

Something Old And Lots Of New

JCC Day Camps welcome a new director and plans a summer of fun.

Elizabeth Applebaum | Special to the Jewish News

In 1929, the world was full of innovation (the first patent for a color TV was filed), turmoil (the Wall Street crash) and drama (the first Academy Awards).

In Detroit, the Jewish Community Center was just three years old, based in a small house and offering a handful of classes. So who could have imagined that the JCC was about to see the start of what would become one of its most popular and innovative programs, continuing to this day with participants who describe it as the best time of their lives.

In 1929, the JCC of Detroit held its first summer day camp.

Today, Howard Gutman is director of JCC Day Camps, which offers dozens of sports, creative, theater, travel and more camps for kids 2½-14. He comes with a



Howard Gutman

touch of the old — plenty of professional and personal experience in the camping field, plus a long affiliation with the JCC — and also the new. This is his first year as director, and he is expanding the program to include more camps and bigger and

better special days.

“I am thrilled to welcome Howard as our new director,” said Miriam Bergman, chair of the JCC Day Camps Camp Committee. “His extensive experience, passion for camp and tremendous energy make him ideal for our program. He is a delight to work with and already has many wonderful ideas for summer 2016.”

What exactly is it about camp that Gutman loves?

“I love things that will excite the kids’ imaginations,” he says. “There is nothing



You never know what to expect on Theme Day!

like their wonderment as they discover the world.” So there will be happy surprises, new adventures and great days ahead at camp. The chance to work full time as the JCC’s camp director is “like a dream come true,” he says.

Gutman, who lives in Farmington Hills, is a native of Oak Park. The father of three (an actor, a graphic artist and an attorney) and grandfather of five, he is married to Karen, director of Career and Business Services at JVS.

When he was young, Gutman attended Tamarack Camps, and his first jobs were working for a summer program with the Oak Park Recreation Department and after school at the JCC summer camp in Oak Park. After graduating from Wayne State University, he worked with the Valley Cities JCC in Encino, Calif., as director of a summer program at the JCC in Oak Park, assistant director of recreation for the city of Hazel Park and as a camp specialist for the city of Southfield.

He was operating a successful business, Howard Michaels Fund Raising, when he

learned about the opportunity at the JCC. He was excited to come on board because it meant getting back to his favorite field and because it meant working at this particular camp.

“There’s the facility itself,” he says. “There’s a ropes course, a basketball court, the pools. I’m just amazed.”

He also points out the diverse program, with traditional camp, specialty programs, trips, sports, arts and crafts. Gutman is expanding the creative camps to include Ready, Set, Go, DETROIT, with visits to favorite spots (including the Outdoor Adventure Center) in the city; Jedi in Training, where kids do everything Star Wars, from cooking to games; Hip Hop Dance; and Summer Stock Theatre Camp, taught by the staff of the Berman Center for the Performing Arts.

There’s even something new for parents: an opportunity to register online at www.jccdet.org/daycamps.

Also new on board is Megan Coultas, director of the Department of Special Needs. Megan holds a master’s degree from Madonna University and has extensive experience in education, psychology, summer camp work and teaching children with special needs. The former unit head for ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) at JCC Day Camps, she also supervised practicum students at Oakland University.

For more information, visit www.jccdet.org/daycamps, call (248) 432-5578 or email camp@jccdet.org. Families can save 15 percent off the cost of their JCC Day Camps tuition by registering and paying in full now through Feb. 19. ❁



It’s red versus blue versus yellow for Color Wars.

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