2019 Summer Highlights and Outcomes

We had a great summer at Camp Coleman, at Coleman in Israel, and in our outreach efforts through Camp Jenny and our growing Mitzvah Corps project. As 2019 comes to a close, we are pleased to provide a few of Camp Coleman’s 2019 highlights!

Coleman in Israel

Coleman in Israel participants, Brynn and Lindsay, spending time in the Negev desert with the Bedouin people learning about their traditions and culture.

Camp Staff!

Noah, “Cheese”, long time camper and staff member, sharing his excitement for Shabbat, one of the most special times at camp.

Machon: Staff in Training

Machon Becca and Seth take time away from Camp Best Friends to do some more volunteering in the community in our Mitzvah Corps Summer Program.

NEW! Sci-Ventures

Sci-Ventures in action! This brand new program allowed our campers to explore big questions and exciting adventures in science.

Summer 2019 FUN!

Our oldest and youngest campers come together in our BnaiM and Chakutzim Buddies program to share their experience and love of camp!

Alumni Pen Pal Program

Alumnus Robbie Berg, sharing his home in NYC with his pen pals from Summer of 2018! The connections don’t stop when camp ends!
The Results are in!

Those of you who have sent your own children to URJ Camp Coleman may know that we participate in an effort sponsored by the Foundation for Jewish Camp called CSI—Camper Satisfaction Insights. The CSI is administered by Summation Research, an independent market research company, and compiles the feedback data of nearly 100 North American nonprofit Jewish camps throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Through the CSI, families provide anonymous feedback about their camp experience. In 2019, nearly 40% of Coleman families participated in the CSI. The data tells us a story of our successes and opportunities for improvement.

From our annual camper satisfaction survey, 96% of our respondents said they were highly likely to recommend Camp Coleman to friends and relatives, and 95% indicated that they were highly likely to return to camp in 2020.

Here are just some of the many reasons citing why—

“...we have three very different kids, all of whom have loved Camp Coleman. I consider it to be the most positive Jewish formative experience they have had, and they’ve made friends to last a lifetime.”

“We also heard your feedback about where we can improve—food service and cabin bathrooms. This coming summer we will be partnering with WOLFoods, a food service company that specializes in serving overnight summer camps! WOLFoods is committed to offering a diverse menu and balanced diet with personalized care for any camper requiring special diets. Each meal offers something freshly baked on site by one of their professional bakers.

We will also be bettering our cabin bathrooms. By next summer, every camper cabin bathroom in camp will either have ceramic tile or vinyl flooring. Doing this will better both cleanliness and structure.

“Our son’s counselors and unit leader were awesome!! Our sons truly felt the strength of a Jewish community beyond the small community in which we live.”

“Definitely please have a metals elective again! And if you can bring back the same specialist that would make my kid very happy! The song leaders were amazing according to my child.”
Machon: Staff in Training

By Adam Griff, 2019 Machon Director

The Machon Staff-in-Training program continues to grow and evolve as we seek to meet both our need for developing future leaders of camp, and also meet the needs of 21st century teens. Two years ago we launched the Machon Mitzvah Corps program, which includes two weeks of volunteer work at an under-resourced day camp in Atlanta, followed by four weeks at Coleman. The feedback from the teens who participated this year was overwhelmingly positive - the experience was more powerful than they could have imagined.

For summer 2020, the Machon Adventure Program will bring increased focus to developing outdoor living skills. Participants will become certified in Wilderness First Aid, they’ll learn to camp and cook their own food outdoors, and they’ll participate in amazing hikes, rafting, and zip lining. Initial response has been very positive and we have twice as many applicants for the Machon Adventure 2020 program as we did in 2019. For more info about any of our Machon Programs, visit campcoleman.org/Machon.

Nurturing Mental, Emotional, and Social Health at Camp

By Amy Smyler McFarland, Associate Camp Director

We strive for Camp Coleman to be that place where campers and staff feel safe and uniquely empowered to embrace their whole selves – mentally, emotionally, and socially. We are pleased to report that URJ Camp Coleman was recently chosen as a recipient of the Yedid Nefesh (Beloved Soul) grant offered by the Foundation for Jewish Camp through the generosity of The Marcus Foundation.

