

Close your eyes and picture a Lion of Judah. What do you see? An older woman? A young mother? A corporate professional? A doctor, lawyer, teacher or nurse?

If you said any of these, you're absolutely right. We Lions are a broad, diverse group. We represent varied life stages, careers, geographic locations, Jewish practices and yes, capacities for giving.

But the amazing thing is not how different we are—it's that underneath we are so alike. As you'll read in the profiles on these pages, we Lions are not only exceedingly generous—though we certainly are that—we are also passionately committed to the welfare of others; determined to maintain strong Jewish communities; and ready to give whatever time, money and skills we possess to make the world a better place.

The women you'll meet below come from Cleveland, Nashville, Birmingham, Buffalo and Washington, DC. Their Jewish backgrounds range from intense to slight. But whether raising young children, running their own consulting firms, or returning to work after the children are grown, these women know how to roll up their sleeves and get things done. They don't hesitate to take on leadership roles, or to spend time learning so they can better inspire others.

If you had to find one word to describe these women, a good place to start would be what they already are: Lions!

A LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN

These five accomplished women reflect our increasing diversity—and the generosity and commitment that connect us all.



Jennifer Korach

SHE JUST SAYS "YES"

Kee your eyes on Jennifer Korach. From the Jewish Federation of Cleveland to National Young Leadership, she's quickly emerged as a star among next-generation Federation leaders.

Korach is now finishing a six-year term with the National Young Leadership Cabinet, where she's served as Campaign co-chair and Membership co-chair. "I've gotten so much out of Cabinet," says Korach. "It's just solidified for me why I'm doing the work I do."

It also gave her something she craved: a cohort of young women as committed to the welfare of the Jewish people as she is.

Shortly after she joined Cabinet, Korach became a Lion of Judah. At the time, she and her husband had just led a mis-

sion to Israel for the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. "It was the perfect time to raise my gift," Korach says, "because I had just seen so much good work that Federation was doing. I was an easy sell."

Though she went to Jewish camp and always felt connected to Judaism, Korach says she "didn't really understand the *tzedakah* part" until she started getting involved in Federation.

It began when Korach decided to leave teaching after the birth of her first child, and called her local Federation looking for meaningful volunteer work. Now Korach is mulling a run for office in National Young Leadership. She's also dipped her toe into Cleveland's women's division and fully expects to get involved with National Women's Philanthropy.

Korach's sense of mission extends beyond the Jewish world, as well. Twice a week, she volunteers with struggling readers at her children's school, where 50 percent of the students are African-American and many are disadvantaged. Though she and her husband can afford private school, Korach says it's important that her kids understand "this is the way the world looks, and a lot of people don't have the advantages you have."

Korach also keeps working on her friends, encouraging them to connect to Federation, too. With so many other causes vying for their attention, it's not always an easy sell. Korach thinks the key is showing that Federation offers myriad opportunities, in addition to fundraising, through which people can make a difference.

"There's something in Federation that speaks to every woman's heart," she says with conviction, "some way to feel connected to the greater good."

We're More Effective Together

Modest, understated, yet fiercely devoted to the Jewish people, Ellen Levitt barely pauses in explaining her support for Federation: "I believe in helping each other," she says, "and helping Jews wherever they are. While there are many wonderful causes to get involved in, this is one where if we don't help ourselves, no one else will."

Levitt's Jewish communal work began when she moved to Nashville and sent her children to a local day school. She became the school board president, and saw firsthand the vital support it received from the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee. She learned about all the other things Federation supports, as well.

Ellen Levitt



While some people might have "retired" after one intense volunteer job, when Levitt finished at the day school, she brought her energy and dedication to Federation.

She moved up quickly, taking on several leadership roles, including Lion of Judah chair, Federation president, and this year, chair of the women's division. Levitt was appointed to the National Women's Philanthropy board and traveled internationally, including on the Campaign Chair and Director's mission, JFNA's premier development mission.

Moving from day school to Federation leadership was simply a natural evolution, Levitt says. But clearly she's one of those people who just "got" Federation, no questions asked: "I believe in the power of the collective. While we could each give individually, we are so much more effective when we do it together."

Unfortunately for the Nashville Federation, Levitt, a nurse, is returning to full-time work, leaving less time for volunteer activities (though "I'll always be involved in Campaign," she notes). Her job will involve training other nurses in the neonatal intensive care unit, where Levitt herself served for many years.

While neonatal intensive care might sound worlds away from Super Sundays and annual campaigns, when you think about it, "intensive care"—caring, intensively—seems to capture perfectly how Levitt operates, wherever she goes.

Walking the Walk

Rae Ringel has spent years inspiring and educating Jewish leaders. In classes, retreats, and as a long-term scholar in residence, she helps volunteers and professionals with practical tasks, like setting goals, while inspiring them to think in new ways about fundraising and what they want their terms as leaders to mean.

