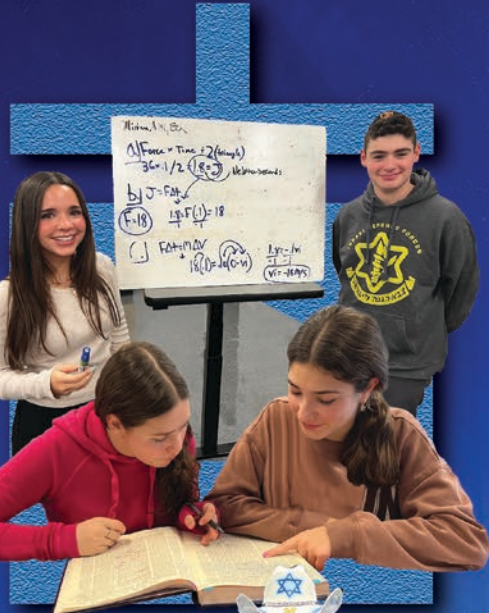


Celebrating Success



ANNUAL REPORT
5785 / 2024-2025
Ida Crown Jewish Academy

LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear ICJA Family:



Each year brings with it new challenges and opportunities, and each year, the students and faculty of Ida Crown Jewish Academy rise to the moment—learning deeply, leading boldly, and living lives guided by Torah and informed by a sense of purpose and pride.

This year was no exception.

From the emotional strength cultivated in our expanded homeroom program to the intellectual rigor of our classrooms and clubs, ICJA continues to nurture students who are thriving academically, spiritually, and communally.

Take, for example, our Chidon HaTanach Team, one of the most robust in the country, entirely student-led, and recognized again this year for its national successes. Or our newly launched Debate Team, which in its very first year saw two students qualify for the National Speech & Debate Association Tournament. Or our Letters About Literature participants, where an astounding 26 juniors were honored for their literary insight and creativity.

Beyond the classroom, our students continue to lead and inspire. Our Daf Yomi club draws committed students on a regular basis to begin their day with learning. Our ICGC and ICBC initiatives, with Rosh Chodesh chaburot, evening mishmarim, and meaningful events, have created a campus culture where Torah is alive, joyful, and ever-present. And through programs like Babka & Bubbies, now a regular intergenerational event at Park Plaza and made possible through Better Together, our students have forged lasting relationships and moments of chesed across generations.

ICJA is also proud to be a central address for our broader community. When Israeli Minister Ofir Sofer came to Chicago, it was at ICJA that he met with students and communal leaders. When the Jewish United Fund marked the one-month anniversary of October 7, it was our students who helped lead the commemorative event. And when

leaders like JUF President Lonnie Nasatir and Israel's Consul General Yinam Cohen want to showcase the strength and vibrancy of our community, ICJA is the place they come.

Athletically, this was another banner year. The Aces captured the IHSA State Regionals and the Chicago Prep Conference Championship. Our Wrestling Team triumphed at the National Wittenberg Tournament, and its longtime coach, Doug Klein was inducted into the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials' Hall of Fame. The Lady Aces won their Conference Championship, and their successes even drew the attention of the Chicago Bulls, who partnered with the team and featured them in a Women's History Month spotlight video. And our Boys' JV Basketball team brought home a second-place finish in the Conference Tournament.

All of this, and so much more, is what makes Ida Crown Jewish Academy a jewel in the crown of our community. It is what inspires us to keep dreaming, growing, and building.

But none of it would be possible without you.

Your support ensures that our doors remain open to every Jewish child who seeks a meaningful, Modern Orthodox education. Your partnership sustains our mission to inspire Bnei and Bnot Torah to thrive in the modern world. And your belief in our school, its values, its vision, and its voice is what allows ICJA to continue to shine.

Thank you for being part of our extraordinary story.

