

You don't belong to JTown, JTown belongs to you!

JTown offers inspired, fun, and meaningful experiences that create relationships, make connections, and build community for Jews and those who share their lives.

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A Rose By Any Other Name Is Just A Rose

JTown is so proud to announce that we have received a very generous grant from **Rose Community Foundation**.



Yes, we did announce a grant last month too--A *Stenberg Anything Grant* through JEWISHcolorado, which was for much needed technology, including computers and accounting software. Who knows what will happen by next month...

This new funding from Rose Community Foundation will allow JTown to continue to fulfill our mission of creating community opportunities for Jews and the people who share their lives. It will do four things in particular:

- Help us keep our programming affordable.
- Enable us to welcome many more people to our High Holiday Services this fall.
- Expand the capacity of Project Our Town, enabling us to help many more worthwhile organizations and people in our community. See page 4 for more info about Project Our Town.
- Double the number of teens we can serve in our BBYO South Chapter, hopefully transitioning over the next few years into separate AZA (boys) and a BBG (girls) chapters.

We often find ourselves in the office pinching each other, wondering how we got so lucky to be able to do what we love, with people we love, for reasons we love.

Hopefully, we will be sharing progress and good news with you every month in this newsletter. But, right now, we are so content and humbled by the support of our family and friends, our peers, and now the greater Denver Jewish Community. To know that they see and believe in our mission is so validating. It inspires us to do our absolute best to be deserving of the generosity of this community.

As always, please let us know if you have ideas or requests! We would also love for you to get involved if you have not already! Want to meet for coffee or stop by the office for a visit? Contact us anytime at info@jtownco.org or 720-920-9086.

Until next month,

Cindy & Amy



Current Events Getting You Down?

The best cure is doing something good for others!

Project Our Town already has over 30 confirmed social action projects and it is only June! We are helping so many really amazing organizations, adding new projects, and bringing in new volunteers every day.

There are many ways to get involved now! You can help shape the projects and truly make a difference.

See page 4 for more info!

Message received from a J-Fan: "We love being a part of JTown and what you have brought to the community. It's a breath of fresh air to come to Shabbat and feel as if we are with family. We have so much fun, to say the least, and always leave smiling. We love you and look forward to our next JTown event!"



AROUND TOWN...



Happiness was had by all at the JTown Happy Hour!



Top left: Picking up our new computers. Thank you Staenberg Family Foundation! This is what Christmas must feel like!
Top Right: The day we got the check from Rose Foundation was a very, very good day!
Bottom left: Project our Town Leadership Council members Lin Sunshine, LeAnn Hait, and Joann Cantor
Bottom right: Pizza and Beer party at the Beckers. The BEST way ever to end Passover!

BBYO South Chapter



From Our BBYO Leadership:

BBYO South is a new Jewish youth group chapter for the Highlands Ranch, Lone Tree, Littleton and south areas of Denver. We are excited to be the youth group for JTown, our amazing sponsors. We are very involved with community service work, social events, and attending Friday night Shabbat Services with JTown. We try to get as many teens involved and let them help plan and run programs. We have very good turnouts at our events, averaging about 10 members at each one.

We are a co-ed chapter involving both BBG (for girls) and AZA (for boys) which means we carry ideas and "folds" from both. Getting involved is a great way to make new friendships and learn new things that we will use throughout our lifetime. We also believe that this is a great way to meet new people in the Jewish community and to strengthen your Jewish identity.

This summer, we have many events planned. We are doing a BBQ and meeting, a Zoo Scavenger Hunt and Camp Out, attending the JTown Picnic, and much more!

If you know of any High School teens interested in getting involved in our awesome chapter, please send us a note at info@jtownco.org.

Chelsea Becker, Chapter President
Julia Frank, Chapter Vice President



At our May Shabbat service, I shared the following "opening remarks." We have had quite a few comments as well as requests to share it. I hope you enjoy it, that its message resonates with you, and makes you feel proud to be the Jew you do. -- Cindy Abramson

How Do You Jew?

