



Hundreds of teen members of HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir from across the U.S. and Israel sang in an uplifting concert featuring classical, contemporary and popular music on April 7 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. **COURTESY OF ZAMIR CHORAL FOUNDATION**

HaZamir Jewish Teen Choir has chapters in Boca, Miami

By Alan Goch
Jewish Journal

HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir provides meaningful musical experiences for young people in 35 chapters across the U.S. and Israel, including locations in Miami and Boca Raton.

Weekly rehearsals for the 2024-2025 season are now underway, culminating in a gala performance at Carnegie Hall in NYC on March 23, 2025, featuring hundreds of HaZamir singers. New members are welcome, and teens entering grades 8-12 are encouraged to join their local HaZamir chapter for a rewarding experience of music, culture, leadership and friendship.

HaZamir was created in 1993 by Maestro Matthew Lazar, Founder and Director of the Zamir Choral Foundation, to provide an opportunity for accomplished young singers to perform great Jewish music at the highest standard of excellence and sing on the world's biggest stages.

"HaZamir gives young people an outlet to celebrate their Jewish heritage, connect with one another and feel a sense of belonging and pride through the creative outlet of music," says Matthew Lazar. "Now, more than ever, this supportive community is crucial to teens."

HaZamir has long served as a training ground for the next generation of singers, conductors, composers and leaders. Many HaZamir graduates have gone on to musical careers and have assumed leadership roles in their communities, while 17 HaZamir alumni are now conductors or coordinators of their own HaZamir chapters.

HaZamir members rehearse weekly in their local chapters with expert conductors, as well as at regional gatherings throughout the year. A three-day Festival leading up to the annual performance brings Israeli and American teens together to rehearse and to discuss important topics related to Judaism, providing an opportu-

nity for them to learn about each other's traditions and cultures.

"This is a life-changing experience for these teens, as they express their Jewish identities through their love of music while building leadership skills and strong connections to peers from a range of backgrounds," says Vivian Lazar, Director of HaZamir. "The camaraderie and healing power of choral singing also boosts mood and self-esteem, allowing them to achieve great success."

The HaZamir choir is comprised of teenagers in 26 American chapter locations including Baltimore, Bergen County, NJ, Boca Raton, Boston, Brooklyn, Central New Jersey, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, L.A. Valley, Los Angeles, Long Island, NY, Manhattan, MetroWest, NJ, Miami, Minneapolis, New Haven, Orlando, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence, Silicon Valley CA, South New Jersey, Tampa, Washington, D.C. and Westchester County, NY and in nine cities in Israel.

HaZamir alumnus JP sums up the unique benefits of the HaZamir experience: "HaZamir taught me invaluable lessons about unity, the power of the collective, Judaism, leadership and friendship. As I look back on this experience, the many memories, while all exciting and different, share a common denominator: HaZamir brings out the best in everyone."

The HaZamir Miami chapter, conducted by Dr. Alan Mason, meets on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. For more information email dralanmason@hotmail.com or call 305-772-6890.

The HaZamir Boca Raton chapter, conducted by Cantor David Muchnick, rehearses on Sundays at 11 a.m. For details contact HaZaBoca@gmail.com

For additional information about HaZamir, email hazamir@zamirchoralfoundation.org or visit www.hazamir.org

A conversation with Audra Berg

By Linda Chase
Contributing Editor

I recently interviewed Audra Berg, CEO and President of the Jewish Federation of Broward County. During our conversation she shared her achievements and goals for the organization.

Q: Share your background: Where were you born, education, career path?

A: I was born in New Jersey, moved to South Florida in middle school and graduated from University of Florida with a BA in religion and history. I relocated to the midwest after college and spent the greater part of my professional career in Jewish communal work, mostly in Chicago working with the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. My long standing work in the Jewish community prepared me well to take on the leadership of the Jewish Federation of Broward County and, in 2022, I happily returned home with my husband and two sons. It's been great to be back in Broward.

Q: What are some of the significant changes that have taken place at Federation in the past two years?

A: In the past two years, I've been focused on clarifying our organization's value proposition, strengthening our infrastructure, raising our visibility and nurturing collaborative relationships within the community. Already we've seen some significant changes. I'm quite proud to share that our 2024 annual campaign saw a 30% increase in contributions, representing the highest increase the agency has seen in more than 20 years. It's inspiring to see how so many Broward residents have united in solidarity this past year, demonstrating resilience and compassion to our mission.

Q: What plans do you have for the Federation's future?

A: We need to understand how the needs in our community have changed and what is most important to Broward residents. We're preparing to launch "Ignite Broward," a large community-wide initiative, that will engage thousands of residents in conversations in the coming months. This will enable us to collectively shape our shared future in Broward.

Q: What are some of Federation's upcoming events?

A: On Sunday, October 6th, at 4 p.m., at the David Posnack JCC, we'll gather as a community to commemorate the anniversary of October 7th and unite against the unprovoked massacre and stand in solidarity. We will welcome our partner agencies, synagogues and the entire community to join us.

In addition, the Federation of Broward



Audra Berg, President and CEO, Jewish Federation of Broward County. **COURTESY**

County will host an IDF Volunteer Mission to Israel from October 6-11. It is an opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with the heroes of Israel on the solemn anniversary of the October 7 massacre. Through the Emergency Volunteer Project Mass-Feeding Project (EVP), this mission will focus on providing fresh and nutritious meals to both soldiers and needy populations across Israel. We'll also visit poignant sites, like the NOVA massacre memorial.

Q: How has the Federation supported Israel since October 7th?

A: Thanks to the global community we've built and nurtured, we were able to immediately mobilize on October 7th to address urgent needs, such as medical care, emergency services, evacuation, transport, housing, supporting victims of terror, trauma relief and psychological support. We are uniquely positioned to respond to the needs of the Jewish community, here in Broward, in Israel and around the world. We have spent years building our "fire station" and were prepared on October 6.

Since the horrific events of October 7, our Israel Emergency Fund has raised \$4.5 million. In addition, we've organized numerous solidarity gatherings, participated in last year's March for Israel (in DC), held community vigils and partnered with synagogues for various philanthropic efforts. We've remained vigilant in addressing security concerns locally and providing funding to congregations, partner agencies and organizations in need, to help combat the rise of antisemitism.

Q: Do you have any new programs assisting Holocaust survivors?

A: Broward County has a very large Holocaust survivor population. We offer funding for Goodman Jewish Family Services, one of our agency subsidiaries, who runs a Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program to provide compassionate support to survivors by coordinating benefits and services to meet their unique needs. The newest program is its Centenarian Club Celebration, which recognizes Broward survivors who are turning 100. This past year, we welcomed about a dozen new centenarians, which is amazing.