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## If We Don't Take Care of Our Community, Who Will?

*A profile of our board chair, Richard Fiedotin*

The Centennial Campaign of the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund is off and running toward its goal of helping to secure the future of our local and global Jewish community. To mark that progress, the Federation's new board chair, Richard Fiedotin, shares his personal reasons for choosing to support the Centennial Campaign.

Richard grew up in Atlanta. His parents were immigrants from Argentina who strongly identified as Jews but were not particularly observant. Richard's family belonged to a Conservative synagogue, where he became a Bar Mitzvah. The family did not live in a "Jewish neighborhood," and he and his siblings attended a Christian day school, where they studied the New Testament and attended, but did not participate in, weekly prayer sessions.



*Richard Fiedotin*

Richard's sense of identity went through a dramatic transformation at the age of 12, when his parents took him to Israel to visit family that had made Aliyah from Argentina. It didn't take long for Richard to feel an acute sense of Jewishness.

"I remember distinctly on the drive from the airport feeling this sense of wonderment," he says. "I can't even really explain it. I was looking at this land where much of our history took place—history that, until that point, had always seemed like remote stories to which I felt no connection. Visiting the sites where many of these 'stories' occurred, walking through the Old City of Jerusalem, seeing the archeological sites at Masada and elsewhere, I began to see our collective narrative as actual history. It became real to me."

Around the time of this first visit to Israel, Richard learned that his great-grandparents had died in the Holocaust. Less than two years after the trip, the uncle he had visited there was killed while serving in the Israeli Defense Forces. As Richard reflected on these events, he felt a greater obligation to continue a tradition that his elders had died for, a tradition that had in countless ways helped him. "I look back on that trip to Israel as one of the most transformative experiences of my life. Being there, I felt connected to the land, to our history and to our people. Over time, I felt not just a connection but a responsibility and a commitment to the Jewish community."

Today, Richard is a passionate supporter of the Bay Area Jewish community and Israel, recently providing a generous legacy gift to the Federation's Centennial Campaign to carry out work that is meaningful to him.

Richard, a physician, health care entrepreneur and executive, says he was inspired to make a legacy gift because of the Federation's unique role as a convener and safeguard for the whole community. "Like other communities, we have needs. And we are fortunate to have a lot of people who want to help, and organizations through which they can channel that concern for others. The Federation is in a unique position to help the community by convening agencies to identify needs and coordinate responses, and by providing leadership, expertise, financial support, and other resources."

POSTED

January 11, 2017

AUTHOR



**Jackie Krentzman**

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For more than a century, the Federation has helped shape the contours of Jewish life in the Bay Area and overseas by responding to the many challenges and opportunities that arise. The [Centennial Campaign](#) seeks to raise \$250,000,000 in order to protect the investments that we have made in our lifetimes, and to ensure that the organizations and programs that we have so proudly built will continue to thrive into the future.

For more information, please contact Debbie Berkowitz, Centennial Campaign Director, at 415.512.6291 or [DebbieB@sjcf.org](mailto:DebbieB@sjcf.org).

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**JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION OF SAN FRANCISCO, THE PENINSULA, MARIN AND SONOMA COUNTIES**

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