

# SID JACOBSON JCC'S CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

A YEAR-ROUND COMMITMENT TO GIVING

BY ALLISON CAGGIA

**Sid Jacobson JCC's Center** Center for Community Engagement continues to profoundly impact the lives of families in need, guided by its core pillars of social responsibility, volunteerism, and its Nikki Schwartz Memorial Community Needs Bank. With programs like Retail Rescue and the Holiday Wishes Wrapped In Love Toy Drive, SJJCC demonstrates how giving can touch lives in meaningful and personal ways, fostering a sense of connection within the community.

## A Fresh Approach to Food Rescue

Thanks to a generous grant through their relationship with Island Harvest, SJJCC's Retail Rescue program achieved a significant milestone: purchasing a refrigerated van and hiring a designated driver. This has allowed the program to collect and redistribute over **180,000 pounds of food** in 2024. The van's driver personally delivers fresh produce, dairy, meat, and other essentials to local households and partner pantries, deepening the connections between the JCC and the community it serves. "They feel that connection, that people in the community have their back," shared Susan Berman, Associate Executive Director - Community Engagement, emphasizing how these deliveries provide both sustenance and hope.

## The Power of Giving: Holiday Toy Drive

The JCC's annual Holiday Wishes Toy Drive brought the joy of giving to life in a special way. Working with their own households and community partners, people could "adopt a child" and purchase gifts specifically for them. This year, over 400 children

received new, handpicked toys, thanks to the kindness of donors.

"We believe every child deserves to get a new toy during the holidays and know it was chosen for them to make their lives happier in one way or another," said Susan Berman. For many families, the opportunity to select gifts for other children proved to be a deeply meaningful experience, teaching the next generation about compassion and generosity.

## Looking Ahead: MLK Upstander Weekend of Service

The JCC's mission extends far beyond the holidays. As January approaches, Sid Jacobson JCC's Center for Community Engagement is preparing for its expanded MLK Day of Service, turning a single day into a weekend of "Upstanders." (can we include dates here, please, or wherever is best to fit in the story, January 18-20) Through various activities for all ages, the initiative highlights the countless ways people can make a difference and create a ripple effect of good within the community. Whether offering food, adopting a child for the holidays, or joining the MLK weekend's events, Sid Jacobson JCC invites everyone to contribute throughout the year. Susan Berman noted, "Every action, big or small, helps us create a stronger, more caring community."



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