

JELF Raises \$213K to Continue Support for Students

JELF is Georgia's oldest nonprofit and makes loans to cover the last dollars Jewish students need to pay for higher education.

BY [SARAH MOOSAZADEH](#) December 13, 2017, 10:49 am



Photo by Marcia Caller Jaffe Oglethorpe President Larry Schall and outgoing board President Marianne Garber take time for a quick photo during JELF's annual meeting and year-end celebration Dec. 5.

WRITERS



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The [Jewish Educational Loan Fund](#)'s support for higher education through interest-free loans brought more than 500 community members together Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Westin Perimeter in Sandy Springs for JELF's annual meeting and year-end celebration.

Featured speaker Larry Schall, the president of Oglethorpe University, addressed the importance of higher education by highlighting public policies that affect institutions and contribute to rising tuition.

While college debt has doubled the past decade, Schall said, the leading cause is the growth of for-profit colleges.

The shift in covering the cost of higher education from the state to students has driven tuition higher and contributed to the increase in student debt, Schall said. That's why he encourages people to support organizations such as JELF, which is Georgia's oldest nonprofit organization and makes loans to cover the last dollars Jewish students from Florida to Virginia need to pay for higher education.

"I'm a believer that education has the power to change one's life. In fact, it can alter an entire family's trajectory," Schall said.

With the help of the Koonin family's matching gifts, people attending the JELF annual meeting raised close to \$213,000 from 210 donations, including \$92,335 in new dollars.

Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, the rabbi emeritus at [The Temple](#), delivered the d'var Torah and said: "Each of one of you is a letter in the Torah because of your support for JELF. You are keeping our tradition of learning and respect alive through education and making it possible for individuals who may have not had the opportunity through your care and generosity." JELF's outgoing president, Marianne Garber, recounted her involvement with the nonprofit and its achievements and noted that after 142 years it's nice that JELF is no longer the best-kept secret around.

Garber said JELF's total number of donors has increased by 63 percent, and the organization has maintained a 99 percent repayment rate from students for 10 consecutive years. This year JELF loaned \$1,000,046 to 273 students.

Incoming board President Stan Lowenstein spoke about his involvement with JELF and about its future. "When it comes to JELF, the organization's culture is built from the bottom up. ... It's an exciting time for me to be a part of it."

Lowenstein hopes to expand JELF's mission, to penetrate the market more deeply and serve more students. A new strategic plan is launching in April.

He recounted a recent conversation he had with a donor about JELF's mission. "This is the best philanthropic opportunity in the city of Atlanta, and it's not just because we help Jewish children go to college, but the fact that when we give money, it goes straight to students and we recycle. ... It's true tzedakah and very easy to connect to."

Exhibit's Final Weeks

You have until the end of December to learn about the century and a half of history behind the Jewish Educational Loan Fund in the exhibit "The Legacy of the Hebrew Orphans' Home" at the Breman Museum, 1440 Spring St., Midtown.

You can tour the exhibit, which includes photos, artifacts, remembrances, thank-you notes and “Jelfies,” during regular museum hours. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$6 for students and educators, and \$4 for children 3 to 6; thebreman.org or 678-222-3700.