



Spotlight on: the Jewish Council for the Aging

An interview with David Gamse, Chief Executive Officer of the JCA

Q: Please tell us a little about the JCA - how long has it been in existence, what is the mission, who does it serve, etc?

A: JCA® -- the Jewish Council for the Aging® -- represents so many different things to the different men and women we proudly serve. We help seniors and their caregivers access providers and resources across the Beltway. We provide answers to many transportation, home care, housing and employment needs. We also design and run a wide range of programs, such as computer skills development classes, to enhance their lives and lifestyles. We have different faces in various places, but are united in our mission of helping seniors experience the positive side of aging. Since our founding in 1973, JCA has been helping older adults and their family caregivers to live with dignity and independence, serving men and women of all faiths, ethnicities and income levels. We help all seniors thrive!

Q: How do you see Interages contributing to the mission of the JCA and vice versa?

A: Interages' programs foster understanding between youngsters and oldsters – a kind of trust between the generations that can develop only when people interact with one another in regular and meaningful ways. Vibrant intergenerational programs expand horizons for young and old alike while realizing the JCA goal of making Montgomery County and the National Capital Region a great place to age.

Because every JCA program is designed, run or improved by the work of dedicated volunteers, JCA leaders are especially excited at the prospect of involving even more volunteers in the design and delivery of human services. A cadre of 500 volunteers of all ages supports JCA programs now.

Q: What are the short and / or long term goals or plans for the JCA and how does Interages fit into those goals or plans?

A: It is difficult but essential to interest young people in issues of aging and in JCA itself. It will be thrilling to work with Interages to pique that interest while expanding the breadth and reach of local intergenerational programs.

We already have the necessary ingredients in hand. Like Interages, JCA's people are passionate about mission and committed to program excellence. And like Interages, JCA has a well-deserved reputation for delivering essential services well.

Beginning July, Job #1 will be the combination of people, programs, procedures and vision so that the new and larger-than-ever JCA will build effectively and efficiently upon shared strengths.

Q: What do you envision being the best thing to come out of a merger between the JCA and Interages?

A: It's hardly news that that nation's balance sheet is a mess, that most states and localities are in cutback mode, or that the Washington, D.C. area has its own array of hardships. It's especially in times like these that community leaders, donors, volunteers and other VIPs delight in seeing determined charities discover ways to accomplish even more with less by acting in courageous ways.

Members of "the JCA family" see the combination of Interages and JCA as good news – indeed, great news – when good news is rare. They are especially excited about the opportunity to nurture the natural synergies between JCA and Interages programs. By harnessing that excitement, which is shared by so many Interages supporters, too, we will be able to fundraise effectively, communicate proactively and design programs that respond to both current and emergent needs.