

---

2020 · 5781

# STRATEGIC PLAN

**Camp Ramah**  
מחנה רמה  
& יומי  
בוויסקונסין

[www.ramahwisconsin.com](http://www.ramahwisconsin.com) · [www.ramahday.com](http://www.ramahday.com)

---



# LOOKING FORWARD

September 2020

Tishrei 5781

Dear Ramahnik – current families and staff, alumni, donors, partners, and other supporters of our mission,

Nearly a year ago, our senior professional team began putting in place a broad framework to identify a group of core volunteer stakeholders whose perspectives and wisdom would inform this, Camp Ramah in Wisconsin and Ramah Day Camp in Chicago's sixth strategic plan. Working with our JCamp180 mentor, Julia Riseman, and camp's Strategic Planning Committee Chair, Neera Kaufman, we built scaffolding to help shepherd our committee through two planned day-long summits, one in January and another in April. We discussed the workability of utilizing Zoom so as to include members of the committee who live outside of the Chicago area who would not be able to join us in-person for both sessions.

Our January kick-off summit was the stuff of dreams. Our full team brought a passion and warmth to the main room of our Day Camp campus on a chilly January day. The group's veteran leadership made ample space for the significant number of new voices around the table; individuals who have been involved with Ramah for generations found that parents of current campers with only a few years of Ramah history shared much of their values and passions; voices from the Twin Cities, Madison, and Columbus, as well as some camper parents and alumni from outside the Midwest enriched the conversation with their perspectives. Many nascent relationships around the table deepened through the soul-searching work of identifying challenges our institution faces, while simultaneously celebrating our ample recent successes and the core values on which our work has rested for nearly seventy-five years.

Just a few weeks later, we feared that the ideas that began percolating on that January afternoon would be all for not, lost like so much else in the tsunami of destruction and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It did not take us long to regroup, just a few weeks into a new period of our lives where Zoom had become the only way to have a meeting, and when we did it became clear that the work we began together in January was not out-of-date: it was more relevant than ever. Even with the first ever cancellation of our summer season, the priorities we mapped out are still the priorities we ought to address. The pandemic is not over, and it will be years before the long-term impacts are fully calculated, and yet – and yet – as the old saying goes, you cannot see a rainbow without a cloud and a storm. Those who love a camp in the stormy Northwoods of Wisconsin surely understand that concept.

We present to you this strategic plan recognizing all that is transpiring around us, and more confident than ever that the ideas in the next pages – conceived in a pre-COVID world and gestated during the pandemic – lay out a path forward for our beloved camps. It is a path filled with more uncertainty than we could have imagined when the process began, while also somehow filled with more promise and hope for a bright future.

With great thanks to JCamp180, our committee of volunteers and broad network of lay leaders, and our incomparable staff, we welcome you into the dialogue that this plan will fuel and inform for the next five years.



**JACOB CYTRYN**  
Executive Director



# OUR MISSION

Camp Ramah in Wisconsin and Ramah Day Camp offer vibrant experiences – filled with camp fun and friends – that build Jewish lives and Jewish leaders. Our holistic communities inspire our campers and staff to see themselves in the ongoing renewal of our rich Jewish heritage.



Owen Rich  
Group 2

Boaz Eisenberg  
Group 2

# OUR VISION

Summer camp – residential and day – is an American institution synonymous with two words: **fun and friends**. The allure of camp facilitates its true potential to shape the lives of children, adolescents, and emerging adults, potential that Ramah consciously mines to help its campers and staff develop diverse passions, learn new skills, cement burgeoning friendships into lifelong relationships of meaning, and promote their own sense of self, independence, and obligation to their communities.

Our institution, which we call Ramah Wisconsin, is far more than the name indicates. To the first of the Ramah camps, established in Wisconsin in 1947, we have added Ramah Day Camp in Chicago and interlocking webs of in-person and virtual programming for current, prospective, and alumni Ramahniks, many but not all of which currently live or trace their family's roots to our Midwestern catchment area. Ramah Wisconsin invests significantly in programs and staff to provide the best possible innovative and field-leading offerings.

Our founding visionaries were a collection of Jewish professionals, dedicated volunteers, and camper families who identified a need for an immersive, educationally intensive, and ritually observant camp to help cultivate a new generation of American Jews who felt at home in their **rich cultural and religious tradition** and how the Jewish legacy they have inherited speaks to their contemporary experience. Today, this vision – and the stakeholders who ensure the camp's ongoing success – remains vibrant. In each generation the *fulfillment* of that vision looks different, as developments in the field of summer camp, Jewish education, and the lived experience of campers and staff, change with the times.

