



## Orthodox Union Women's Initiative and Impact Accelerator Launch Women's Leadership Collective

*Partnership Brings Together Women in Senior Nonprofit Leadership from Across North America for Skill-Building, Networking, and Peer Learning*



*Women in senior leadership roles from Teaneck and Bergenfield, New Jersey, participate in the Women's Leadership Collective inaugural program at the Orthodox Union in New York.*

Women in senior leadership roles now have a dedicated forum for growth, connection, and skill-building through a new program powered by the OU Women's Initiative and Impact Accelerator. The newly launched Women's Leadership Collective welcomed 60 participants from across North America to its inaugural program at OU headquarters in New York.

The event brought together women in senior nonprofit leadership that address a variety of areas, including mental health and disability, social services, *chesed*, education, *kiruv*, advocacy, and financial

and family support. OU Women's Initiative Assistant Director Adeena Mayerfeld explains that the collective provides a forum where women, who often spend most of their time supporting others, can focus on themselves and grow as leaders.

"The impact these women are already having by strengthening communities and supporting thousands of people daily is inspiring," she says. "The program created space for reflection on their strengths, roles, and the organizational goals they wish to advance. It was very interactive, blending guided learning, journaling, small-group discussions, and the chance to meet women from across different communities and organizations. There was tremendous diversity in the room — different communities, *hashkafot*, professions, and life stages — and yet, as the conversations began, a shared experience quickly emerged – we're all navigating many of the same challenges."



*Participants from Silver Spring and Baltimore, Maryland.*

Centered on "Leadership from the Inside Out," the program was led by Ianna Raim, a renowned executive and leadership coach, speaker, and facilitator. Other speakers included Managing Director of OU Communal Engagement Rabbi Yaakov Glaser, Women's Initiative Founding Director Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman, Adeena Mayerfeld, Impact Accelerator Director Tamar Frydman, and Meir Naiman, chief technology officer at Emerest and Royal Care.

"Participants' authenticity was remarkable," says Frydman. "They spoke candidly about their personal experiences, how they see themselves as leaders, the assumptions they feel hold them back, and the approaches they hope will help them grow. Despite coming from different organizations and roles, they were fully engaged and eager to gain as much as possible from the day."

Rebbetzin Dr. Shmidman was also struck by participants' enthusiasm and engagement.

"The sense of camaraderie and openness to learn and to meet others was impressive," she reflects. Knowing that these women are at the helm of such incredible and inspiring organizations, gives one confidence in our people. Equally exciting was the opportunity to share our passion at the OU, the epicenter of Jewish community-oriented programming, and to help accelerate their work in an environment with its own unique energy."



*Participants Jessica Katz, of Clifton, New Jersey, Geneve Kaye, of Teaneck, New Jersey, and Stephanie Savir-Perlman, of Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Stephanie Savir-Perlman of Silver Spring, Maryland, is the director of operations at Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington, a nonprofit dedicated to addressing food and financial insecurity in the Jewish community through programs such as Tomchei Shabbos, Emergency Financial Assistance, the Capital Kosher pantry, and more. This was her third experience participating in an OU professional development program.

"As always, I came away with actionable skills I could use for the benefit of my organization and clients," she says. "The collective made me realize that I have the strength to accomplish things I tend to find difficult. When it comes to calling donors, I expect the task to be hard and to be met with resistance. I decided to approach this using the skills Ianna taught, including stepping out of my negative thinking, increasing my positive beliefs about donor outreach, and adopting a different mindset

about possible rejection. These skills gave me a new path to try calling donors again this year with greater confidence.”

Geneve Kaye, of Teaneck, New Jersey, is the chief development Officer at AMIT Children, a nonprofit organization and the premier educational network in Israel, supporting over 40,000 students across 90-plus schools, youth villages, and specialized programs. While she already utilizes AI in her work, she found Naiman’s session on AI to be particularly valuable.

“The presenter shared several interesting new applications that I’ve already begun looking into,” says Kaye. “I also learned about how some organizations are starting to use AI, particularly in shifting routine tasks and operations to automated systems. That was very helpful, and it’s something I’m hoping to explore further and learn much more about.”



*Women leaders engage in a focus group at the Women’s Leadership Collective inaugural program.*

In addition to gaining new skills, participants left with professional connections they plan to nurture moving forward.

“The networking opportunities were a highlight,” says Frydman. “Being a leader of an organization can be very lonely. Even with volunteers, much falls on your shoulders. Connecting with others in similar positions eases that loneliness, and learning from their examples, challenges, and experiences can be even more valuable than learning from a presenter. Many participants asked if we’re going to circulate a participant directory — and we are — but that request underscores how eager they are to maintain these connections and continue learning from one another.”

Mayerfeld agrees. “There’s value in building friendships and going through the process with other women who have successfully built organizations,” she says. “Being in a room with others who are broad thinkers is inspiring and educational.”

Savir-Perlman found the peer-to-peer conversations between activities and over lunch incredibly impactful.

“Each new professional contact is like finding a diamond, whether for connections, referrals, or simply feeling supported alongside others doing the same work.” she says. “Many women spoke about challenges similar to those I encounter in my job. I also learned that so many leaders struggle with juggling too many balls at once, and wanting to do more with fewer resources. I realized this is not my personal shortcoming, but rather a challenge that many non-profit leaders have, which was validating.”

Kaye sees the collective as a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow leaders from organizations she might never have discovered otherwise — women from out of state and from diverse walks of life.

“I was thrilled that the OU launched this initiative,” she says. “Seeing the enthusiasm of the younger professionals was really quite inspiring. I have worked in the Jewish non-profit world for over 30 years in a variety of different organizations, and it was wonderful to meet, and I hope to provide some chizuk to those who are beginning their journeys in communal life. I am passionate about fundraising, and I would love to inspire and educate some of the younger professionals about the important role of fundraising within Jewish organizations. I look forward to continuing our meaningful conversations in the future.”

*Applications to join the Impact Accelerator's next cohort are open until Monday, March 23. Learn more and apply at <https://accelerator.ou.org/apply>.*

*The biennial Women' Initiative Leadership Summit for experienced and emerging women lay leaders will take place in May, 2027. For more information, visit [ou.women.org/27](http://ou.women.org/27)*

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**Contact:**

Rachel Miller  
Marketing and Communications Manager, OU Women's Initiative  
847-372-0887  
[millerr@ou.org](mailto:millerr@ou.org)

Tamar Frydman  
Director, OU Impact Accelerator  
646-630-1549  
[frydmant@ou.org](mailto:frydmant@ou.org)

**About the OU Women's Initiative**

*The OU Women's Initiative elevates and connects Jewish women through Torah study, leadership development and community engagement.*

**About OU Impact Accelerator**

*The OU Impact Accelerator meets the Orthodox community's challenges through advancing innovative and impactful nonprofits. Providing changemakers with additional resources and networks to make a positive impact.*

**About the Orthodox Union**

*Founded in 1898, the Orthodox Union (OU), or Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, serves as the voice of American Orthodox Jewry, with over 400 congregations in its synagogue network. As the umbrella organization for American Orthodox Jewry, the OU is at the forefront of advocacy work on both state and federal levels, outreach to Jewish teens and young professionals through NCSY, Israel Free Spirit Birthright, Yachad and OU Press, among many other divisions and programs.*