreds. The horrific events surrounding "9/11" revealed an enlightenment from our internal culture. That day our 100 plus employees watched the news accounts, all huddled together in our conference room. I experienced a special kind of intimacy in our shock and sorrow. This nurtured a powerful, collective courage that continues to influence our culture today. Navigating the economic plunge following these events, we were chosen to manage emergency financial assistance distributions through larger entities like Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, United Way and government programs who demonstrated confidence in our diligence. We understood the significance of discipline in service delivery and sharpened our skills in talent management and outcomes. In serving basic needs we knew more was needed and we reorganized our career services. Over the next few years we placed more than 1,400 individuals in jobs. As the diversity of our clients escalated, our mission matured. Our decision to diversify our Board of Directors (to better represent the community we serve) combined with our stellar programmatic outcomes and delivery, ultimately led to the esteemed recognition by the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta with the Managing for Excellence Award in 2012-2013.

Of equal impact are the milestones of our community-centered responses. Some of our proudest benchmarks include moving out of the basement of a midtown homeless shelter space in 1995 and onto our own campus. Soon to follow this move was the merger of Jewish Vocational Services with Jewish Family Services, uniting two service groups and Boards of Directors into a one-stop, comprehensive human service entity. Ongoing achievements include the creation of new programs to support the underserved like our comprehensive Division to serve adults with developmental disabilities, and programs addressing those "unspeakable" needs such as our Shalom Bayit program that offers a Jewish centered domestic violence resource. The Capital Campaign to build a new state-of-the-art Ben Massell Dental Clinic helped double the number of volunteer dentists. A unique national model, It provides comprehensive dental care with social service and health screening supports on site, and has become,

as our former Mayor Shirley Franklin stated, "One of Atlanta's crown jewels." Our most recent introduction of H.A.M.S.A. (Helping Atlantans Manage Substance Abuse) demonstrated the astounding unmet need for resources to address preventive and existing issues around addiction.

I believe that this kind of success is the result of key influences: the community itself, as we have ridden the wave of exponential growth in the Atlanta and Jewish community; leadership courage to start new programs and grow...and the courage to shrink or transition out of programs as the needs in community changed; and authentic collaboration amongst lay leaders and the professional team. Our volunteers, and especially our Board, have served their roles clearly and tirelessly, separating governance from operations. This clarity feeds success. They have opened doors, advocated with passion, and built the foundation for confidence within our walls and throughout the community.

Our most recent example of this successful collaboration is the launch of a 2015 Capital Campaign to Complete the JF&CS Campus. We are building needed and specialized space for the vocational training/support programs serving adults with developmental disabilities. In addition the plan includes the reconfiguration of space serving counseling clients with psycho-social service needs that embraces a private practice model. I am, indeed, proud to continue to participate in this exciting expansion.

With JF&CS in the hands of consistently solid lay oversight and longstanding professional management, I have made the decision that the time has come for me to transition into a different role. I am ready to consider my future in concert with what is best for the organization, and to evaluate how I can continue to direct competitive advantages to the agency while dialing back my day to day responsibilities. The Executive Committee and I entered into discussions about transition in early 2014, and it has been a diligent and thorough process.

While the details are presented through the following voice of the lay leadership, I add that no person has had greater fortune than I to work with volunteers who are boundless in sharing their wisdom and resources, and fearless about supporting the dreams of this organization. These are the people I see as the true guardians of human dignity for our community's welfare. Moreover, no person has had a greater privilege of working with a staff who, day in and day out, demonstrated greater dedication, commitment, courage and endless care for the clients they serve...and for each other. They are and will always be my lasting definition of heroes. I look forward to sharing the next chapter with each and every one of you.

## **Commentary from Lynn Redd, President of Jewish Family & Career Services**

The term **legacy** at JF&CS means different things to different people. It is used to describe our planned giving/endowment program. It is also the name of our Aviv Older Adult Services Home Care services. But there is no greater legacy than the one created by our CEO, Gary Miller. After twenty-four years of dedicated service and leadership, Gary has had an enormous impact on the growth of JF&CS and its influence throughout the metro Atlanta area.