Our focus on the developmental needs of our campers and staff, an appreciation for Jewish friendships and Jewish community, and the educational pillars that define our community link our alumni together across the decades. These pillars include: regular engagement with Jewish cultural artifacts; daily tefillah (prayer) and ritual observance; a deep connection to Hebrew; and an appreciation for our familial connection to the entirety of Am Yisrael (the Jewish people) and the State of Israel.

Through these experiences Ramah Wisconsin educates, engages, and inspires the next generation of Jewish leaders and their families.

Ramah Wisconsin's Jewish community embraces diversity and inclusion – of ideas, opinions, backgrounds, and human beings. From the friends made to the Judaism we live, we welcome Jewish families of diverse levels of observance and perspective as well as the full spectrum of humanity, warmly embracing campers and staff inclusive of different abilities, races and ethnicities, gender- and sexual-identities.

Ramah Wisconsin accepts its role as a **lifelong beacon** to many of our alumni and the most important Jewish touchpoint for many current campers and staff. Our increasing engagement, year-round and life-long, of current and prospective camper families as well as alumni, represents one aspect of this important role we play. The responsibility of this role also underscores a realization of the wildest dreams of our founding generation: Ramah Wisconsin is a leader and incubator of leadership for the communities we directly serve in the Midwest and Conservative Movement, as well as throughout the Jewish and secular worlds. We proudly identify with thousands of alumni, living in the US, Israel, and throughout the world, many of them working in the highest echelons of their profession, bringing everything they have learned at Ramah – about their Judaism, themselves, leading others, the vast breadth of secular knowledge, and so much more – to the betterment of themselves, their families, workplaces, communities, and the entire world.







# 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

**TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION DURING THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, CAMP RAMAH IN WISCONSIN AND RAMAH DAY CAMP WILL PLAN FOR, EXECUTE ON, AND ACHIEVE FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

## **DISTINGUISH**

Define and communicate Ramah's unique value for families and campers.

## **EXPAND**

Increase affordability and reduce barriers to transformative Ramah experiences.

## **ELEVATE**

Enhance overnight session offerings & program.  
Create superior day camp program & facilities.

## **CULTIVATE**

Foster lifelong meaningful touchpoints with Ramah alumni, families and committed stakeholders.

בין רכסי הרים במסודה אבות  
פנינת תפאדה וברוב עוננים  
ישכון לו בדרך יפלס לנו 2  
מחנינו רמה 1 יורד נסדק החיים  
לגבינו מלא רחשי הודיה עוד תהיה למופת  
לאלפי רבנה 3



# DISTINGUISH

We will distinguish Camp Ramah in Wisconsin and Ramah Day Camp as **exceptional summer camps**. This process will clarify who we are and what we do best, and then seek to communicate more effectively the value of joining the Ramah Wisconsin family.

We will address challenges to recruitment and enrollment by **investing in professional market research and marketing strategy services**. Based on well-researched guidance, we will fine tune our messaging and marketing strategy to better recruit and retain additional families to our programs, cultivate and nurture professional relationships among a growing list of partner institutions, and engage additional donors in the coming years.





# EXPAND

Our purpose is to provide our community with transformative, immersive, joyful Jewish experiences that develop lifelong commitments to Jewish life and outstanding leadership skills. We will **utilize the learnings from our efforts to distinguish ourselves to expand the total number of campers, camper families, and alumni who join us on a lifelong journey.**

We will **analyze our mix of session length, pricing structure, and program offerings to make modifications** that allow us to maintain our founding commitments to transformative Jewish programming while refreshing that vision for the next generation of constituent families. Our engagement of an increasing number of new families will depend on the ongoing innovation and expanding of our programming – summer and year-round, in-person and at a distance – reducing barriers to participation and increasing affordability for more families. We will model modifications to incentives, discounts, and fee structures in an effort to drive new growth in enrollment.

Leading with compassion for families needing greater financial assistance, we remain steadfast in our commitment to **raising even more funds in support of scholarships, innovation, and enduring organizational stability**, resulting in a more resilient organization by 2025.