She weaves Judaism and Jewish values into all of this, which is probably why Ringel's client list includes the Jewish Federations of North America, as well as Hillel, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.

"One of the great things about Rae—and there are many—is that she not only gives back to the community through her work, but that she lives the very principles that she teaches to others," says Beth Mann, JFNA's associate vice president.

In conversation, Ringel is open, intelligent, funny—and an ardent advocate for the collective model of *tzedakah*.

Rae Ringel

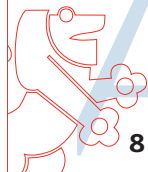


That's why she finds Federation so compelling, both in her work and life. "I really am a believer in the Annual Campaign as a Jewish value. For me, it's the most impactful gift that you can give."

Ringel was not connected to the Jewish world growing up. But after working one summer at a Jewish camp, she wanted in. She spent an extended time in Israel post-college through OTZMA, the Federation-supported work/study program. Back home in the mid-90s, she found a job with a national organization then called UJA.

A Wexner fellowship allowed Ringel to earn a master's degree in organizational development and spend a year at Jerusalem's Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She returned to become director of education and training for UJC. In 2002 Ringel married Amos Hochstein and moved to Washington, where she opened The Ringel Group, an executive coaching and leadership training company, and added corporate and government clients to her roster.

Now an observant Jew, Ringel marvels at the distance she's traveled since her youth, and the way Federation influenced her life. "My Jewish identity was born through connecting to the work of Federation."



Please Hold the Fluff

Leslie Shuman Kramer was a Federation baby. In Buffalo, NY where she grew up, both her father and mother were campaign chairs. For her bat mitzvah, she asked for donations to Federation. She went to Israel with her family at 13, went alone at 14, spent a year at Tel Aviv University during college, then another year and a half in Israel after graduation.



Leslie Shuman Kramer

So it was natural that as a young woman living in Chicago, Kramer contacted her local Federation. She went on a mission, and was tapped to join the young leadership board. When she married and moved back to Buffalo, she eventually found her way to the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo, helping lead its Women's Campaign.

But by 2007, Kramer was losing steam, feeling disconnected from the Federation and discouraged by the lack of enthusiasm among her peers for community and Israel. "I thought, 'If I'm not excited, how can anyone else be?'"

Kramer needed an intervention, and amazingly, one arrived. It was Machar, a 2007 women's mission to Israel conceived and led by leaders of the National Women's Philanthropy board.

Kramer's Federation recommended her for the trip, but she was leery. "I remember calling Paula Saginaw, one of the leaders, and saying, 'I only want to go on this trip if it's really going to be meaningful.' I wanted it to be meaty." Turns out it was "phenomenal," Kramer says.

She was inspired by the passion and knowledge of the NWP veterans. She loved meeting the other women, who shared her commitment to Israel. "They were so dynamic, so smart, so interesting," she recalls.

Kramer was rejuvenated. She co-chaired a six-week leadership training course based on a program done by JFNA. She became chair of Women's Philanthropy—and a Lion of Judah. She joined a 60-woman mission to Israel and initiated several hands-on volunteer projects.

Her advice for engaging younger women? Like the skeptic she was before that 2007 mission, women today, says Kramer, "are not looking to be entertained. They're not looking for fluff. They want something they can really sink their teeth into."

A Most Unlikely Lion

About eight years ago, Karen Grace sent a check for \$1,500 to the Birmingham Jewish Federation. The Federation was running an emergency campaign to help Israel in the face of Palestinian suicide bombings. Grace had not been solicited, but she wanted to help.

That gesture led the Federation's executive director, Richard Friedman, to want to meet Grace and thank her.

The two had coffee, and Grace told Friedman that she was deeply pained by Israel's plight and wanted to do something about it. Of German heritage, she'd been haunted for years by the notion that perhaps someone in her family had tortured and killed Jews. She felt the possibility placed an added responsibility on her to help Israel and the Jewish people.



Karen Grace

From all of this a friendship began, and Grace and Friedman would connect and visit every year or two.

Last year Grace read about the Lion of Judah program. She e-mailed Friedman and asked if she could join. Friedman assured her she would be welcome, and Grace then revealed how proud and happy she would be to donate \$5,000 to become a Lion.

Grace then learned that a search of her family's history found that her family on her mother's side had actually been Jewish. It was a life-changing revelation, and further deepened Grace's feeling of connection to the Jewish community. A committed Christian, she was motivated to become a bridge between the two faiths, educating Christians about Jews and fighting anti-Semitism.

For Friedman, it was a fascinating discovery. "Knowing that the BJB is touching countless lives and engaging new people is so gratifying," he says. "Equally gratifying is meeting someone new who, because of her unique background and qualities, can enrich our organization."

Friedman's visit with Grace took place the last day of Chanukah, just as Grace and her family were getting ready for Christmas. As she left the Federation that day, Friedman recalls thinking, "What could be a better present than people connecting with one another through friendship, and through a common and sacred cause?"

ordinary women