

Bringing Books to Life with PJ Library in New York

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The world is sustained by the breath of children learning. Talmud, Shabbat 119b

In the wake of the destruction of the ancient Temple and exile from Jerusalem, the rabbis of our tradition engaged in deep conversation about what it might take to sustain the world as they knew it. How will our world endure after everything we once knew has changed, they asked. The world is sustained by the breath of children learning, they answered. And so it is with PJ Library. Thanks to the vision of Harold Grinspoon, PJ Library is a revolutionary innovation on the ancient idea that children learning is what will sustain our people, our values, and our traditions.

Today, through PJ Library in New York, nearly 40,000 children receive the gift of PJ Library books each month in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester, representing nearly 20% of the more than 200,000 children who receive PJ Library books throughout the United States and Canada. In New York, we are reaching more than 30% of all children eligible for PJ Library, and we offer engagement beyond the books, where parents and children connect with the people in their communities who share those values.

As a PJ Library parent in New York, I think about the values imparted by the book *What Zeesie Saw on Delancey*

Street, which I read with my 8-year old daughter this past summer. Ami and I talked about the bravery we saw in Zeesie's actions. We saw the importance of community coming together to help those in need, and we spoke of generosity as we read of how each family gave according to their own means. Reading Zeesie's story also sparked conversation about how parts of our family once lived that kind of life on the Lower East Side in New York City, and about how our family even came to live in America.

With many PJ Library books set in New York City, the content of the books provides incredible opportunity for creative local engagement programming through program partners, which in many cases are funded by grants from the PJ Library Alliance.

PJ Library engagement programs take place in dozens of local synagogues and JCCs and beyond the walls of Jewish institutions, reaching families in public spaces such as Union Square, at local Whole Foods stores, and at cultural institutions, including the Jewish Museum and the Brooklyn Children's Museum. This year, the Eldridge Street Synagogue received a PJ Library in New York engagement grant to create a program called History Hunters, in which families

explore what childhood was like on the Lower East Side in New York 100 years ago.

PJ Library books set in New York help spark conversations about so many families' journeys to this country, and about the values we carry with us as we move through and beyond experiences that change everything we once knew. Just like the rabbis of the Talmud, PJ Library parents ask how our world will be sustained in the modern era. Thanks to the gift of PJ Library, families have access to books that help us sustain and enrich our children's learning, and thereby, sustain our world and ensure our future.

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Become a funding partner in New York and help PJ Library reach *even more* families in the metro area. Visit newyork.pjlibrary.org to learn more.