With deep appreciation and Torah blessings,

Rabbi Leonard A. Matanky, Dean
Ida Crown Jewish Academy

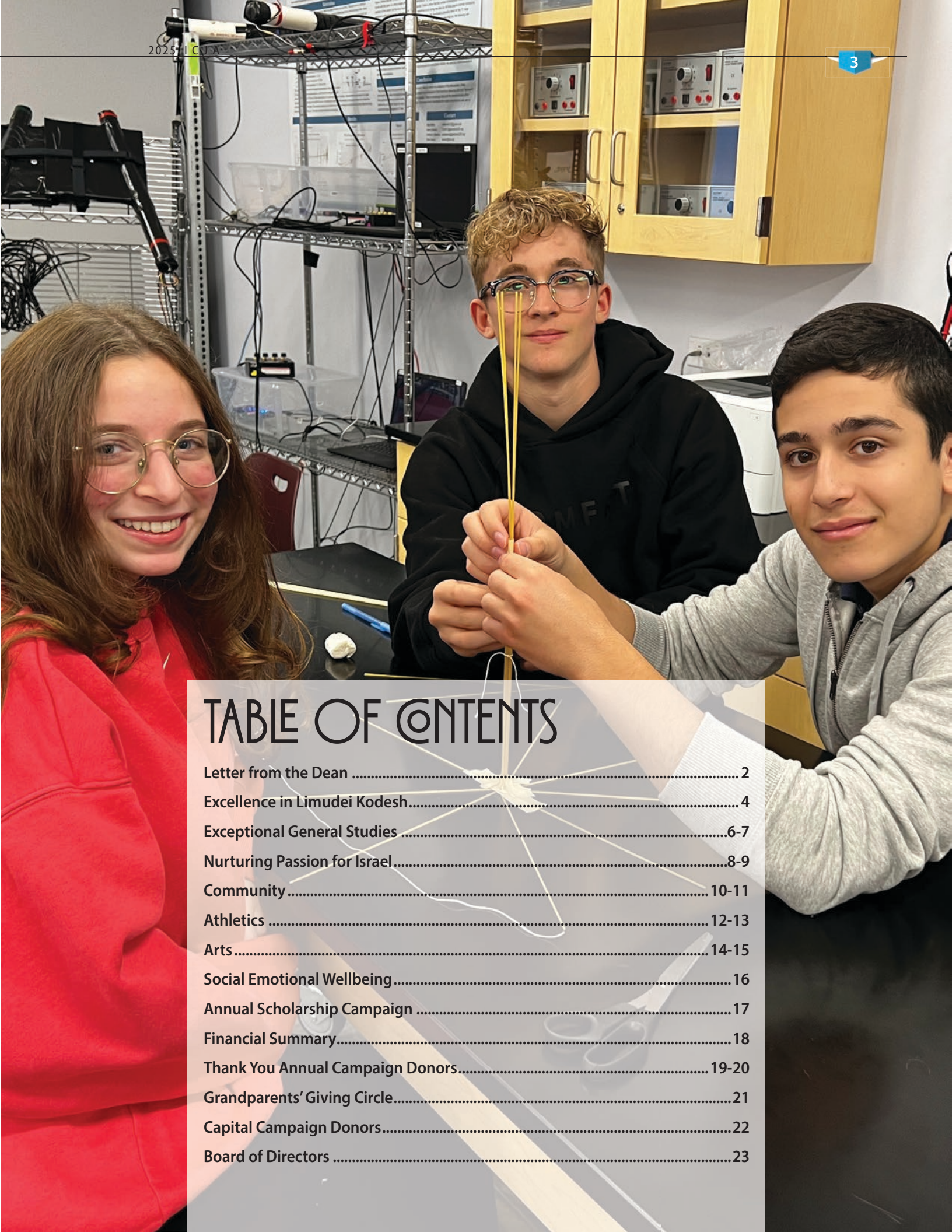


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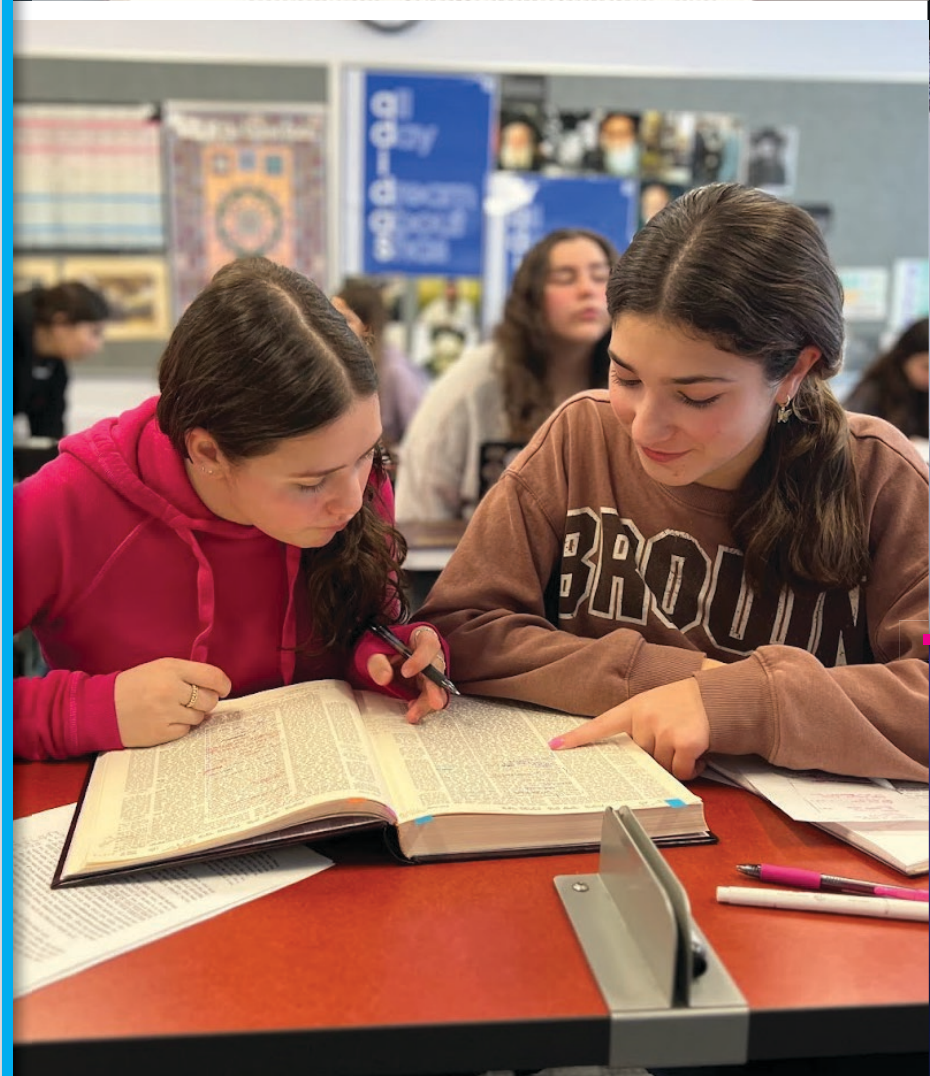
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EXCELLENCE IN LIMUDEI KODESH

