Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Powered by Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle

Recording Date: October 23, 2025
Last Edited: October 27, 2026

Janice Brumer

SUMMARY

Janice Brumer discusses her lifelong involvement with Jewish summer camps, emphasizing their role in fostering Jewish identity, community, and leadership. She shares personal experiences, from her early days as a camper to her founding of Camp Kalsman, highlighting the camp's cultural and spiritual significance. Looking ahead, she outlines plans to expand and modernize the camp to serve future generations and strengthen its impact.

Sara Glass: Good evening. It is October 23rd, 2025 and we are speaking this evening with Janice Brumer. She is a longtime resident of Bellevue and has lived there since moving with her family from Florida at age five. In the 1920s, I didn't know that Jewish summer camps were ideologically based and almost entirely secular. There were Zionist camps that taught practical skills and a connection to Israel, but didn't put much emphasis on religion. Things changed following the Holocaust, and the summer camps became a vital part of shifting the focus to the Jewish religion and culture. And Janice is going to share with us her story, or excited to hear about your life and the summer camps that you knew and are involved in now. And what can you tell us?

Janice Brumer: Great. Thank you. Um, so I am involved in URJ Camp Kalsman, which is a Reform movement camp in the Pacific Northwest. It's in Arlington, Washington, a little bit north of Seattle. Um, and you were saying that this camp started as just Zionist camps back in the 1920s, and then after the Holocaust became more religious camps. And now there are many there's over probably 600, 700, 800 Jewish camps.

Sara Glass: Really!

Janice Brumer: Many different, different variations. There's Orthodox, Conservative Reform, um, non-denominational JCCs. But I am involved in the URJ camping system, which is a Reform movement camp, and each camp is individualized. They have their own ways of doing things, their own, um, cultures, their own traditions. Um, and we started camp in 2007, and I was the inaugural Camp Kalsman Commission chair. Um, so and at this moment in time, I am still on the Commission and I am the development chair. Although you go off the commission as a as a board member, as I'll be termed off, termed off because we now have term limits in our, on our, on our board. But the Commission as a we call ourselves a Commission because we're a non fiduciary board. We act like a board and an advisory board. Um, because we're under the URJ the Union for Reform Judaism umbrella. The URJ executive board is the is the fiduciary board for all of the, uh, URJ camps. And we're the 13th summer camp that has.

Sara Glass: How many URJ camps - are there many? Are there other URJ camps?

Janice Brumer: Yeah, we are the 13th uh, URJ summer camp that has a physical building, have physical property. And then we also have, um, three, three specialty camps throughout the Union. We have a sports camp, a sci-tech camp, and then a performing arts camp. But they are based out of colleges in the summer. But we are the 13th camp that has its own, a property that we purchased.

Sara Glass: Are they around the country?

Janice Brumer: Around the country, around the United States. And we also have one in Canada, in the Toronto area near Toronto.

Sara Glass: Okay. Wow, that oh thank you. And I have to ask, how old were you when you first went to summer camp?

Janice Brumer: Um, I was, I think in third grade. So my parents, um, when we moved from Florida to Seattle or to Bellevue, um, we did not have any family here at all. My my dad's family is from the South, and my mom's family is all from Vancouver, BC, Canada. And when we first moved, we joined a congregation, joined Temple B'nai Torah, Temple De Hirsch Sinai. And, um, we met a bunch of different families and they became our family. They they became our close families. We did all the holidays with them. We did. Uh, so they became our core group of people, just like our family. And, um, at that time, Temple De Hirsch Sinai had a summer camp that they were doing every year. And I think because we were so involved in temple, we it was just ingrained that my parents were going to send us to, to summer camp and that a ten day summer camp at the end of the summer, every, every summer. Um, and we started going. So and that also was nice because when we could see the see the same kids, you know, at summer camp that we would be in with, with, uh, in religious school and youth group. And I was in the junior choir and we sang every Saturday morning at services. So, um, it was just it was just ingrained. So I went, I think since third, third grade and on, my siblings and I all went to camp and then through 10th grade, which at that time was the oldest, oldest grade you could go. And then you were a junior counselor in 11th grade and then a counselor in, in high school. And yeah, as a senior. Um, and then the URJ at that time only had, uh, summer camps, not in the Pacific Northwest area. They had one in Northern California when I which I went to going my going into 10th grade year and then my incoming 11th grade year, I went to Camp Kutz, uh, in Warwick, New York, which is a specialized high school camp.

