

“**R**oots & Branches gave me the tools to be a better philanthropist and to be more strategic in my giving. I’m now part of a great community of smart, thoughtful, Jewish people committed to making a difference.”

– Ilana Simon,  
Roots & Branches  
Foundation member



Roots &  
Branches  
Foundation  
2010-2011  
Members

## One Question, Many Answers: Giving Jewishly Today

by Rachel Shields, Roots & Branches Foundation member

Roots & Branches Foundation brought together a group of 18 young Jewish adults from the Denver metro area to make a difference in our community using Jewish values and philanthropy.

Our group was responsible for collectively defining “giving Jewishly” and for turning our definition into impact. We examined and discussed Jewish texts about *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world, and *zedakah*, justice. We studied the work of Jewish thinkers from Maimonides, a 12th century Jewish philosopher, to Maslow, a modern psychologist famous for his Hierarchy of Needs, and reflected on our own experiences with Jewish giving. We asked ourselves, “What does our tradition say about these issues and how can that inform our

grantmaking today?” We each brought our own unique perspectives and personal passions to the table. We discussed many worthwhile causes, and our discussions were often emotional and always eye-opening. Ultimately our group determined to focus on two issues – providing opportunities for more Jewish youth to connect to Judaism through camp, and supporting victims of human trafficking.

One part of our definition of “giving Jewishly” was to provide opportunities for young Jews to

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**ROOTS & BRANCHES  
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## Reconnecting with My Jewish Identity

by Zach Hochstadt, Roots & Branches Foundation member

That I participated in Roots & Branches at all was pure happenstance. I met a new friend at a party, and several days later, he introduced me to his business partner, a charismatic man in his mid-30s who, it turned out, was an alumnus of Roots & Branches Foundation. I only knew this person through email and phone, but in the span of 30 minutes he had convinced me that I should apply to participate in a program that would significantly shape my next year.

Like many people of my generation, I'm an unlikely candidate to participate in organized Jewish activities at this stage in my life. At different times, Hillel, Camp, youth group and Sunday school had played important roles in my life (even though I grew up in Billings, Montana), but today, as my family and I chart our course, our connection with Judaism tends to be more self-directed, home-based observance taking place outside the reach of institutional Judaism.

And to be honest, it wasn't lofty goals that inspired me to apply to participate in the program. The reasons were practical: though my family goes back many generations in Denver, I had only recently moved here. I saw Roots & Branches as an opportunity to build my own professional network.

On July 11, 2010, however, when I attended the Roots & Branches opening retreat, an important change took place. Sitting in a room with 17 other Jews between the ages of 25 and 40, I began to realize what Roots & Branches was really all about.

Around me were Jews from a cross-section of backgrounds: men and women, secular and orthodox, gay and straight, interfaith families, Jews by choice and Jews by birth.

We would meet over the next several months. At first, we had the conversations of strangers, questions of what do you do and where are you from. But as months passed, the conversations became richer, accompanied by a warm hug and a genuine smile.

Our work as a group changed, too. At first we were each individuals thinking, sharing, and debating. Though those debates continued, as the months passed, we also became more aware of what was important to one another. We began to give ground and make room for one another so that we could build consensus and work together.

I'm sad to see my cohort of Roots & Branches come to a close. While some of us will no doubt remain involved in creating new giving circles, I will miss working with this diverse group of wise and caring individuals. I went in seeking connections and connections are what I found, but not the connections of business; they were the connections of community. Built on intellectual pursuit and care for others in our community, Roots & Branches succeeded in reconnecting me with qualities I find essential in Judaism: a community challenging one another and thinking together, and using our varied strengths to find a way to do good in our world.

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**\$89,282** in grants to **9** organizations

# Having Impact as Grantmakers

by Ali Greenberg, Roots & Branches Foundation member

When our group settled upon Maimonides' highest priority of *pidyon sh'vuyim*, redeeming the captives, as our grant priority, we interpreted this concept as a need that extended outside of the Jewish community. We agreed that we wanted our grants to assist any captive person in our community. It was a risky choice because the Denver and Boulder communities are still in the early stages of addressing this problem and when we issued our request for proposals, we did not know how many local organizations would be interested in applying. It was also a complex choice because human trafficking has as many definitions as it does victims.

It took a tremendous amount of focus, determination, patience and cooperation for our group to decide how to best fulfill this funding priority. We decided to focus our funding on services to help identify and reach out to victims, meet their emergency needs, offer case management and counseling to help

rebuild their lives, and provide life skills and employment education.