Passion for Limudei Kodesh, Jewish studies, infuses everything we do at ICJA. Students gain Ahavat HaTorah, a deep love of Torah; Ahavat Yisrael and Ahavat Eretz Yisrael, a love for the people and the Land of Israel; and a love of learning.

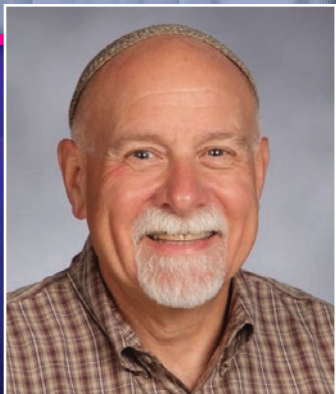
An ICJA education nurtures a connection with our Jewish community and our mesorah, building resilience and social emotional wellbeing.

- Twice-weekly optional Mishmar study sessions with over 50 regular participants.
- Weekly before-school learning with the YU Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago
- Daf Yomi Club Talmud study sessions
- Monthly "Shabbat Shteig" pre-Shabbat celebrations
- Weekly freshman parent-son davening, learning, and breakfast at a different Chicago-area synagogue each Sunday morning, led by award-winning teacher Rabbi Louis Fliegelman
- Weekly Shabbat afternoon Tehillim for girls at the home of ICJA Assistant Dean Alise Gold
- Weekly "Parsha and Pancakes" learning and monthly Rosh Chodesh learning for girls
- Shabbatonim empowered students to learn and celebrate together on Shabbat
- "Fridaytons" – Friday night davening, Tisch, Shiur and dinner – for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors
- Rabbi Sacks Global Day of Learning all-school study of Jewish texts about charity and chesed
- Chanukah learning with YU Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago
- Tanach Senior Seminar teaches research skills for students' semester-long research projects
- Annual Freshmen Haggadah project brings together learning and original divrei Torah from all members of the freshman class



• ICJA Takes the Stage, Day of Learning allowed all girls to spend a morning learning Jewish sources for this year's theme: Tocho K'boro, Inside-Outside. *ICJA Takes the Stage*, commemorating the life of Batsheva Chaya Stadlan, z"l, is generously sponsored by the Ralla Klepak Foundation for Education in the Performing Arts.

• ICJA students qualified for and competed in the National Chidon HaTanach Finals in New York and racked up national victories: Aliza Shyovitz '25 – 1st Place, 12th Grade Division; Emily Adler '28 – 8th Place; Penina Benjamin '26 – 11th Place; Levi Polsky '25 – 4th Grade



Director of Support Services Mr. Phil ("Doc Phil") Zbaraz retired this year after 24 years at ICJA. Under his expert leadership, ICJA expanded our services to support the social-emotional needs of students and staff, and gained a reputation for outstanding understanding and care.



This year ICJA Assistant Principal Mr. Daniel Harris '78 retired after over 30 years of working at ICJA, both as a teacher and coach and an administrator. Generations of students have been shaped by Mr. Harris' warmth and the care he took in getting to know each and every student.

EXCELLENCE IN GENERAL STUDIES

ICJA's 21st century teaching methods and our innovative curriculum ensure that students develop their passion for learning, infusing innovation, and critical thinking into their studies.

We support students' inquiries, offering a wide range of clubs, extracurricular activities, and individual tutoring to encourage students to reach their potential.

- Over 250 different class sections offered each day

- 1:5 teacher-student ratio

- 53 clubs and sports teams active during the current school year

- 13 AP classes offered

- ICJA Ranked #1 Jewish high school in Illinois, reflecting academic achievement and positive student and parent reviews

- 36 seniors inducted into the National Honor Society

- Levi Polsky '25 won 4th place in the 5785 Jerusalem Science Contest with his project Filtering Water with Carbon Nanotubes

- Hadar Simkovitch '25 was recognized as one of Jewish Chicago's 18 Under 18 winners.