Sara Glass: And you so you flew across the country? Yes. That's how to do that. Wow. Was that your first trip?

Janice Brumer: Like, uh, no, I went to California first. We had flown. Well, again, my dad's family lived in in the south in Tennessee, so we went back and forth. But, um, I think just the difference of, um, of being a camper and then a staff member and then going to different camps. You got to see and be with kids who were not just in your little area, like in my in my Seattle area. And so it was just really nice and, uh, meeting people and really having that connection of being at camp for, you know, a two week period or a three week period and really having a sense of belonging and, and the, the two camps that I went to that weren't my own synagogue's summer camp were both, uh, leadership camps. So one camp was all about leadership skills, and the other camp was all about, well, I took a song leading track and a music track, but there was different leadership skills. So I knew, um, and then when I came back as a, as a college age person, I was a staff member at our, at our synagogue summer camp for many, many years.

Sara Glass: But there was that built in connection that you felt even across the country and with

Janice Brumer: I still have friends from from Camp Swig and from Kutz Camp there. As they say, camp friends are best friends and they're always friends.

Sara Glass: Oh my gosh.

Janice Brumer: Yeah. So it's again, it's the it's the relationship that you can build and the camaraderie and the community that you can have. Because you are you are 24/7 living with them Jewishly. So you you it you feel that love of being Jewish and being Jewish is fun. And it's showing the kids that that it is great. It's fun to be Jewish. You know, it's not scary. It's not a horrible thing. You need to be proud of who you are.

Sara Glass: So what are some of the values that you think? So do you do - there's the typical camp activities obviously, right that you would. So can you think of an example for us that might happen any age group at the summer camp, that would be a way to live that live Jewishly while still doing, what?

Janice Brumer: With regards to Camp Kalsman at least I mean, you a child loses their first tooth at camp and and the whole cabin says shehecheyanu like it's a it's a shehecheyanu moment or when a, when a kid, when a child, um, climbs the climbing tower for the first time, even if they go up ten feet, their cabin mates are there, like cheering them on and are so excited for whatever height they can get. It's one foot, ten feet, to the top of the of the tower. It's just that camaraderie and that love and having people. We have a camp talent show every summer, um, for the session. And even if that child can play the guitar or play the piano or sing or whatever, their talent is the best or not the best, the kids are so amazing and they're still like they're hooting and hollering and It's so wonderful and really, um, backing that child up to make them proud, no matter how good or not. How, you know not how good they are. It's just it's the the love, the authentic self that you can be at camp. But I think also that because of my upbringing with with temple camp and with summer camp, I knew that when I got married and had children of my own, um, that I would send them to, to our synagogue summer camp. And so my husband and I got married in 1990 and we moved from I was living in California at that time, and we moved from California back to Seattle, and we joined Temple B'nai Torah, which is the temple in Bellevue. Our rabbi was from, uh, from Temple De Hirsch Sinai. So the senior rabbi, Rabbi Mirel um, and and when our kids were

old enough, we knew that we would want to send them to camp. So they our synagogue also had a summer camp, a ten day summer camp in the summer. And they did that for a few years until the URJ, the Reform movement, um, had a donor who was very big in Camp Newman, which is our sister camp in California. They, uh, their family had their father passed away, and they had a nice chunk of change that they wanted to give to the Pacific Northwest to purchase a property and build a URJ camp in the Pacific Northwest. And so when they, back in 2006, when we bought the property, uh, the URJ asked me if I would be the inaugural Commission chair, because I knew my passion for youth and my passion for summer camp. And so I said yes. And so then it was the whole way of, of, you know, hiring a director of the camp and making sure that the property was good and creating the program. And, you know, even down to building the beds at camp, the bunk beds at camp. And, um, my family, well, my family was involved from the very, very, very beginning. And in the summer of 2007, we opened.

Sara Glass: Don't you have a picture? I think you shared that you have some pictures. What? Because I'm thinking of, like, starting

Janice Brumer: This is my youngest daughter, Kayla.

Sara Glass: Oh, what a great picture. So you actually built. You literally.

Janice Brumer: Literally built every single bunk bed at camp. There's 220 beds plus. My family and a couple other families; we literally built, built them, volunteered, built them, took us over a week. We went up every couple days and built lots, lots and lots of bunk beds. And my daughter there, I think she was going into second grade and now she's 25. All three of my children and my husband, we all built with a couple other families and we built the bunk beds. We built, um, the lots of things at camp, my daughter's bat mitzvah, uh, every year for their bat mitzvah, they have a bat mitzvah project. And my daughter's bat mitzvah project was building, um, water coolers. Water cooler stands for camp. And so she and my husband built all these water cooler stands, and they're still out.

