Mission Statement

To represent the metropolitan Detroit Jewish community, Israel and Jews throughout the world to the general community, and to establish collaborative relationships with other ethnic, racial, civic and religious groups. JCRC/AJC educates and advocates on important issues, seeking consensus with a commitment to Jewish values.

We are living in a moment of great contradiction. In 2017, when the Pew Research Center surveyed whether Americans had positive feelings about various religious groups, Jews were the most warmly received. However, in the same year, hate crimes against Jews in the United States represented 58 percent of all religion-based hate crimes, a significant increase from 2016. There have been few better times or places to exist as a Jewish community, yet every time I am at a Jewish community event, I check for the location of emergency exits and look around for both apparent and undercover security. We, as a community, feel the anxiety produced by this polarization.

At this moment, the role of the Jewish Community Relations Council/AJC is especially sacred. We live as a Jewish community of 83,000 nestled in metropolitan Detroit. This agency exists to reach out to and engage with the broader Detroit community. Whether through communication with the media, the diplomatic corps, our legislative representatives in Lansing or Washington DC, or representatives of others faiths or communities, we exist to connect Jewish Detroit to the rest of Detroit.

Pictures fill the pages of this report, telling a story of bonds made, friendships forged and work done in service of creating a stronger Detroit and more connected Jewish community. Personally, some of the most powerful moments I experienced in the last year were not memorialized in an image. They included inviting Muslim friends to say their evening prayers at my home after an event ran long, being embraced by a Christian pastor as we digested the pain after the attack in Pittsburgh and receiving messages of support and solidarity from diplomats and legislators. Though each incident of violence and vandalism feels isolating, the Detroit Jewish community is not alone because of the relationships forged over the years and decades by this agency.

In the coming year, I ask that you support us. Come to an event. Join a committee. Make a donation. Be part of this vital work.

With love for Detroit,

Alicia B. Chandler
President

As someone who joined JCRC/AJC’s board earlier this year, and only a few months ago as executive director, I truly have been amazed by how impressive this organization is. As you will see over the next few pages, JCRC/AJC leads the way in breaking new ground in connecting the metropolitan Detroit Jewish community to our brothers and sisters in the African American, Muslim, Hindu and other communities with which we have much in common. At the same time, we advocate for our local Jewish population by deepening relationships with our local and national elected officials, the media and the local diplomatic corps representing countries from around the world. We are constantly in communication with them to educate and advocate on topics of concern to our community including antisemitism, Israel, local and national politics and issues, and the fight against all forms of hate.

Throughout this report, you will see opportunities for new relationships created at each and every one of our events. Behind the scenes, our staff works tirelessly, and with devotion, with our lay leaders to create these meaningful programs, as well as to enhance the friendships formed and forged afterwards.

I look forward to building on the success of our efforts, especially those of my predecessor, David Kurzmann, so we may establish deeper relationships with even more communities, stakeholders, volunteers and others who can be our allies and partners. I am excited to meet all of you, our supporters and friends, and listen to your ideas and visions.

Every day at JCRC/AJC we are reminded of how important it is for our community to shake the hands of the greater community, and to create understanding and a bond which strengthens and blesses us all.

Rabbi Asher Lopatin
Executive Director
JCRC/AJC Meets with U.S. Representatives, Foreign Diplomats and the Media

JCRC/AJC hosted its annual Congressional Reception, which was attended by representatives from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, its constituent agencies and other community leaders. U.S. Representatives Elissa Slotkin (8th District), Andy Levin (9th District), Haley Stevens (11th District) and Debbie Dingell (12th District) answered questions about U.S.-Israel relations, antisemitism, mental health issues and the social safety net.

JCRC/AJC hosted meetings with elected officials to discuss issues of interest and concern to the Metropolitan Detroit Jewish community. Last June, board members and leaders of local communal agencies met with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow.

Representatives from JCRC/AJC Detroit and AJC Midwest Regional Offices met with the Consul General of China, among other diplomats, during the annual AJC’s Midwest Diplomatic Marathon in October.

Gil Hoffman (not pictured), chief political correspondent and analyst for the Jerusalem Post, addressed a potential growing divide amongst American and Israeli Jews at JCRC/AJC’s annual Media Luncheon.

At AJC’s Global Forum in Washington D.C., delegates had the opportunity to visit the Hill and meet with local members of Congress.
A night of fun, festival and music for the Coalition for Black and Jewish Unity’s first annual holiday party.

The Coalition for Black and Jewish Unity hosted a luncheon, a conversation about “Fighting Hate Together,” celebrating the launch of the Congressional Black-Jewish Caucus.

Black and Jewish Unity—Connecting our Community

Michigan Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence played an integral role in launching the Black-Jewish Congressional Caucus, which was formally announced at AJC’s Global Forum. In October 2019, members of the executive board of the Coalition for Black and Jewish Unity, Representative Andy Levin and Representative Elissa Slotkin, along with JCRC/AJC Executive Director Asher Lopatin, attended the group’s celebration in Washington, D.C.

JCRC/AJC and The David Project brought together 35 students for the second annual Black-Jewish Summit, this year taking place in Detroit. The students came together to learn how to advocate for each other and to find the best ways to strengthen Black-Jewish relations.
As the troubling issues at the southern border continued, more than a dozen rabbis from various congregations and denominations joined together at “Strangers in Our Midst.” This evening of Jewish learning on the crisis at the border featured clergy members addressing Jewish texts about welcoming the stranger and ways the community-at-large could help those affected. JCRC/AJC served as a sponsor of the event, where Executive Director Rabbi Asher Lopatin and Vice President Ruby Robinson spoke.

**A Shared Future**

A three-part lecture series hosted by JCRC/AJC and the Michigan Muslim Community Council explored the topic “Destination America: Jewish and Muslim Migration Histories & Trajectories.” Each lecture featured Wayne State University Professors Howard Lupovitch and Saeed Khan.

**Interfaith Roundtable**

In July, JCRC/AJC was honored to participate in a roundtable of interfaith leaders that met with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist.

**Freedom Seder**

Forty-eight Hillel Day School students and 50 Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy students from Detroit joined together for a Freedom Seder with Rabbi David Fain from Hillel and Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist.

Our Annual Diplomatic and Interfaith Seder, led by Rabbi Yoni Dahlen, invited local diplomats and friends of other faiths to experience a Seder, some for the first time. Fernando Gonzalez Saiffe, Consul General of Mexico, served as the evening’s honorary chair.

**Relationship Building**
JCRC/AJC actively promotes valuable participation and connection from its volunteers through its various community programs. There are many opportunities to make meaningful impacts such as Bookstock, Mitzvah Day, the Detroit Jewish Coalition for Literacy and our Activist of the Year event. These initiatives have a positive effect on participants, and especially those in need.

**Detroit Jewish Coalition for Literacy**

**Bookstock**

**Mitzvah Day**

**Activist of the Year**

JCRC/AJC hosted its 22nd Annual Mitzvah Day on Christmas Day at nonprofits throughout metropolitan Detroit. The daylong event, which was held in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, is the single largest day of volunteering by Detroit’s Jewish community. Approximately 800 people visited nearly 50 organizations filling staff shortages and allowing facilities to reduce staffing on Christmas Day.

Board Member and Past President of AJC Detroit Howard Brown was the recipient of JCRC/AJC’s 2019 Activist Award. The May event, which featured a conversation about interfaith engagement in the digital age with Rabia Chaudry (“Undisclosed” podcast) and Yair Rosenberg (Tablet Magazine), honored Brown for his work building bridges among different interfaith groups, specifically between metro Detroit’s Jewish and Muslim communities.