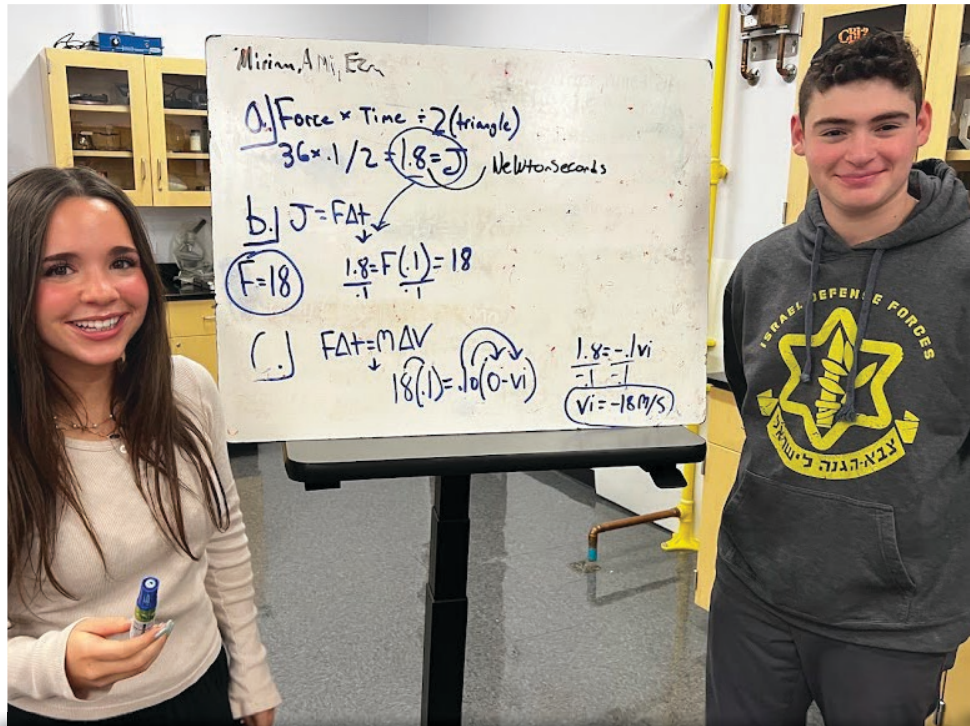
- Jacob Thomas '27 and Caleb Novick '27 won 1st prize in the Walder Science Jewish Innovators Challenge, winning a trip to meet observant NASA scientists at Kennedy Space Center in Florida

- 6 students gained qualifications to be EMTs in ICJA's EMT class; 40 students gained first aid qualifications in our popular Hugo's Heroes Club.

- National Merit - Levi Polsky '25 named National Merit Finalist; Yossi Gordon-Burstyn '25 named Commended Scholar

- 26 ICJA juniors have been honored in this year's Illinois Letters About Literature contest, which challenges juniors to write letters to characters in beloved books.

- ICJA's 2023 literary and artistic journal *Charlotte's Web* has received the designation "Excellent" once again from the National Council of Teachers of English, their highest honor. *Charlotte's Web* is supported by *The Susan and Joseph Ament z"l Fund*.



ACADEMIC TEAM VICTORIES

A ICJA's new Debate Team - Eliana Frankel '27 and Zachary Kupietzky '28 qualified for the National Speech Debate Association national tournament

B Mathletes - 3rd place overall win in our Division, 1st place in the Oral Competition category, and 2nd place in the Sophomores category

C ICJA's student-led Chidon HaTanach Team is one of the most successful in the country, routinely outperforming even much larger teams from schools with dedicated Chidon teachers and classes.

D ICJA Model UN Team - participated in Yeshiva University's National Model United Nations, with Aliza Shyvovitz '25 receiving an Honorable Mention



Our in-house Math Tutor helps students with test prep, homework, and more.

NURTURING PASSION FOR ISRAEL

Love of Israel infuses everything we do at ICJA. Students build connections through davening, learning, education about Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael, frequent Israeli visitors, volunteering, demonstrating, and advocacy. Over 90% of the Class of 2025 are continuing their education with a growth year in Israel after high school.

- ICJA's Israel Advocacy Club educated students about Israeli politics and empowered students to engage in political action on issues critical to Israel's future.
- ICJA students were at the center of the JUF-organized Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day ceremony, raising the Israeli flag over Daley Center in downtown Chicago. Avi Chen '25 and Ranon Ginsberg '25 recited the Prayer for the State of Israel; Ella Kakon '25 and Emily Darlow '25 recited the Prayer for Israeli hostages. ICJA students led the crowd in rousing singing and dancing.
- Students celebrated the 77th Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, with an event that transformed ICJA into a slice of Israel for the day. After special all-school davening, students studied, met with Israeli Consul General to the Midwest Yinam Cohen, and celebrated Israel with Israeli-themed activities, a gala Israeli-style lunch, and dancing.
ICJA Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations are sponsored by the Gertz family in memory of Doris and Paul Rosenberg, a"h.
- In preparation for Yom HaZikaron, Hebrew classes interviewed bereaved Israeli families on Zoom, learning the stories of their fallen loved ones; students then gave presentations about each family to their peers. ICJA's solemn, student-led Yom HaZikaron observance included tefillot (prayers), a student memorial candle-lighting ceremony, learning, and powerful speakers.
ICJA's Yom HaZikaron program and Tekes has been generously sponsored by the Zenia and Jeffrey Cohen Fund For Yom HaZikaron Program.
- Students engaged in tefillot on behalf of Israel, both as scheduled activities and impromptu prayers at times of danger to Israel.
- Our newest Senior Seminar, "Hot Topics: Israel in the News," empowered students to understand Israeli politics and challenges.
- Students gained concrete skills in speaking about Israel, countering anti-Israel prejudice, and fighting misinformation in workshops led by Stand With Us. Upperclassmen learned to identify when criticism of Israel is antisemitic, and practiced responding to some common anti-Israel statements in preparation for life on college campuses.