The grant will help our camp staff work closely with families and campers prior to camp to assure that a camper is set up to have the best possible camp experience. Yedid Nefesh will also provide training so that our staff is more aware of the mental, emotional, and social needs of all campers and staff. Through these efforts, we look forward to building a stronger and more resilient Coleman community year round.
Working at Camp: The Ultimate Internship

By Bobby Harris, Camp Director

As camp leaders, we know that the staff who most frequently interact with the campers have a major impact on the quality of a child’s overall Coleman experience. Accordingly, in 2018 we became the first nonprofit Jewish camp in North America to introduce the e21 initiative for our staff’s growth and development. The e21 program is both a professional development curriculum and a tool to train, lead, and evaluate our staff. E21 is based on research of a wide range of Fortune 500 companies to gain an understanding of the skills and attributes that they are seeking in their job applicants. The 6 leading characteristics they hope to find include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, work ethic, and leadership. These same skills are also central to job success at Coleman and we intentionally lead our staff to gain more proficiency in these areas.

We are grateful for the enthusiasm and compassion that our counselors, specialists, and entire staff demonstrated at Coleman this past summer. Even though the days are almost always hot, the Coleman hills are consistently steep, and the hours are many, our staff showed a tremendous amount of grit and kept a positive mindset throughout the summer to make a positive impact.

In fact, when asked to describe the “the quality of the relationship that their child had with the counselors,” 81% of Coleman families answered “excellent” which is 5% higher than the national average of all Jewish camps.
Performing Arts Center Completion Set for Summer 2021

By: Todd Gordon, Facility Committee Chair

One of the most exciting projects beginning this fall is the planning for our new performing arts center (PAC) scheduled to open for Summer 2021. In conjunction with our facilities committee, architect, and construction management firm, we have finalized the location of the building and entered the building design phase.

We are excited to share that the Performing Arts Center will include a spectacular auditorium space that will be able to house the entire camp population for plays, concerts, and camp-wide programs. The auditorium will also serve as a sacred space where we can gather for prayer when weather prevents us from using the Strauss or Hillman Chapels.

Additionally, it will provide more than 2,500 square feet for additional activity space making it possible for campers to be in smaller groups and experience a wider range of camp activities in their daily schedule.

The official ground breaking and beginning of construction will take place following our 2020 summer session with an anticipated building grand opening in May 2021. Everyone who participated in our fundraising efforts for the PAC will be recognized. Additional naming opportunities are available. Please reach out to developmentcoleman@urj.org for additional information.
Support from the Coleman Community

Support from the Coleman community continues to ensure excellence and relevance in our programming, staff, and facilities, and helps as many campers as possible have access to the lifelong impact of the Coleman experience.

- With support from the rabbinic community, Coleman created the Treiser Tie-Dye Terrace at the Minsky Arts Center in honor of the memory of Rabbi Daniel Treiser. He was a huge part of Coleman and committed to coming back year after year. He brought light into our community and his memory will always be a blessing.

- Thanks to the generosity of everyone who responded to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation’s Build Your Match challenge, we raised more than $350,000 for Scholarships and the Performing Arts Center (PAC). The PAC support enabled Coleman to move forward on plans and construction of the new facility, which should be completed for summer 2021!

- Thanks to Rabbi Geoff and Sue Huntting and the Weiner Family Foundation, Coleman secured major funding to for Coleman in Israel in 2019-2020 by subsidizing its cost to make it more affordable and nearly doubling the number of participants. As a result, we are able to send 42 participants in 2019 and already have 48 participants registered for 2020.

- A generous grant from the Molly Blank Fund at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation helped us expand to a year round Machon Mitzvah Corps Atlanta program.

- Annual support from our community for Coleman’s Allan Solomon Scholarship Fund helps make sure every bunk is filled and that no camper is turned away due to inability to pay.

We are grateful for the generosity of Coleman’s supporters!