

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Slingshot*, an annual resource guide featuring 50 of the most innovative organizations in Jewish life today. Since the release of last year's guide, *Slingshot* has made an exciting leap forward as support from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies has allowed me to take the reins of this project as its first ever full-time Director.

Slingshot began as an experiment to give next generation funders a road map, a Zagat-style guide to the world of innovative Jewish nonprofits, and it has grown beyond an idea and beyond the pages of this book, adding a fund that has allocated more than \$1 million in general operating support for innovative Jewish nonprofits across the country. In addition, our research has shown that being listed in *Slingshot* has become the sector's seal of approval for funders, next generation participants and other nonprofits.

Slingshot has also attracted a national network of 20- and 30-something Jews who have come together to volunteer time and pool resources with other investors to support a subset of the undercapitalized and underappreciated Jewish organizations working tirelessly to engage Jews around the country in meaningful communities and experiences.

As the new Director, I am fortunate to inherit dozens of colleagues who serve as sage evaluators and volunteer their time to vet nominees for the guide as well as provide guidance on *Slingshot*'s direction, ensuring that it remains an

inspirational and effective resource. Most vitally, *Slingshot* is only as valuable as the network of nonprofit leaders, professionals and board members who have devoted their lives to enhancing 21st century Jewish life through the projects and organizations featured on the pages within.

It goes without saying that *Slingshot* '09-'10 is being written and published amid a time of economic uncertainty. It is not yet known exactly how big the decrease in charitable dollars will be. We continue to believe that innovation is the engine that keeps non-profits relevant for the next generation, as highlighted in the "Five-Timers" essay on the following pages. However, the question remains: will Jewish funders help fuel this form of Jewish continuity and help many of the struggling organizations within this guide become sustainable?

I look forward to working on this and other questions in the year ahead. If you would like to become involved in this endeavor as a member of the *Slingshot* community, an investor, organizational partner, *Slingshot* evaluator or as a nonprofit listed on the following pages, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Will Schneider, Director

will@slingshotfund.org

www.slingshotfund.org

THE CURRICULUM INITIATIVE

47

The Curriculum Initiative (TCI) arose out of the recognition that thousands of Jewish teens around the country who attend independent schools have scarce time for active Jewish engagement. Through presentations, clubs, service-learning projects and trips, TCI seeks to help schools heighten student appreciation for the depth and diversity of Jewish community and culture while they participate in a secular high school experience.

TCI's approach is not about framing Jewish learning as supplementary to regular life – the established model of Hebrew and Sunday schools, youth groups and Jewish summer camps – but rather to operate in the spaces where teens move every day, which include their non-Jewish peers. 76 schools in four regions, New England, metropolitan New York, San Francisco and the Mid-Atlantic, host TCI participants. Last year alone, 2,700 students participated in TCI programs, and within five years, the number of regions where TCI operates is slated to grow to five. In addition to servicing students, TCI has also offered professional development programs for teachers from over 210 schools.

As a member of Generation X running an organization for Generation Y-ers, Acting Executive Director Adam Gaynor maintains that in order to integrate a Jewish lens into multicultural settings, organizations must promote a diverse view of Jewish identity and create the space for students to chart their own Jewish paths. His open approach has been rewarded with a dramatic rise in the number of participants in TCI programs. One evaluator sympathetically notes, "I am aware of how difficult yet rewarding this work can be. With additional funding to provide more staff in each of the existing regions, TCI would be able to further its impact."

6 East 46th Street
Suite 502
New York, NY 10017

CONTACT Adam Gaynor
PHONE 646.230.1630 x204
EMAIL agaynor@tcionline.org

BOARD CHAIR Dana Raucher
BUDGET \$1,278,623
INCEPTION 1996