When Israeli MK and Minister of Aliyah and Integration Ofir Sofer made his first-ever visit to Chicago, he headed to ICJA to learn about Jewish life here. ICJA students discussed Jewish life with MK Sofer; Executive VP of Nefesh B'Nefesh Zev Gershinsky; Director of Pre-Aliyah at Nefesh B'Nefesh Marc Rosenberg; and other Israeli officials.

During the year, ICJA students welcomed Israeli leaders, including:

- Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrahi
- HaRav Yosef Zvi Rimon, Nasi of World Mizrahi and Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion
- Hadas Lowenstern, educator whose husband was killed in Gaza as he rescued wounded soldiers

- Gil Hoffman '95, Honest Reporting Director
- Gabi Katz '16, who described how after graduating from ICJA he spent his "fifth year" learning in Israel, then joined the IDF as a lone soldier
- Karen Hochhauser, Co-Director of Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center
- Jacob Magid '12, USA Bureau Chief for The Times of Israel



This year we welcomed Mrs. Alise Gold '05 as our new Assistant Dean for Student Life. Mrs. Gold attended Stern College for Women and has an MS in Jewish Education from Azrieli Graduate School. Mrs. Gold continues to serve as one of our Mechanchot and teaches Tanach at ICJA.


"Ida Crown students are exceptional! You have amazing teachers and an amazing education here. In Israel we all know that Ida Crown students are knowledgeable and enthusiastic!" - Karen Hochhauser, Co-Director of Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center.

COMMUNITY


Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze Ba'Ze – All Jews are Responsible for One Another (Shavuot 39a).

ICJA students a passion for Achdut” to: ICJA students develop a passion for Achdut. Chesed is incorporated into every aspect of our school, from all-school Chesed Days, to clubs, to holiday celebrations that include opportunities for Chesed, to the requirement that every student must complete 80 hours of Chesed before graduation. ICJA students a passion for Achdut and learn to become leaders in our school, the wider Jewish community, and beyond.

- Babka & Bubbies brings together dozens of students each week to bake tasty treats, then deliver them to Park Plaza residents Friday afternoons. Students socialize and form intergenerational bonds during weekly pre-Shabbat festivities. Park Plaza recently announced it renamed its weekly pre-Shabbat Oneg (celebration) to Babka & Bubbies – and the program will be run by ICJA students.

Babka & Bubbies is sponsored by the Legacy Heritage Better Together Program. 

- Erika’s Lighthouse club empowers students to learn about mental health and advocate for mental health awareness and inclusion.

Our mental health resources are generously supported by the Dr. Michael Maling and the Crain-Mailing Foundation. 

- Chesed Day gave all ICJA students the chance to volunteer for local charities, including Sharsheret, Yachad, Gratitude Generation, Cradles to Crayons, and the Chicago Center.

- ICJA’s All-School Retreat, supported by Leslie and Tom Silverstein, brought students and staff together for two days in beautiful Camp Chi in Wisconsin, where our school community bonded over sports, learning, tefillot, and fun outdoor adventures.

- Students observed Yom HaShoah, with an educational conversation between Alison Pure-Slovin '75, Midwest Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and Jeff Schoep, the former leader of America's largest neo-Nazi organization, learning about ways to combat hatred. *This program is sponsored in memory of Rabbi Shlomo Hirsch Koller, hy”d, and his sister Etko Kokker-Cykornik, hy”d, by Sharon and Seymour Gertz and the estate of Margalit bat Rav Shilem Gertz, z”l.*



Packing boxes on Chesed Day



All-School Retreat

- Ida Crown Girls Club (ICGC) and Ida Crown Boys Club (ICBC) held individual Shabbatonim, fostering camaraderie and building a warm, inclusive community.

ICGC is generously supported by the Walder Foundation.

- Menchanchim and Mechanchot learn with and spend time with each and every student, ensuring that each student has a trusted adult they can turn to for support, help, and validation, and with specific questions and concerns.

Tanach Department Chair and Mechanechet Mrs. Lynn Kraft learning with Caley Gordon '26



Tanach Teacher and Mechanchim Coordinator Rabbi Mayer Simcha Stromer after a shiur

Student to Student battles antisemitism by empowering Jewish students to educate their peers about Jewish life and being a Jewish teen today



ATHLETICS

- ICJA Varsity Basketball won the IHSA State regional championship for the first time.
- ICJA Varsity Basketball won the Chicago Prep Conference Tournament Championship.
- ICJA's Wrestling Team won the Wittenberg Wrestling Conference for the second year in a row.
- Lady Aces Varsity Basketball won the Chicago Prep Conference Tournament Championship.
- Lady Aces Daria Lennon '25 and Talia Linzer '25 made the girls varsity basketball All-Conference team; Daria Lennon was awarded tournament MVP.
- ICJA JV Basketball won 2nd place in the Chicago Prep Conference Tournament.
- Wrestling Coach Doug Klein was inducted into the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association (IWCOA) Hall of Fame.