Sara Glass: I was going to ask if they're still there.

Janice Brumer: Yeah. They are. And the bunk beds, too.

Sara Glass: Are the bunk beds still sturdy?

Janice Brumer: And still standing also? Yep yep yep. Wow. I mean, literally, we've been there since the very, very, very beginning. So it's.

Sara Glass: Incredible. That's just amazing.

Janice Brumer: To see the, the way I mean from the years that I've been. So I am what's called a, um, so our camp is different than other camps. We have a position, a staff position at camp called camp mom. Well, what's called camp mom now it's called camp parent. It's in the beginning, we we learned after the first couple summers that there are kids, obviously, who miss home, who have never been away for summer camp, who need some love, tender loving care. Or ones who need a little bit extra help. Or even counselors. First year counselors who don't know really what they're doing and and they need some extra help. So we we established a volunteer position on staff called camp mom. Um, and I have been camp mom for the past 19, 20 years, 18, 19, 20 years. Um, and it it it evolved from being literally a mom at camp to help these kids with, with their with their homesickness or we call it missing home. But, um, now since mesh and since mental health is such a big, bigger deal. Since Covid, um, we now have with, with a grant from the Foundation for Jewish Camp back in 2021, we received a grant to hire a full time, um, social worker at camp. So we have a whole camp care team now. Yeah. So I do less. Less. As a camp parent. I do less as a as as a home. Like missing home. But also it's changed to now I can be a judge at a on a camper program that the high schoolers are doing. Or I can help the youngest cabins, um, with their cookouts if they need help, right? Or I help with the medical if there's extra medical needs that they needed extra help or with, you know, um, handing out different things or in the office if the office needs help or if they need to do a supply run. So but it's just an extra adult hand at camp for anybody who needs something. So we've had that, um, since the second year of camp, and now it's become a camp parent because we have camp dads. Who are there? My husband comes with me because he's now retired. We're there for a week or we're there for a session and we're just there to help, whatever's. there. Yeah. So it it's more from from being really camper care and counselor care to camper care and counselor care and and all the other above, as we say, duties as needed.

Sara Glass: It's wonderful.

Janice Brumer: And it's actually a way for me to become to be a be at camp. As an adult, because. I love camp and I'm always.

Sara Glass: I can tell.

Janice Brumer: But it's also great I think, for the staff to know that there's somebody there that if they need something that we're open and we're we're here for them, that they can ask and we're, you know, an extra person who's not in their realm of of other counselors or other staff members. So it's nice, it's nice. And we're definitely used a lot used.

Sara Glass: And you have the historical background and just can help kind of everywhere as needed. You just can tell I'm assuming too, even if you're not asked sometimes you can probably just tell that there's something that could use some assistance just because I'm doing it so long.

Janice Brumer: Yes. And it's wonderful. It's like, you know, we tell parents, we tell parents that, you know, the counselors are really encouraging the kids, you know, to make sure that they have sunscreen on and they're drinking water and to make sure that they stay healthy. And I see it with my own eyes that at services, you know, these counselors are going around with their with their suntan lotions and and put saying, put out your hands and they're squeezing suntan lotions on these kids hands to make sure that they're, that they're putting it on. And, and there's like every so often there's like, okay, they have this Mickey Mouse, you know, they it's a drinking like Mickey, Mickey, Mickey drink. They drink their water. So they make sure they really the counselors are really good about that. And so it's nice to have that person where parents come up to me and say, you know, I heard this, this and this, you were there. What's, what's going on? So it's It's also nice that, that parents have that, that knowledge that there is a, a a parent there.

Sara Glass: Yes. Yeah.

Janice Brumer: Make sure that these things are, you know, are. And our counselors are absolutely amazing. They treat the kids great. And it's so nice to see from from the beginnings of the summers, like these kids who are in second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh, eighth grades and then those kids becoming counselors and how the kids look up to their own counselors. And now these counselors have kids now looking up to them, as I was saying, like my my daughter is a song leader. And when she was she started she was in eighth grade when she started back in 2007 when camp opened, um, and she had a mentor, a song leader who she really looked up to. Her name is Chava Mirel, and she's a song leader really because of her. And from camp and and when she was a counselor and a song leader, there was a young, young child there who is now currently this, this past couple years, a song leader. And she came up to me a couple years ago and said, you know, Janice, I just want to let you know I'm a song leader and invested in camp in song leading because of your daughter, Megan. Because what she showed me. Yes. It's the it's the like. It's the next generation. And it's just like these kids are becoming like they're becoming amazing human beings in the first place, with morals and ethics that the Reform movement teaches of being open and every human being is, you know, is incredible and every human being is worth it. And we are all together in this world, and we all need to help each other. And it's not just about us. And that's what camp teaches. Camp teaches people to be their authentic selves. There's so many kids out there who you know, don't know where they're going or who may have, you know, different genders and different and are trying to figure out who they are. And they when they get to camp, they feel so empowered to be who they are. And they see their mentors. They see these counselors who are just like them.