We made six grants that will provide these services to a diverse population. Already I have heard from one grantee that has used our funding to achieve tangible results. The Delores Project provides shelter and services for adult homeless women. They were recently contacted by the Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance with the news that a young woman from Liberia had left the home of her trafficker and had no safe place to stay. The wait for The Delores Project's long-term transitional shelter program is normally four to six weeks. However our grant funding has allowed them to prioritize human trafficking victims and provide them with safe shelter immediately.

As grantmakers, we set our priorities and found organizational partners that would put our ideals into action. Nothing is more rewarding than to see our work come full circle and to know that our grants are making a difference.

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## One Question, Many Answers: Giving Jewishly Today Continued from Page 1

connect to Judaism through overnight camp. We were inspired by recent studies that have shown that going to a Jewish overnight camp is a powerful way to help young people build strong Jewish identities. A number of my Roots & Branches peers attended Jewish camps themselves and their experiences echoed the findings of these studies. We met with the leadership of Colorado's three largest overnight Jewish camps, JCC Ranch Camp, The Maurice B. Shwayder Camp of Temple Emanuel and Ramah Outdoor Adventure, and learned that scholarship needs exceed the funds currently available. Our grants to these camps provide need-based scholarship funding to help more Jewish campers experience the social, religious and personal growth that Jewish camp can provide.

While studying Maimonides, we found inspiration for another part of our definition

of "giving Jewishly." Maimonides wrote that there is no greater *mitzvah*, commandment, than *pidyon sh'vuyim*, redeeming the captives. We asked ourselves what that meant today and found an answer that surprised us. We learned that slavery still exists today, right here in Colorado, in the form of human trafficking. We decided to make grants that would support organizations helping human trafficking victims rebuild their lives and empower them to help themselves. It is our hope that our work will be a signal for others to take note of this injustice and join with us to address it.

We realized that the definition of "giving Jewishly" can take many different forms. Both of our grant priorities were inspired by our Jewish values and our Roots & Branches experiences. As a group we can be proud of our grantmaking, and I believe our grants will help to make the world a better place.



Gilad Schwartz, JCC Ranch Camp Director, and Alyce Blum, Roots & Branches Foundation member, at the Roots & Branches final celebration

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## Your Turn: Get Involved

Rose Community Foundation is looking for a diverse group of Jewish people between the ages of 25 and 40 who want to be part of this innovative grantmaking program. Visit [rcfdenver.org/initiatives\\_roots.htm](http://rcfdenver.org/initiatives_roots.htm) to apply. The deadline to apply is Monday, May 30, 2011. However in order to guarantee that you will receive an interview, we recommend that you apply or indicate your intent to apply by Monday, May 16, 2011.

Contact: Sarah Indyk at 303.398.7416 or [sindyk@rcfdenver.org](mailto:sindyk@rcfdenver.org)

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## Roots & Branches Foundation 2010–2011 Grants

### SCHOLARSHIPS TO JEWISH OVERNIGHT SUMMER CAMPS

The following organizations received grants to provide need-based scholarships for Jewish youth from Greater Denver and Boulder to attend Colorado's Jewish overnight summer camps:

- **JCC Ranch Camp:** \$11,267  
[ranchcamp.org](http://ranchcamp.org)
- **The Maurice B. Shwayder Camp of Temple Emanuel:** \$11,267  
[shwayder.com](http://shwayder.com)
- **Ramah Outdoor Adventure:** \$8,196  
[ramahoutdoors.org](http://ramahoutdoors.org)

### SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Center for Immigrants and Immigration Services:** \$12,500 for outreach and to provide emergency support, case management, life-skills education and legal services to victims of human trafficking in five African immigrant communities.  
[ciisdenver.org](http://ciisdenver.org)

**The Delores Project:** \$4,000 to provide shelter and counseling to women who are victims of human trafficking.  
[thedeloresproject.org](http://thedeloresproject.org)

**The Denver Center for Crime Victims:** \$5,000 to provide legal services, case management, counseling and emergency financial support to immigrant victims of human trafficking.  
[denvervictims.org](http://denvervictims.org)

**Prax(us):** \$12,000 to support the Street Outreach and Community Organizing programs addressing the needs of youth victims of human trafficking.  
[praxus.org](http://praxus.org)

**Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network:** \$15,052 to provide free legal services to child victims of human trafficking seeking lawful immigration status.  
[rmian.org](http://rmian.org)

**Urban Peak:** \$10,000 to provide shelter, case management, education and job placement, and medical and mental care to homeless youth victims of human trafficking.  
[urbanpeak.org](http://urbanpeak.org)