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## **Intermountain Jewish News Editorial**

### **The legacy of RCF's 'Live On'**

Readers of the 95th anniversary magazine of the **Intermountain Jewish News**, to be published July 7, will learn much about our community's history. No doubt, the most important legacies are left by parents and grandparents in the souls of their descendants. Were it not for them, our community would not be here today. Nonetheless, there is something disheartening about the record of our community's past: so very little of it is recognizable today. Forgotten names. Forgotten institutions. Forgotten efforts — huge efforts, no doubt, but nonetheless erased from memory.

It is not an easy thing to design a legacy, as everyone from Bill Clinton to philanthropists large and small have discovered. Of note in this regard is the recent effort of Rose Community Foundation.

Beginning a decade ago or so, RCF launched the “endowment challenge.” It was an undertaking unprecedented in concept and size in the history of Denver Jewry. In the end, some \$19 million was raised, establishing major endowments at a number of local Jewish institutions. Needless to say, \$19 million is not a figure to sneeze at; yet, upon reflection, RCF felt it could do still better, and this in two senses.

First, the beneficiaries of the endowment challenge tended to be the community's largest institutions, already capable of a large campaign. Second, the gifts, while directed toward endowments, tended to be cash gifts. Nothing wrong with either mechanism, to be sure, but a legacy is a still broader reality. It is for the wide swath of community institutions, not just the larger ones; and it focuses on what virtually everyone can do, whether the scale is large or small, and that is to leave a charitable bequest.

And so, RCF set out to follow up on the endowment challenge with “Live On: Build Your Jewish Legacy.” This program, which has just

concluded, would not likely have been put into motion without the prior success of the endowment challenge, not to mention the longtime example of federation's endowment fund, now the Jewish Community Foundation.

The facts speak for themselves. Under "Live On," 27 metro-area Jewish organizations have secured roughly \$36 million in pledged bequests from 433 donors. And that, at least potentially, is not even the major scope of the project. RCF's investment was in teaching smaller organizations the legalities and the techniques of soliciting pledged bequests. The hope is that these 27 organizations, thus educated and trained, will continue to work in this area, building on the number of donors and the total of the bequests.

Some of the pledged bequests will be housed at RCF, some at the Jewish Community Foundation of the federation and some, presumably, elsewhere. It was not Rose's intent to gather for itself these bequests — but to build a Jewish legacy for our community.

That is, Rose sought to embed in organizations the vision and fiscal techniques for the future, and to build awareness of the importance of bequests among everyone in the community. A bequest may be big, it may be small; either way, it's about the future. It will sustain community organizations — and it will sustain the names of the donors.

The legacies we leave behind are primarily in our offspring, our disciples, our acts of kindness, our study of Torah. However, as the Talmud puts it, "if there is no flour, there is no Torah" — if there is no plan for future resources, little of the present good work and good intentions will likely be sustained. Thanks to "Live On," at least 27 Jewish organizations now have a head start on a community legacy.