



SAN DIEGO

Jewish Academy

Challenge Minds. Inspire Purpose. Explore Possibilities.

May, 3 2019

Dear SDJA Community:

Our Head of School, Chaim Heller, has announced to the Board that he intends to retire from San Diego Jewish Academy after the 2019–2020 school year. We received this bittersweet news understanding and appreciating his desire to relish his time as a full-time grandfather with his family.

There will be time to celebrate Chaim's many accomplishments in our community, but we want to express our gratitude for his leadership. For the past seven years, Chaim has led San Diego Jewish Academy with wisdom, commitment, and heart. He has many outstanding achievements that have strengthened our school community;

- Chaim has strengthened our mission, vision, and values, balancing academic excellence with a deep Jewish heart and soul. His stewardship of the *Vision for 2020* Strategic Plan has led to implementation of nearly every goal set through that process.
- SDJA has started to grow enrollment, building on the excellent reputation of the school, as well as initiatives such as the Open Tent and Open Door programs, making a Jewish day school education affordable to so many members of our community.
- An outstanding leadership team has raised academic standards across the board, received Blue Ribbon national recognition for the lower school, and developed forward-thinking Jewish and secular academic programming for all of our students.
- Chaim's impact was evident in the tremendous success of the *Our Family is One* Campaign, which will ensure that our school will be in a strong financial position well into the future.
- Perhaps most importantly, Chaim has been a role model and mensch to our school and the larger Jewish community. He has built bridges across communities and has raised SDJA's profile as an inclusive, pluralistic Jewish school that is a center for Jewish life for many of our families, and for the region as a whole.

Our school is strong and we are excited for SDJA's next chapter. A primary responsibility of our Board of Trustees is to hire and support the head of school, and we take that responsibility very seriously. We have begun to take all the steps necessary to find a passionate and skilled leader who both appreciates and embodies SDJA's mission and the



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richness of our pluralistic Jewish foundation, and who will lead our school with vision and enthusiasm into the future. SDJA is a dynamic and highly desirable school, and we expect to have excellent candidates from which to choose.

We are assembling a search committee made up of diverse representatives of our parent body, our faculty and the San Diego Jewish community, and we are thrilled to announce that this committee will be co-chaired by Theresa Dupuis and Jessica Fink. Both are SDJA parents and long-time members of our Board of Trustees. Theresa was our board chair from 2015-2017, and recently co-chaired the *Our Family is One* Campaign. Jessica chairs the Committee on Trustees, and has been an essential part of our Atid committee, bringing new families into the school. The first task of the committee will be to interview recommended search firms, and to develop a plan to ensure a smooth transition.

Your search chairs and your Board of Trustees are committed to a thoughtful, and transparent process. The chairs will provide regular updates as the search progresses. Chaim will continue in his role as head of school through June 2020 and is committed to working with the Board and the leadership team to ensure a smooth transition.

The Psalmist teaches, "*Limnot yameinu, ken hoda, v'navi levav hochmah*" (90:12): Let us count our days with gratitude, that we might acquire a heart of wisdom. We give thanks for the many days with Chaim, and we know his wise hearted leadership will be felt long after he retires.

We hope you will join the Board of Trustees in expressing our gratitude for his leadership and vision.

Shabbat Shalom,



Rabbi Yael Ridberg
President, Board of Trustees



Heidi Gantwerk
Incoming President, Board of Trustees



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