Sara Glass: Yeah.

Janice Brumer: Who are diverse, who are who are who are, you know, heterosexual, homeless, like gay. They're just every which way. Um, and they get to really understand that they're not that they're not alone. And then they grow up and they may be they're the counselors, and they're the unit heads, and they're the professionals, and they're the leadership staff, and they teach the kids the the the next generation the exact same.

Sara Glass: It's wonderful. It's such a natural progression. I could see that as they get older, you know, probably like middle school age, that they're already really wanting that role and to take on that responsibility.

Janice Brumer: One thing about about Camp Kalsman, is that definitely we go from, um, ages incoming second grade through incoming 11th grade, and the high schoolers are our kesher, our kesher kids. Um, we have intergenerational programming with the youngest ones, so they're programming with the older kids and the youngest kids, and they actually get to be like their counselors, but they're really not; they're still campers, but they do programs where the oldest kids can teach the youngest kids different things. On Shabbat, um, is the day where it's all open and we have what's called chugim during the day so they can be, um, playing guitar, playing basketball, or going swimming in the lake or, uh, climbing the climbing tower or a nature hike or anything. And that is all ages and stages. Any camper can go to any of those, um, chugim. And so they're all mixed ages; which is really nice because then also siblings can go to the same chugim. And normally during the, during this the, the regular week, not Shabbat. Um, most programs are unit based, which are age based, so they don't really besides eating together their meals, they don't. They don't really get to spend time with siblings and kids the other ages. So it's really nice that they get to do that. And yeah, the older ones to practice and and really want to be, you know, CITs in their incoming 12th grader years and then counselors, um,

after they graduate from high school and go into college.

Sara Glass: Would you say in any given year, like thinking of this past summer, how many? Because it sounds like a lot of them have kind of been all the way. If you think of like, the kids who you just saw this past summer, I'm guessing a lot of them.

Janice Brumer: I don't know exactly, but yes, probably. Uh, usually, I mean, a lot of them not not most, but I mean, we we have about approximately 600. We've we have approximately 600, 600 or so kids who come to camp every summer throughout throughout the summer, um, we can hold about 200 kids per session and we have for summer, um, different weeks, a 13 day session, a three week session, and a two week session. And then for the youngest kids, we have a one week session. But I see a big a big portion of them. And then a lot of the the counselors, if they're counselors for the first year, they'll stay for 3 or 4 years and then they'll become they'll become to be on leadership team. And you have to be 21 to be on leadership team. Um, we also have five year jackets, staff jackets and and tenure staff jackets and 13 year staff jackets. So a lot of our kids really say, I want to come back. I want my five year staff jacket.

Sara Glass: Okay. What is the besides you maybe like, do you have a camper, a returning camper who has just still.

Janice Brumer: So there's one there's one one staff member who has been there, um, every single summer for 19 summers as a camper, a counselor, a staff member, or a leadership staff member.

Sara Glass: Oh my gosh.

Janice Brumer: Every single summer now, my daughter was also one of those. But after her 15th summer, um, she was on staff there and she ended up she ended up moving to a different job. So she has not been there all, all 19 summers. But I think she made 16 summers. But there's a lot of kids who. Yeah, there's we have We have when we do uh, the Birkat Hamazon after meals, they always invite a group of kids up, whatever it should be for that day. It could be if you're dressed in red or if you have blue eyes, or if you have a sibling, or if you're if you if you've been to camp before. And there's some sometimes that they invite kids who've been to camp for ten years or more. And there's quite a lot of people who come up. So yeah, it's wonderful. Again, it's the camaraderie and and what? And the kids go, most of the kids go like whatever session you start with, they they keep going that session because the same kids go that session.

Sara Glass: Oh okay.