Varsity ICJA Boys' Basketball Team



JV ICJA Boys' Basketball Team



Lady Aces Soccer Team



ICJA Wrestling Team



Lady Aces Varsity Basketball Team at United Center



ICJA Boys' Soccer Team

A PASSION FOR THE ARTS

Students develop a passion for the Arts at ICJA. Artistic expression is woven into every class through projects, lessons incorporating art and art history, and students' multimedia presentations.



Students regularly meet for impromptu music sessions in our fully equipped Band Room during lunch and free periods.

- ICJA Takes the Stage challenged students to design, plan, and put on a sold-out show entertaining 600 women and girls. Students formed committees including publicity, photography, choreography, stage set, choir, chesed coordination, and much more to create the show, developing valuable skills in planning and executing major projects. ICJA Takes the Stage included a Day of Learning and a trip to watch a live performance of *Frozen* as they planned their own performance. *ICJA Takes the Stage, Celebrating the life of Batsheva Stadlan, z"l*, is generously supported by the Ralla Klepak Foundation for the Performing Arts.

- All students take either Art or Band sophomore year; many continue onto Advanced Art or Band in subsequent years.
- Keshet students are integrated into ICJA Art classes, enriching all students' appreciation for our community and for artistic expression.
- Weekly guitar, keyboard, and drum lessons during lunch for all interested students with a professional music teacher.
- Eighteen ICJA students have been recognized by the Letters About Literature competition, a statewide reading and writing contest sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book, the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Secretary of State, and the Illinois State Librarian. Competing students submit an essay in the form of a letter to an author explaining how a book they wrote resonated with the student and affected their life.
- Students in Mr. Ben Kramer's English class set to their learning, using AI to create original musical pieces incorporating poems they wrote.

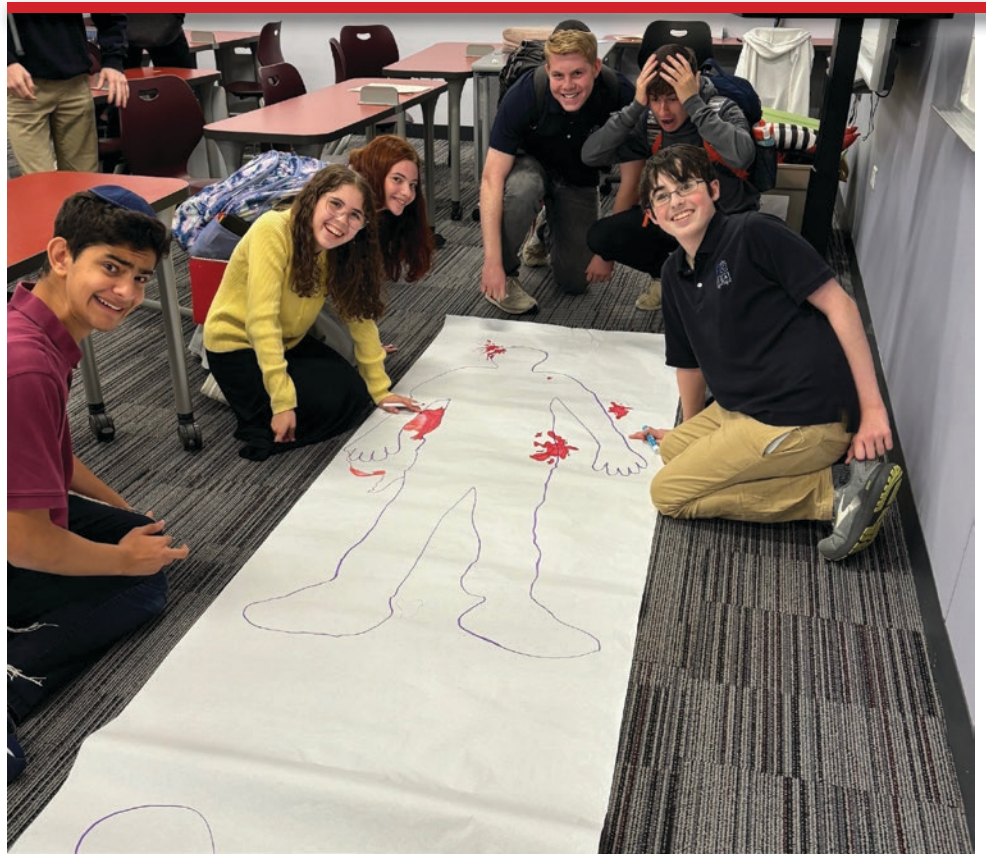


Rifi Bleichman '03 leading a workshop making resin Mezuzah cases with Libby Bleichman '26 and Ariella Pullin '26

- Students in Mrs. Alissa Zeffren’s Jewish History class created “Virtual Museums” of Jewish history and gave multimedia presentations of their Museums to their peers.

- Our popular Film & Drama Senior Seminar empowered students to develop their passions for film and learn how to be a critical viewer.

- ICJA’s new Creative Writing Class was so popular expanded to two sections, empowering students to hone the art of writing.



Meital Wittlin '25 won this year's Better2Write essay prize, a program of the Legacy Heritage Foundation.