# ELEVATE

Many families are attracted to Ramah due to our dynamic, creative, and engaging programmatic offerings, including our specialty areas, camper care services, inclusion programs, modeling of Jewish living, and creation of singular friendships; our facilities; and our outstanding staff. Our families' love of Ramah-infused summers is what ensures camper retention year after year. We are responsible for **elevating the Ramah experience above all other summer options through consistent investments in outstanding site, facilities, programs, and staff.**

Of specific focus is investing in **meaningful upgrades to Ramah Day Camp** so as to meet our expectations of excellence. In addition to expanding program options and investing in improved facilities, we will address additional factors related to the developing demography of the Chicago Jewish community and its geographic spread. By 2022 we will lay out and begin implementation of a master site plan to ensure the success of Ramah Day Camp for the next decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to implement new and innovative ways of engaging stakeholders, including campers, camper families, alumni and friends. We seek to understand what we can learn from this experience, and plan for the next generation **of program innovation that best elevates the lifelong Ramah experience** across many different stakeholders.





# CULTIVATE

Our mission, in part, is to build Jewish lives and Jewish leaders through the cultivation of lasting friendships and relationships. This crisis precipitated by the pandemic has made more apparent the benefits of deep connections, friendships, faith, and purpose for Ramahniks of all ages. **We will cultivate lasting and meaningful relationships lifelong.**

We will **build out and support programming** that reaches out to whole families, alumni across the country, and our many supporters who value their lifelong Ramah journey. We dedicate ourselves to **creating a robust alumni and community engagement plan** with the goal of increasing participation in programming by 2025.

Our mission compels us to cultivate Jewish leaders as well. We will do more to cultivate individual leadership development among our year-round staff through professional development, and among prospective and current lay leaders through **development and training**. We will do our part in replacing each generation of dedicated volunteers by deliberately growing pipelines, facilitating relationship-building and mentoring opportunities, and expanding mechanisms through which volunteers can meaningfully engage with the work of our organization.

# TODAH RABBAH!

Todah Rabbah to JCamp180 and our talented mentor Julia Riseman, our committee of volunteers, our broad network of lay leaders, and our incomparable staff for their investment of work and wisdom in the creation of this strategic plan.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Neera Kaufman, Chair  
Mark Altschul  
Steve Altschul  
Joel Brown  
Michael Chartock  
Laura Elkayam  
Carol Weintraub Fogel  
Ben Hofkin  
Liz Lippow  
Jason Litwack  
Elana Matthews  
Danielle Pearl  
Ayala Podhoretz  
Rabbi David Russo  
Adam Seidenberg  
Jonathan Sherman  
Kenny Steinman

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Kushnir, Board President  
Dan Blumenthal  
Joel Brown  
Yehuda Cohen  
Karen Ebroon  
David Elyashar  
Todd Fishbein  
Arnie Harris  
Neera Kaufman  
Dr. Jeff Kopin  
Tamar Newberger  
Donald Newman  
Marc Sacks  
Robyn Schein  
Jonathan Sherman  
Alan Silberman  
Mark Silberman  
Dr. Margaret Silberman

## VA'AD

Avi Allen  
Mark Altschul  
Steve Altschul  
Ben Azulay  
Rebecca Bacon  
Marshall Brill  
Rita Cortes  
Ari Derman  
Dr. Mark Drexler  
Laura Elkayam  
Brad Feinberg  
Carol Weintraub Fogel  
Nami Goldenberg  
Ashlyn Gorlin  
Diane Halivni  
Ben Hofkin  
Micah Kafitz  
Stephanie Kavanaugh  
Jordy Kirshenbaum  
Liz Lippow  
Jason Litwack  
Liat Meisler  
Dr. Scott Moses  
Andrew Pass  
Danielle Pearl  
Ayala Podhoretz  
Tomer Rothschild  
Steven Schoenberger  
Erica Schwab  
Carol Ann Schwartz  
Samantha Silverman  
Bryan Sloane  
Michael Small  
Adam Steinberg  
Kenny Steinman  
Roni Weiss  
Deborah Winick

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jonathan Sherman, Chair  
Scott Forester  
Arnie Harris  
Dr. Jeff Kopin  
Judge Norman Krivosha  
Michael Newberger  
Fred Rothschild  
Betty Rozenfeld  
Alan Silberman  
Morton Steinberg  
Mayer Stibel  
Phyllis Hofman Waldmann

## RAMAH SENIOR STAFF

Jacob Cytryn, Executive Director  
Scott Topal, Director of Operations  
Talia Derman, Ramah Day Camp Director  
Sam Caplan, Chief Development Officer  
Linda Hoffenberg, Director of Institutional Advancement



**CAMP RAMAH IN WISCONSIN, INC.  
RAMAH DAY CAMP, INC.**



67 East Madison Street  
Suite 1905  
Chicago, IL 60603  
312.606.9316