A few weeks ago, a leader in the Jewish community made the following comment to Amy: "JTown is so awesome, and growing so much, maybe more organizations should be offering *watered-down Judaism*." I don't think it was intended to be a back-handed compliment, but I've stewed and stewed about it ever since.

We are definitely used to people misunderstanding what JTown is and isn't... Repeating over and over "no, we are not a Temple; no, we are not looking to hire clergy; no we aren't looking for a building." We have explained: "We are kind of like a Hillel for adults, we offer opportunities for Jews to be together."

But, I think the most important thing we've tried to be clear about is that, we are **not** taking away, we are **adding**.

In reality, JTown is what you/we make it every time we are together. There is no box to check or term to easily explain it... It's a JTown! A "JTown" is different, special, out of the box, evolving, fluid, thoughtful, relevant, welcoming, accepting, positive, inclusive, and fun!

It is not watered-down or "Jew Lite." – If anything, it is the exact opposite. Every single thing we do, whether it be a social event, a service, or a social action project, it is carefully and deliberately chosen.

We have a list of what we call our "Whys" on the wall in our office that we made way back before we even announced JTown. The "Whys" are answers to the question "Why are we doing this?" They are our core beliefs and determine everything we do. When building the concept for JTown, we started with the *Why* first, and then built out from there to the *what* and the *how*.

Here are some of our "Whys:"

- Relationships matter the most.
- Jews and Jewish families have changed, continue to change, and look different from one another. And, there are more interfaith families than ever before (some recent statistics show that there are more interfaith families than families with two married Jews).
- Traditional synagogue models don't work for everyone.
- Our personal Jewish identities are fluid, individual, and, wherever we happen to be at any given time, is valid.
- People do not want to be judged or to feel "less than" based on their knowledge, experience, or differences.
- Jews, and the people who love them, the people they share their lives with, want to feel equally welcome and comfortable.
- Jews being together IS a Jewish experience and IS a Jewish community, period, regardless of what we are doing.

So, what does JTown do? In a nutshell, four things:

1. Social programming
2. Alternative, lay-led worship services
3. Social action/community service work
4. Teen programming

Our social programming is just that, social. Whether it be concerts, brewery tours, movies, picnics, parties, etc., as long as we do it together, it is community. It is meant to have fun, build relationships, meet people...oh, and did I mention have fun?

Our worship experiences are put together with great intention, conversation, and research in order to create something that is truly meaningful, that makes us think, and challenges us to be better and do better. Our services include traditional prayers and rituals interwoven with songs and readings meant to be relatable and meaningful to our lives today. They are all lay-led, anyone can help to lead, and each service becomes an individual, unique reflection of its participants—a sum of all of its parts.

Our teen programming has, in a very short time, become the official BBYO SOUTH chapter. Our teens are planning programs, making new friends, attending conferences, participating in regional events, and learning leadership skills.

We have two teens from our chapter attending a leadership conference this summer in Montreal! Mark my words, these kids have very bright, Jewish futures.

Our social action work is an integral part of what we do. Much of it is nondenominational and benefits a myriad of causes and organizations. Caring for and serving our community is a Jewish value, whether or not it is for a Jewish organization. Our Project Our Town weekend in November already has over 30 projects and our volunteer base is growing every day. It resonates so deeply, especially now, when what is happening in the world seems to be so out of our control. This work we are doing is truly going to change lives. We invite you to get involved. Reach out to us at any time for more information.

So, THIS is what JTown is... does any of that sound watered-down to you?

Because all Jews are different, families are more diverse than ever, and each of us has our own Jewish identity and feelings about what is important and meaningful to us,—we all (each and every one of us) get to choose as individuals and families how we want to Jew!

And, at a time when Jews are at an all time low affiliation rate, creating spaces and places like JTown might just be what keeps Judaism alive and thriving.

How do you Jew?