

Camp Ben Frankel Families,

I am writing to you regarding a difficult decision the Federation Board made on Sunday December 20, 2009, when the board terminated the employment of Director Steve Low. Steve has served as both the Director of Camp Ben Frankel as well as the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky. The “dire financial straits” of our federation has been a topic for the board for some time. Huge efforts have been made to reduce the costs of operating the federation. Having completed that process and continuing to operate at a significant loss, we, as responsible leaders, were compelled to act, not hastily but in a careful and reflective manner.

The Federation has faced declining campaigns for many years. Our declining campaign can in part be explained by changing demographics; increased competition for non-profit contributions; and givers not increasing their gifts at the pace of inflation. Our reduced campaign, coupled with poor market performance, has created a situation in which the federation has had significant losses over the last two years further illustrated below. Faced with this situation the board had two choices: spend out our endowment funds over a period of approximately five or six years and see the federation cease to exist, or act to reshape the federation. The board chose the second option.

No one can deny the difficulty in terminating Steve who devoted so much time to our federation and Camp Ben Frankel. Steve and his family have been an integral part of both Camp Ben Frankel and Jewish life in our federation for over eighteen years. While difficult, this decision provides the best chance of ensuring the federation’s survival.

As we begin the transition process, rest assured we will continue to regularly communicate with Camp Ben Frankel families. Further, if anyone has any questions as we undertake this process I would encourage you to contact me or any board member. Thank you in advance for your support.

Best Regards,
Burton A. Zwick, President
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