Janice Brumer: These kids and they get. And now with the day and age of of FaceTiming and you know, and Zooming and things like that and and phones, these kids really can keep in touch with their, with their friends throughout the whole entire year. And camp does programs throughout the year, um, gatherings with Shabbat dinners every now and then at different synagogues and, and part and, uh, get get togethers at, at parks during the, during the, the school year so the kids can get, you know, get together.

Sara Glass: And do they come um, are they mostly from the Seattle broader Seattle area? By and large?

Janice Brumer: About 60% is probably from the greater Seattle area. But we do have campers from Montana, Idaho, Alaska, Oregon, Washington State. Some kids come from Texas. Um, so there's a lot of families, actually, who, um, started going to camp and moved away.

Sara Glass: Oh, okay.

Janice Brumer: Somewhere else. But they still send their kids back to camp.

Sara Glass: Okay.

Janice Brumer: Because it is so important for those kids that they're like, I'm not going to another summer camp. I want to come back to Kalsman. And there's some staff members actually also who have moved away. If they're there and they, they, they now send their kids to camp or if they're from the Seattle area, we have some rabbis who don't live in this area who send their kids, and they also come back as faculty on camp. Wow. It's a great it's an amazing community. And now and now that we've been here, um, we'll we're, you know, such for for a period of time. We are now transferring into making it a more Jewish, um, a year round retreat center. So we've always had some retreats in the year round, but it hasn't been a big thing. Mostly it's been just just a summer camp. We started as a summer camp. But now that the community, um, the Jewish community, is vast and wide around here, we really want to be the the place for the Jewish community to come and celebrate many different things, either retreats or or. We have a congregation who who celebrates high holidays at camp because that's the that their building isn't big enough. And so they have they come to camp. We have sisterhood retreats for the Pacific District. Um, the sisterhood comes and we have women who come for for a weekend to spend a weekend at camp. So it's not just for kids anymore. It's for for really for the whole

Jewish greater Seattle Jewish community in the Pacific Northwest.

Sara Glass: That's phenomenal.

Janice Brumer: Northwest Jewish community.

Sara Glass: That's, uh, that's amazing. And to have a resource like that, a place to go instead of instead of in some sterile conference room or, you know, a space that's not that's it's it's just, um. Oh. That's amazing. So how many now versus you said so it's kind of been sporadic. The groups that you've mentioned are you so you're saying you're going to more actively publicize that.

Janice Brumer: We are we are. Yes. We're trying to active. We're we're we're in the midst of, um, uh, reconfiguring camp to make sure to make it more year, year around, year round space. When we first started, um, the weather was was beautiful. There was no, you know, 106 degree days in the summer and there was no freezing, freezing the pipes in the winter time. So only one of our cabins is heated and cooled. The rest of our cabins don't have air conditioning or heating. So with climate change, um, times are different now, so we need to reconfigure that and figure that out. So we're looking into to making the cabins more, more year round. So we we currently can only use our, our, our campus up through November. And then we really shut it down until March because it's just very hard to do it in the winter months when it's so cold. And we didn't realize that 20 years ago when we when we purchased and built our cabins because climate wasn't like that. So.

Sara Glass: So I didn't even think about that aspect of it and the impact of that, you know, on the program.

Janice Brumer: Now we have AC units in every single cabin, because in the summertime, uh, he it gets much hotter than it has been.

Sara Glass: Yeah.

Janice Brumer: We just built a brand new art center that is fully air conditioned and heated. So that's another great indoor space that we have that has a, a dance studio, a culinary art studio. Um, it has a music room, a Uh, uh, ceramics room and we use it for lots of different, lots of different programming, which is great because that was that's one of our only, uh, air conditioning, air conditioned spaces that we have.

Sara Glass: Just options for a rainy day if you get.

Janice Brumer: Yeah. That's really. Yeah. We have a nice big pavilion that's undercover.

Sara Glass: Okay.

Janice Brumer: But it's open on open on the sides. But we also have I mean it's beautiful. So we have a beautiful outdoor sanctuary that's with literally, uh, surrounded by trees. And it's just so beautiful. On Friday nights and Saturday mornings and, uh, in the evenings when we have services, and then on Saturday mornings, we usually have services in, in, in the dance floor on our, our art center, just because it gets really, really warm and it's covered and the sun doesn't, doesn't shine as much on on the camp. But yeah, we have beautiful pool and we have a lake. Um, lots of gaga. Lots of gaga pits.

Sara Glass: It sounds incredible. Wow. Amazing again.