Ella Perlman '25 was a finalist for the DePaul's Blue Book: Best American High School Writing 2025.



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

ICJA is committed to helping each and every student thrive in school and beyond. All students are supported by our teams of professionals who are equipped to assist students facing challenges in areas of academic, social, emotional, college-planning, and religious-growth areas.

- **Support Services** - Our two full time therapists, “Doc Phil” Zbaraz LCPC, CCATP, and Etyy Gugenheim, LSW, EMDR, form connections with students; their offices are located adjacent to the cafeteria and are always welcoming for students to stop by.

- **Academic Services** – Our Academic Services team, lead by Director of Academic Services Marisa Loebmann, support students. ICJA’s popular academic resource rooms, located next to the Learning Commons, provide a safe and support environment for all students to work independently, meet with teachers, and consult with learning specialists.

- **REACH** – We partner with ATT’s Resources for Educational Achievement Collaboration and Health (REACH) to serve a wider range of student needs. REACH provides teachers and administrators with data-driven education tools and best practices, teacher professional development, coaching, consultation, and ancillary services to students.

- **Freshmen Homerooms** – Monthly “Homeroom” gatherings for students foster camaraderie among the youngest students at ICJA and equip freshmen with social skills and guidance in navigating social interactions. Based on the Lifni V’Lifnim social-emotional learning program developed at Yeshivat Mevor Chaim in Israel, this program guides students in building self-awareness, deepening their connection to Torah and strengthening empathy and respectful relationships through honest conversation and shared reflection.



A therapy dog helped relieve students' stress during Finals Week



AJSP teacher Mrs. Kochava Yitzhak is leaving ICJA to become Director of Judaic Studies at the Sarah Hartman Women's College of Touro University – we will miss her and look forward to continuing to learn from her in the community.



Tanach and Talmud teacher Rabbi Shlomo Rosen retired at the end of this year. He deepened the love of Torah for generations of students.

DR. EDWARD A. CROWN SCHOLARSHIP DINNER



Ald. Debra Silverstein, Crown Leadership Award, tribute video
Scan the QR code to watch

Ald. Silverstein's Tribute Video



Mr. Daniel Harris, Crown Service Award, tribute video
Scan the QR code to watch

Mr. Harris's Tribute Video



Rabbi Yishai Broner, Educator of the Year, tribute video
Scan the QR code to watch

Rabbi Broner's Tribute Video



ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP CAMPAIGN

Our Annual Scholarship Campaign raised over \$1.62 million this year, ensuring that no child is ever denied an ICJA education due to financial need.

SOCIETY OF PATRONS

Our Society of Patrons (SOP) enable ICJA to meet in Campaign Scholarship goals. Each year, our SOPs enjoy an exclusive event to forge a deeper connection with our mission and with each other, a community of deeply dedicated stakeholders in our school.

This year, Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, Managing Director of Community Engagement, Orthodox Union, gave an inspiring presentation about ways to safeguard children's social emotional resiliency.



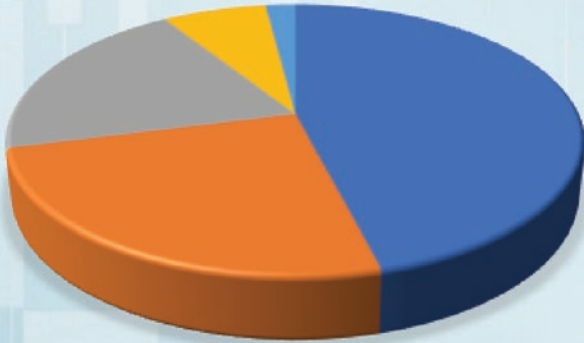
Rabbi Yaakov Glasser



Vice President of Development Miriam Friedman '99 and Jon Friedman '95 at this year's SOP event

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2024 Expenses - \$10,080,593



Education	46%
Adminlstration	25%
Scholarship	20%
Facility	7%
Other	2%

2025 Expenses - \$10,419,658



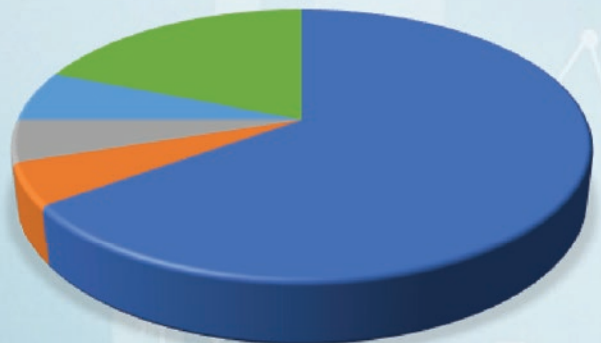
Education	46%
Adminlstration	18%
Scholarship	28%
Facility	6%
Other	2%

2024 Revenues - \$10,164,774



Tuition	63%
Heerey	15%
JUF	5%
Invest in Kids	6%
Other	5%
Dev	6%

2025 Revenues - \$10,476,366



Tuition	65%
Heerey	5%
JUF	5%
Invest in Kids	0%
Other	6%
Dev	19%

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

Thank you to all of our donors for contributing over \$1.62 million to our ICJA Annual Campaign.