When Gary joined JF&CS as its CEO in 1991, the agency had total revenues of \$1 million and 27 employees. The annual fundraising goal was \$8,000. In 2014, the agency raised more than \$3.2 million through its fundraising efforts. In a little more than two decades, revenues have grown to nearly \$14 million and the organization now has 269 employees. The numbers only tell a small part of the story. Throughout Gary's tenure his vision, passion, and insistence on excellence have guided the agency in its meteoric growth and countless accomplishments.

As CEO, Gary's achievements have been many. He has successfully diversified funding streams by creating a more secure financial foundation. He led a highly successful funding campaign to support the construction of the new Ben Massell Dental Clinic. Gary oversaw multiple highly positive accreditation reviews. He insisted upon a disciplined, analytical and visionary approach to strategic planning that ensured that the agency focuses on the most important priorities and capitalized on the most sustainable opportunities. He envisioned the launch of the Tools for Leaders program which ensured a steady stream of highly qualified committed volunteers were available for leadership positions. He also led the vision of the Scope of Services initiative that served to tighten agency services and right-sized staffing in response to the sputtering economy. Gary led a Guardians of Human Dignity fundraising campaign that replaced funding losses from the depressed economy and inspired the vision to complete the current JF&CS campus to provide comprehensive client services in a confidential and secure space. In less than three months his leadership and expert fundraising capabilities with the Capital Campaign have resulted in raising more than 30% of the campaign goal.

When Gary decided he would like to consider stepping down from day-to-day management of the agency, he conferred with me and the President-Elect of the Board, John Perlman, a little more than a year ago. After thoughtful consideration, we formed an ad hoc transition committee, comprised of four former Board presidents of JF&CS, John, and me. In January 2014 the JF&CS Executive Committee unanimously commissioned the transition committee to address a broad range of issues relating to CEO succession at the agency. The committee then focused on evaluating potential internal candidates, the Board role in succession planning, whether or not to engage a national search firm, and Gary's ongoing advisory role.

The key decision made by the committee was that the JF&CS COO, Rick Aranson, was best qualified to assume the position of CEO. Rick has served as COO for eleven years and has the breadth and depth of operations knowledge, management experience, strategic vision, and external relationships that we felt we could not match in an external search. His leadership in such initiatives as our program planning and evaluation process, our scope of services analysis, program design, and earned income planning have brought discipline, structure, and vision to our delivery of services. Rick's qualifications to lead a social service agency similar to ours were confirmed as he was vetted (among 150 applicants), selected, and offered the position of CEO at a large and highly respected Jewish Family Service agency in another community. He has also been mentored by Gary in recent years to help him prepare for assuming the CEO position. We are extremely fortunate to have had a thoughtful, well executed succession plan at the agency.

Rick will assume the role of CEO on July 1, 2015. The transition committee has defined a consulting role for Gary that will commence on July 1 and continue for approximately two years. His primary role for the near-term future will be to lead the agency's Campaign to Complete the JF&CS Campus, a \$4.9 million capital campaign to provide comprehensive client services in a confidential and secure space on

the Dunwoody campus. He will also continue to provide advisory and fundraising service to the agency overall. This role will allow JF&CS to benefit greatly from his passionate commitment to the agency and his fundraising expertise while he steps away from all management responsibilities. Over the next year he will transition his external relationships with key collaborators and major donors to Rick.

While Gary's time at the helm of the agency is coming to a close, his legacy will live on for many, many years to come. We are confident that Rick has the ability to forge a new path with virtually no disruption to our clients, employee, key partners or volunteers. In their new respective roles, JF&CS will continue to flourish and serve the needs of more than 30,000 metro Atlanta clients each year with compassion and dignity.