Janice Brumer: And it's more than just the stuff that it has. It really creates the bonds. Really creates the the lovingness of being Jewish and the camaraderie and and the ethics and the morals of of treating people with respect and loving your neighbors and making sure that nobody goes unnoticed. And if there's a child, you know, who's very quiet and shy, people are there to, like, take their hand and say, come on, come with me, come do this. And that's just the like, that's just the magic, literally the magic of camp and the magic of camp. That's how Camp Kalsman is, I think different in some ways, because we are we are the the camp in the Pacific Northwest where you may have you may come from a place, you know, where there's only one family who's Jewish in your school, and you are the only one, and you don't have that camaraderie like other kids do if you live in Bellevue or Seattle. And so that kind of places these kids really who come from Yakima and who come from, you know, Montana and Idaho and places wherever they come, like this is their this is their, that people say you live, you live. 11 well ten for two, which means you live ten months out of the year for two, two months of camp. Um, it's called living ten for two for these kids. They're living literally 11.5 months for for two weeks out of the year because they come for two weeks or three weeks. It's their, it's their livelihood. And I think for parents, first of all, they, they get some time off on their own, which I think is absolutely amazing because everybody needs some time on their own. But I think for parents that they've been saying, you know, they say that that kids come back first of all, more independent because you have to learn, even at a young age, to be able to fend for yourself and, and shower on your own and dress on your own and, and be with a whole group of kids in your cabin. Together. And learn how to get along. And so those

kinds of things, just those those those, uh, stepping stones of becoming a young adult or older child and a young adult is great. And the leadership skills that you get from being a counselor, working with others, and learning how to manage manage somebody and learning how to the development of a child and making sure that kids are safe. Like just those. I'm working with a group and working in in pairs and and doing, um, group, you know, group projects and group programs and things like that. You get so much out of that as a camp counselor that that these kids go into their jobs there in the in the real world and are already ahead because they already know how to work with people.

Sara Glass: Exactly.

Janice Brumer: They've already been out in that world. And I think, at least for my girls. What they learned in camp has really brought them to where they are. My oldest is a rabbi. Um, and she became a rabbi, in part because mostly because of camp, my kids also went to the to Jewish, the Jewish Day School here in Seattle and Bellevue. Um, and my middle child worked as a professional, um, as assistant director at Camp Kalsman for three years. And then now she's she works at our own congregational, uh, preschool as one of the assistant directors and supervisors. Um, and my youngest one really, um, got into mental health, and she's now a mental health professional. And and again, because of what she learned and how she. She was a homesick kid at camp and and just the way that counselors, um, helped her.

Sara Glass: Exactly.

Janice Brumer: Really helped her, like, get through it. And her her journey, you know, made her want to to do to help in some ways do mental health and help others. So she so I think just and me I, I my product growing up in camp really got me to make to to feel to give back voluntarily. And so I am also very involved in our synagogue and on the, on the URJ board and on the URJ executive board. And that's because what I got out of camp and what I got out of my, my Judaism and my congregation as, as a young child and as a, as a young adult, um, it was important for me to make sure that this next generation of youth, um, become leaders now and become leaders in the future.

Sara Glass: It's so, you know, listening to you, it really is an immersion. I remember you said to live Jewishly 24/7. And when I think about, you know, yes, you might go to, um, you know, learn at, at your temple or synagogue, you may go and learn. It's kind of in isolation, though. You go that day, that hour, and then you go home again and you might see those kids. You might not. It's just not the same because it's also you're not. So they're just like, I loved how you said they're just living and having fun, right? But they're doing it Jewishly. And so it's just baked into the whole experience so seamlessly and at the same time teaching the values they don't realize that's it's it's like, um, oh, kind of like subliminal, you know, like it's just it's happening all around them and they're just absorbing it. And that I think that's the feeling that you're describing to just come away feeling this sense of connection and pride and a better understanding during those other ten months. If you do go to synagogue. Oh, this is we talked about this, you know, at camp, this you can refer back. I would think it would deepen your connection, maybe the rest of the year. Is that right?

