

Cultivating Philanthropy with PJ Library

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How Toronto Gave Families the Power to Give Back

If all PJ Library did for Toronto was to make our homes the center of Jewish identity formation, empower parents as our first Jewish educators, serve as an on-ramp to lifelong Jewish engagement, and fill our social calendars with dinners, celebrations, and story times – *dayenu*. It would be enough. But for a community-building organization that is powered by philanthropy, we as a Jewish federation had to ask ourselves if PJ Library could have another powerful purpose in Toronto. Could it be an introduction to a life of philanthropy?

It is our privilege as Federation to give the gift of Jewish books and to imbue the kind of community building described above. PJ Library is a gift from the community to children and families. While this gift cannot be repaid, it can be passed on. When considering how to connect PJ Library with giving, our goal was to catalyze the gift economy – not create revenue from subscriptions.

This question is important for yet another reason. With PJ Library books reaching the majority of families raising

Jewish children in Toronto, increasing the number of families who donate to the Jewish community by even a small percentage will have lasting dividends.

An encouraging statistic: In a 2015 study of the Toronto PJ Library community, 25% of respondents indicated that as a result of PJ Library they have increased their financial contributions to Jewish causes. At the same time, however, only 8.9% of PJ Library families had ever made a gift to UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Armed with this data, and the overwhelming evidence that PJ Library families love the gift that the community gives them, we began experimenting with ways to see if PJ Library subscribers would pay that gift forward.

Among families who responded to a 2015 survey of the Toronto PJ Library community

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reported that they'd increased their financial contributions to Jewish causes as a result of PJ Library



Over the last two years we have undertaken two key projects in this respect: Telemarketing and a digital day of giving.

In June 2017, we launched a telemarketing campaign with scripts carefully designed to reflect the philosophy of paying it forward. We also chose to direct families who had never given to UJA before to give specifically to the PJ Library program. Over time, however, we would steward these new donors towards gifts to UJA's annual campaign, which supports PJ Library. In our first year, we raised \$20,779 from 355 PJ Library subscribers. Notably, 70% of these

donors had never made a gift to UJA before. For us, the greatest success of the campaign was the nearly 250 young donors making their first gift to UJA.

In June 2018, we launched our second initiative, a day of giving. Sometimes called a fundraising bomb, a day of giving is a short digital campaign with clearly delineated goals and a bombardment of marketing. In this case, we ran a 24-hour campaign with the goal of raising \$20,000. In the days leading up to the campaign we blasted out teasers: videos of families sharing their PJ Library experiences, statistics about the impact of PJ Library in our community, and messages from our community partners about the importance of the program.

Through emails, social media, and other forms of digital marketing, we pushed out messages about the importance of PJ Library in our community. The reach was astounding, with more than 30,000 people connecting with the campaign over Facebook and email. Our Facebook videos alone had nearly 13,000 views.

During the 24 hours of the campaign, the PJ Library messages were augmented with fundraising asks directing people to the campaign website to give. In total, we raised \$25,347 through the day of giving, including a \$10,000 match designed to motivate small gifts. While the total dollars raised from subscribers was lower during this campaign than the telemarketing campaign the year prior, the reach of the campaign in sharing the message of the impact of PJ Library was far greater.

In Toronto, there are three powerful goals of PJ Library: to inculcate the home as an incubator of Jewish identity; to serve as an entry point to ongoing engagement with the Jewish community; and to catalyze philanthropy by encouraging families to pay the gift forward to others and become the next generation of our community's philanthropic leaders.

This third goal may be the most challenging, but with an aging donor database, cultivating young donors is critical to our organization's



future strength. While we've started experimenting, we also know we are just at the beginning of building a strategy. Over the course of two years we have had nearly 400 young families – people starting their careers and their families often with an endless list of financial commitments – make their first gift to UJA. These parents have raised their hands and said, "I value what the Jewish community is giving to me, and I want to ensure that it is available to others in our community." With proper stewardship, the dividends of these relationships will pay off for decades to come.

We may never fund PJ Library exclusively on the back of grassroots giving. Leveraging the power of PJ Library, however, we do have the ability to engage a critical and elusive demographic of young donors to strengthen the future of our community.