\$25,000 and above

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Crown Family Philanthropies
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ICJA's Grandparents play a crucial role in the lives of our grandparents and in our school. Our Grandparents' Giving Circle provides financial and emotional support for our students, strengthening our school and showing students that the commitment to a Jewish education is a lifelong value.

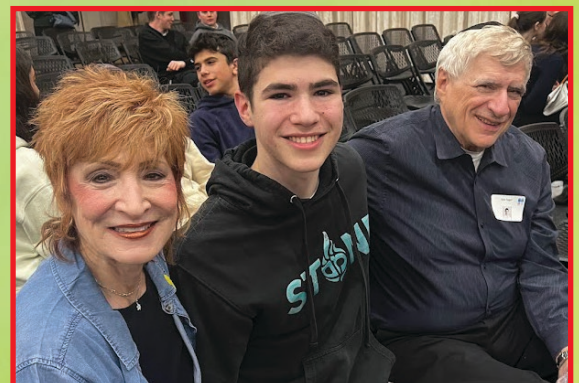
Whether or not grandparents were not able to attend this year's gala Grandparents' Day dessert reception and school tour, all grandparent contributions ensure that ICJA will be able to offer a robust Jewish education to generations of students. We thank those grandparents who contributed to our Grandparents' Giving Circles by Making a gift to our Annual Campaign.

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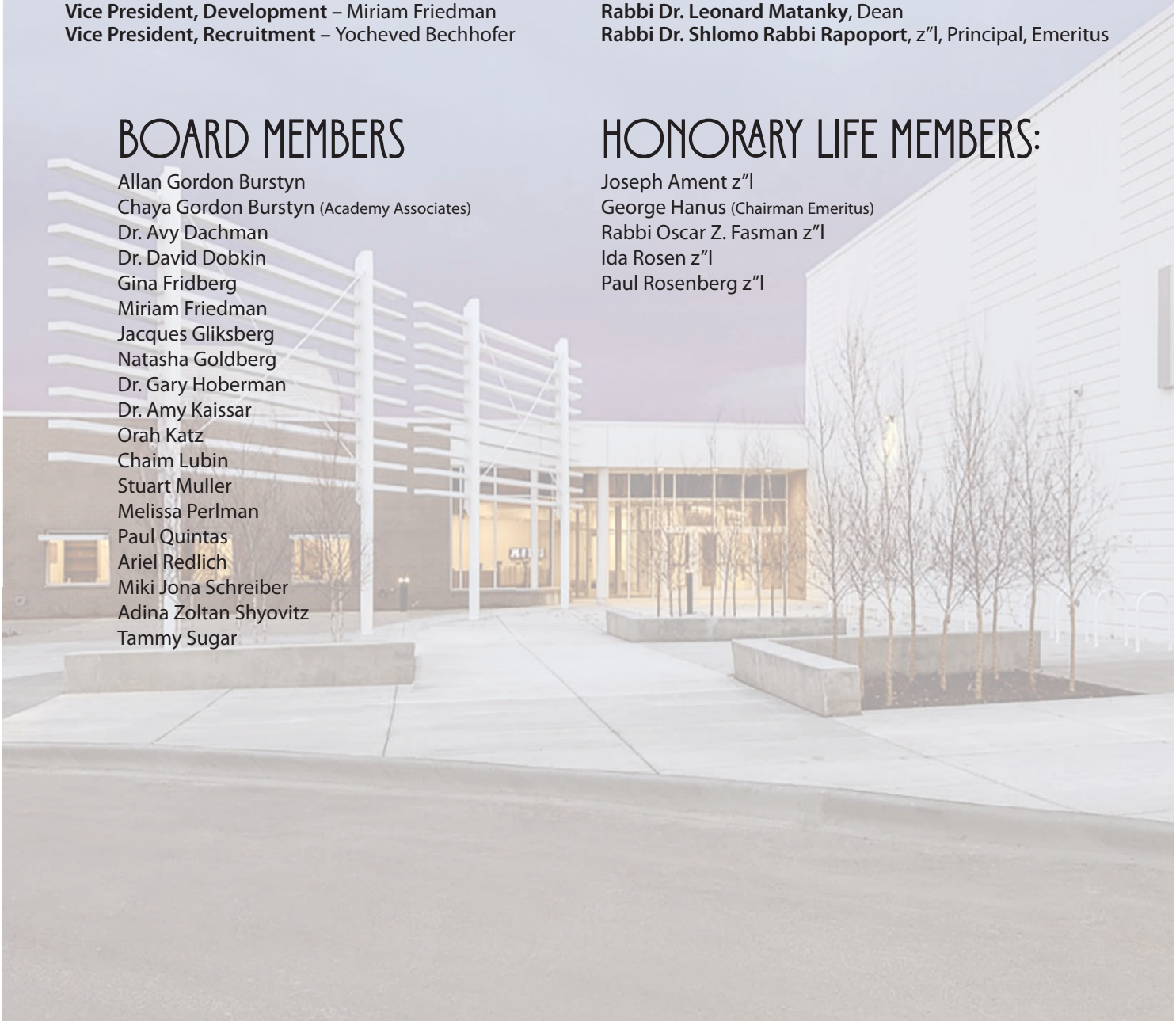
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