Janice Brumer: Yes. And I think these kids, you know, as much as they as some kids love Sunday school or don't love Sunday school. Religious school. Um, camp. Like you said, camp is is your 24 hour, 24/7 living Jewishly for an extended period of time. It's experiential learning. You are living in these in, in, in, in and everything at camp has a Jewish flair to it from from learning a Jewish word, you know of the day, if if that is sometimes, we have Jewish word of the day for camp. Each evening we have a quick half an hour prayer service. Evening service. It's all musical. Everything's everything's every prayer is sung. Um. So these kids learn the the music. They learn the tunes. Uh, and these are all, you know, camp tunes they're from. Yeah, they're they're also a lot of them are from, uh, song writers, song leaders who have become, up through the camp movement, who are new song, who are new young song leaders. And they they have created and wrote these songs. And so we use we use their tunes. We have visiting scholars and residents who come, who do art with the kids and who do song leading with the kids. For Shabbat, everybody dresses in white. It's beautiful. And we start with the Torah and we carry the Torah from the the main dining hall area, and we go around camp and each at each point we pick up different campers. We pick up units by unit.

Sara Glass: Oh that's lovely. Yeah.

Janice Brumer: To the unit heads or to somebody in that unit. And then they carry the Torah to the next area and they carry towards the next area as we're singing, you know, these Shabbat songs and it's again, it's about it's about the continuation of, of the like of being Jewish throughout your whole entire life. Yes. And how you can how how you can keep doing that. Um, as a camper or a counselor or a leadership team member, or if you're, you know, as you when you finish being a on on leadership team and you don't, you're not on staff anymore, but still doing that throughout your young adult and your adult life.

Sara Glass: I was just about to say, in your own life, you carry that, you'll carry that with you always.

Janice Brumer: Yes. And you'll carry your camp friends. I mean, my camp friends were my were were a lot of my bridesmaids. Like, they're your friends. My daughter's camp friends are their best friends. They still hang out with their with their camp friends.

Sara Glass: So speaking of your daughters and your family, do you have a picture? You have talked about them? Can we see?

Janice Brumer: So this is probably this is from the summer at camp of 2023, which is the last time that all three of my girls were, were on staff at camp. My oldest, my oldest was my oldest Megan was a Judaics specialist, director of Judaics, and my middle one was, I think, assistant director or almost to be, and my youngest one was on staff, um, on the leadership team, uh, as a unit head. So.

Sara Glass: Um, it's incredible, just incredible.

Janice Brumer: And even my girls. Even even when they're not on staff, because this is the past couple of years, they haven't been on staff because they have their own jobs, Um, they still come back to camp. We have community Shabbat.

Sara Glass: Wow.

Janice Brumer: And they they're like, I am there. They come, they come back for community Shabat. My oldest lives in New York, and she's a rabbi in New York. And this was the first summer she couldn't come back because she just didn't have time off from her own rabbi job.

Sara Glass: That must have been really hard.

Janice Brumer: But she was a she was on faculty at at at two different summer, URJ summer camps, um, in the, on the East coast. Because she, it was such it's still such a big part of her that even though she couldn't be faculty at camp, she was Camp Kalsman. Faculty at Eisner, and then she was faculty at Six Points. Sci-tech.

Sara Glass: So because summer must just mean camp, right?

Janice Brumer: It means it's the joy of being with people, of learning together, of teaching, of just summer of of living. Yeah, summer of living. Summer is not summer without camp.

Sara Glass: Thank you

Janice Brumer: I'm sure the years to come, my kids will. And I know that, you know, one day when they're they're married and have significant others. I'm I pray and I'm sure that they'll send their kids to and hopefully.

Sara Glass: Absolutely. And I have a feeling you'll still be there. You'll be like the camp by that point, grandma. Right? And then, the camp great grandma.

Janice Brumer: It is important. It's so important to our lives. We've done so much. I mean, voluntarily, my husband, my husband works. He's the he's the IT person at camp. Um, he's built a lot of the projects. Um, my kids, again, have been staff and counselors and campers. I help in any way we can. We've given our our money, our time, our love. But it's because camp is such an important part. It's our, it's my family's second home. Anytime we cross those gates, when I, you know, go go. through those gates, its just that feeling. I'm coming home. We say to I, we literally say to everybody when they come in the the gates for camp, you know, welcome home. Home. It is that that is what we say to every single camper who comes in for the beginning of the sessions. Welcome home, welcome or any, any anybody who comes to visit. Welcome home.

Sara Glass: We have talked about the future in terms of we know the upcoming campers, but do you have plans beyond the year round? Um, as we come to the end of our time, you talked about the year round, perhaps publicizing that more and growing that, but are there plans afoot for the future beyond that?

Janice Brumer: This this coming summer is actually our 20th summer. Um, so we are we're actually planning a big 20th summer bash. Um, but we also with that, we're doing a big $17 million capital campaign to, um, to build another adult adult living, adult staff housing, which will be more like a, um. Uh, a mini, a mini conference center with housing and then, like, a little, uh, convention meeting room in the middle, um, where we can really have people gather there either on their own and just stay there with the little kitchen and stuff, and just to have extra staff in, in, uh, faculty housing in the summer as well as we're, we're part of the money is to reconfigure our cabins one again to make them, uh, more year round.

