

Candle Lighting Ceremony

1996 - JCA Founded

The vision: Create a powerful voice of the Jewish community involved in broad social, racial and economic justice issues. Using grassroots organizing, change how synagogues think and act on social justice. Provide entry points and leadership opportunities for Jews from all segments of our community in this important work. Create a sustainable model that can build alliances and coalitions in the community.

1997 - JCA Named, Mission and Model

Thanks to the early leaders of JCA, and their combined passion for this work and their practical approach to building an organization, Jewish Community Action got its name, mission and vision, and the model of working in congregations, working with unaffiliated Jews and building alliances with multiple communities was launched.

1998 - First Inreach is Launched

Committed to grassroots organizing, JCA launches its first one-to-one inreach to build relationships among Jews inside and outside of congregations. More than 450 conversations are held. The first inreach leads to a focus on racial justice, affordable housing, and community reinvestment. 8 years later a second inreach is held with another 400 conversations, including a house party campaign in Mount Zion. A commitment to economic sustainability and health care emerges, with a renewed commitment to racial justice.

1999 - Connection to the Russian-Speaking Community Emerges

JCA builds a coalition of organizations and individuals to respond to the threat of residents of Oak Grove Towers losing their apartments. Russian-speaking residents play a prominent role in this work and 100 units are preserved. 9 years later with the help of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, a collaboration of the Sabes JCC, Family and Children's Service, Sholom Alliance and JCA, a new initiative is launched with the Russian speaking elderly in several hi-rises in downtown Minneapolis.

2000 - Building Membership and a Base of Leaders

Starting with its first group of members in 1997, JCA's individual membership has consistently grown, reaching approximately 300 in 2000, reaching 600 in 2007 and now closing in on 800. Membership is the backbone of JCA's base of support and leadership that work in alliance with other many other organizations on multiple issues. In 2008 and 09, JCA has now added congregational affiliation with three synagogues formally affiliating with JCA.

2001 - Community Reinvestment Reaches More than \$10 million

As one of the first issue areas, JCA was committed to economic development and reversing a trend of divestment in multiple communities. In 2001, thanks to synagogue, church, city and foundation investments, more than \$14 million was invested in inner city community development. Now 10 years later, this commitment to economic revitalization and sustainability is being realized through the creation of a new coalition, Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition and a series of actions to prevent foreclosures.

2002 - Neighborhood and Policy Actions to Expand Affordable Housing

As another initial issue area, JCA responded to the need for affordable housing by establishing the Gateway Interfaith Table for Affordable Housing which brought together 17 congregations in the highland park area and led to more than 500 units of housing in St. Paul, more than 1/3 affordable. Through additional housing initiatives and coalition-building, housing trust funds were created in Minneapolis and Hennepin County, and housing policies were passed in other communities to sustain and increase supply.

2003 - Protecting Human and Civil Rights in Minnesota

As the third important issue area, JCA has been an important ally in the protection of civil and human rights. JCA was part of the equal access working group which led to the first of its kind audit of a city with respect to affirmative action in contracting and job creation, and the formation of the St. Paul Department of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity. This commitment continues in current coalition efforts to make sure the Central Corridor LRT is beneficial to all communities, especially to communities of color, and the residents of the old Rondo neighborhood displaced by I-94 in the 1960's.

2004 - Protection of the Rights of Immigrants

JCA has worked on immigrant rights issues for nearly 13 years and joins with immigrant rights groups, unions, civil rights organizations and others to work for immigration reform. In 2004, along with community partners, we succeeded in passing

separation ordinances in St. Paul and Minneapolis to outlaw local police from enforcing immigration law. This year, JCA, along with HIAS and JCUA, spearheaded Progress by Pesach: a nation-wide Jewish call for an end to immigration raids and for passing humane and just comprehensive immigration reform.

2005 - Indie Jews is Formed

Committed from its inception to creating a home for unaffiliated Jews to come together and act on their social justice passions, JCA formed Indie Jews. We began with a small group of dedicated leaders who started by hosting monthly potluck Shabbat dinners. Today, Indie Jews are active in the Heksher Tzedek campaign and continue to build community and create organizing opportunities for Jews to take action together outside of congregations. Our annual Jewbilee, held on December 24th for the past 4 years, draws hundreds of Jews from around the Twin Cities. We still hold monthly Shabbat dinners, and we invite you to join us to learn more and get to know Indie Jews.

2006 - Annual Operating Budget Eclipses \$500,000

There are two kinds of power, organized people, and now with more than 700 households, and organized money. To sustain our organization and its commitment to social justice, JCA reached more than \$500,000 in 2006 and has sustained that budget since then, although not without a lot of work. Thanks to members of our community who give at all levels, including some who give very generously for so many years, we are able to employ a talented staff committed to action.

2007 - New Alliance is Formed, Leading to the Protection of Legal Status for Liberians

In its tradition of building new alliances and working on immigrant rights, JCA was able to assist the Liberian community to maintain its legal status and its home in the United States in 2007. With the largest Liberian population in the United States here in Minnesota, the coalition created two years ago, succeeded again in gaining an extension of legal status until 2010. The focus continues on permanent legal status for Liberians and other immigrant communities in 2009.

2008 - Responding to the Crisis in Postville; Building the Heksher Tzedek Initiative

On May 12, 2008, 389 workers were detained in the then-largest immigration raid in US history, at Agriprocessors kosher meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa. The raid illustrated the intersection of worker and immigrant abuses and the need for stronger worker protections and immigration reform. JCA co-planned an interfaith service, march and rally in Postville and led a delegation of over 150 people from the Twin Cities to Postville for the day. Volunteer leaders created and delivered "Workshops on Wheels" on the bus ride down.

The crisis in Postville further galvanized our work on immigration reform and on a Heksher Tzedek - a national effort of the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism and the Rabbinical Assembly to improve the working conditions, environmental impact and treatment of animals in kosher food production.

Locally, JCA created and staffs a team of congregational lay leaders working on Heksher Tzedek. The team has representation from 5 Conservative shuls, Indie Jews and the Hillel.

Rabbi Morris Allen of Beth Jacob Congregation is the Project Director of this initiative.

2009 - Creating a New Generation of Leaders for Social Justice

JCA recognizes the importance of building leaders for the future and in 2006, formed the Jewish Youth Organizing Leadership Team - JYOLT, to educate Jewish youth about community organizing and social justice, while working on a campaign of their own. This fall, JCA will launch the next chapter of our youth organizing, the Seeds of Justice Youth Fellowship - a focused cohort of high school-aged youth that will learn about the intersections of organizing, politics, art and culture while gaining hands on experience with JCA staff and community mentors.