Sara Glass: Uh, yeah.

Janice Brumer: Air conditioning and heating. And our cabins now fit 15 kids and three counselors. So 18 total. Um, some of our some of our sessions in the beginning only have 7 or 8 kids. And so you're wasting half that.

Sara Glass: Oh okay.

Janice Brumer: Cabin. So and we're going to be splitting up our cabins where they can be a full cabin of 16 to 18, but they can also be split to two cabins of eight, which will get more kids.

Sara Glass: Okay.

Janice Brumer: More kids per session because we have waiting lists. We don't have enough cabin space. We have enough bed space. Yeah, we don't have enough cabin space for everybody who wants to come to camp. So by reconfiguring our cabins, we'll have enough bed space and cabin space to add at least another 30 to 40 more beds.

Sara Glass: That's going to give you real flexibility. Real flexibility. That'll be great.

Janice Brumer: For year round and flexibility for the summer. And it'll be able to, um, have us recreate programs and be more. We can do an arts camp, like an arts two weeks camp, because we'll have then faculty housing for the arts, artists in residence to come and stay, because at this moment in time, we have no faculty housing. You can't even a visitor who wants to come to camp. There's no room. They have to stay in a hotel off camp. So when I'm not camp mom and I'm not physically, I don't have a place at camp. A room at camp. Um, if I want to come and stay for the weekend, there's no room for me. Okay, I have to go. And if I want to, you know, not have to drive home to come back the next day, we have to stay at a hotel because there's just. There's no room. We are. We are so full.

Sara Glass: Okay.

Janice Brumer: This will make it so we can do. We can do an adventure camp. We can, you know, maybe do an adventure camp. We can maybe do a sci-tech camp so we can do a more specialized as time for summer, but also year round, we can be a more year round programming space where we can have people, um, congregations come up to camp. We can have, uh, groups come up to camp that that may be Jewish and non-Jewish groups. Um, we can have.

Sara Glass: Really strategic it really is for.

Janice Brumer: Having a Kalsman run like fifth grade or sixth grade retreat where all the congregations can send their kids to Kalsman for a Kalsman run retreat. We have a family retreat twice a year. We're sold out and we can only fit 150. So if we have more cabin space, we can extend that. We can maybe have, you know, like a grandparents weekend or more, more.

Sara Glass: There's so many possibilities.

Janice Brumer: Where we can make more again, more times that we can have experiential relationships. And and and find more more ways to be to become, um, to have longer times. So you can do 24/7. So not it's not just like going to your synagogue for a Sunday school, but more finding, having more room and having that having camp cabin be the place where we can have more experiential living, experiential experiences for for adults.

Sara Glass: I am excited for you, for the future And for the camp.

Janice Brumer: We've we've raised some of that and we're still looking to raise more, but hopefully by 2027, um, for the summer of 2027, we'll have a, a whole brand new way of, uh, adult and, and faculty housing. And hopefully by 2027 or 2028, we'll have our cabins reconfigured and we'll be the, the prime place for, for the Jewish community of the greater Pacific Northwest to come.

Sara Glass: And I'm going to put a link, a link to your website in our captions so people can follow along, watch for pictures of the progress and construction, and be wishing you all the very best.

Janice Brumer: For any, any family who's looking for a place to send your kids. And I know it may be expensive. There are so many places to get scholarships. Um, the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle is amazing. Uh, congregations also have scholarships. URJ Camp Kalsman, we also give scholarships. So. So money should not be, should not be a reason not to come.

Sara Glass: Want to. I want to come. Definitely will.

Janice Brumer: It's just it's amazing there. They will. Their impact impact of Kalsman is just amazing on on these kids and and even the young adults. And we have a survey every year that goes out. Um, and we have fours and fives and great results. I mean, from our from our parents talk about

Sara Glass: Phenomenal. Thank you so much for sharing. Gosh. It's like I said, I want to come, I want to come, I want to come. It's been wonderful, wonderful speaking with you.

Janice Brumer: Thank you. Thank you. And I'm looking forward to Camp Kalsman being there for many, many, many more years, 20 years.

Sara Glass: Well it will, it will. Thank you Janice. Thank you.

Janice Brumer: I appreciate it. Thanks. Bye bye.