

Impact Report

January 2020–June 2021

“ We are forever grateful to the AJFN for giving us the chance to create our miracle, to be able to complete our family and to help build the next generation.

—Janine and Shimon Davidowitz

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This report was created thanks to the help of our wonderful and generous volunteer Elizabeth Coyne through the Catchafire platform. We are very appreciative of her time and expertise.

Chair's Report

What a year it's been! While the past 18 months have presented tremendous trials and unprecedented hardship for many in our community, they have also shown us some of the best examples of humanity, community and resilience. AJFN has much to be thankful for as we close out this financial year.

I am humbled, and immensely proud of how our community has come together to help AJFN to assist a record number of couples over the past year, because they share our belief that providing the opportunity for every couple to try to build the next generation is key to the vitality of our community. JCA's latest Gen 17 Report shows data that our Jewish population growth has significantly slowed in the last decade with Jewish couples having an average of two babies each, below the replacement level of 2.1+. The AJFN plays a pivotal role in supporting and promoting our community's population growth. Whilst the need for AJFN's services continues to increase exponentially, and the additional stress of COVID-19

saw demand increase dramatically, we are filled with gratitude to our community of supporters for helping us ensure that no couple misses out.

Our next phase of growth focuses on continuing to meet the growing needs of our community, and as part of our 2022 Strategic Plan, AJFN plans to expand nationally and continue to broaden our service, education and advocacy offerings.

This upcoming year will sadly see us bid farewell to our legendary Founder, Shterny, in her official capacity as inaugural Executive Director—although, as the proud 'mother' of the AJFN, we look forward to her continuing to provide counsel and care where needed, as any good Jewish mother does for their growing children. Through Shterny's unending passion, drive, determination and vision, together with a community of volunteers and the generous support of our community, the AJFN has grown to offer a broad range of fertility support encompassing both financial and emotional support, as well as education and advocacy. We are forever grateful to Shterny for having the vision and tenacity to create this community gem; a truly unique and pioneering organisation.

After an extensive search, I am thrilled that Loren Finger will be stepping up from her Development Manager role to be our new CEO and I welcome Robbie Clifford who has been appointed in a newly created COO role. Together with the new Executive Team, we remain committed to encouraging open and honest conversations about infertility within the Jewish community and beyond, and look forward to the launch of our two world-firsts later this year to do just that; our **One in Six** documentary, and our **Fertility Knowledge Bank**.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board, staff and dedicated volunteer committees of AJFN, as well as our donors, for working together to deliver our strategic vision: a world where no Australian Jewish couple should ever feel alone on their fertility journey.

When the community comes together, we can create miracles.

Kerry Gonski
AJFN Chair



Executive Director's Message

14 years ago I was approached by a Jewish couple seeking help as they had exhausted their funds and were desperate to pay for their next IVF cycle in the hopes of building their family. I knew that I had to help this couple and within three weeks an event was arranged and enough money was raised to pay for their IVF treatment, and their baby boy became the first AJFN miracle baby. At the time I didn't realise that this simple supplication would be the catalyst for the inception



of the AJFN, a unique and pioneering organisation that is one of only a handful of charities worldwide that offers financial support for fertility treatment.

Since then, 82 couples have been helped and **35 miracle babies have been born**—babies that would not exist without AJFN's assistance. In that time, the organisation has significantly expanded and now offers a broad range of financial and emotional support, education and advocacy. The need for AJFN's services continues to increase exponentially, however we have been extremely fortunate that our community and our corporate partners have stepped up and enabled us to meet this increase in demand.

So, it is with mixed emotion that I have made the difficult decision to step down from my role as Executive Director and spend some time with my own family and see where the next chapter takes me. I am so proud of what has been achieved and I know that AJFN will continue its important work in helping to build the next generation, but I am sad to farewell incredible colleagues, inspiring volunteers, generous community supporters and the couples with whom I've forged deep connections.

This is not yet farewell, and I am committed to working with the new CEO, Loren Finger as well as the inaugural COO Robbie Clifford for an extended handover. Under the capable leadership of the AJFN Board I am confident they will continue to meet the growing needs of our community, fuelled by the incredible generosity of our partners and supporters like you. The AJFN will remain a vital asset to our community as we continue to lead the way in opening the conversation and breaking the stigma around the fertility struggle.

Shterny Dadon
Founder and Executive Director

Our Vision

AJFN believes that no Australian Jewish couple should ever feel alone on their fertility journey. They deserve to have the financial and emotional support they need to try to build the next generation.

Our Mission

For those couples struggling to achieve their dreams of having a baby, the AJFN is a beacon of hope, offering financial and emotional support, as well as educational resources, and encouraging open and honest conversations about infertility within the Jewish community.

The Year in Review

The year may have started amidst the uncertainty and stress of COVID-19, however it resulted in AJFN's most successful event and fundraising campaign to date, along with pivotal growth for the organisation as a whole.

In line with our Strategic Plan to deepen and grow our impact by 2022, the AJFN continued to invest in resources to help meet the increased demand for our services, as well as enable our future growth objectives. This saw us welcome two new professional (part-time) staff in September 2020 to join Shterny (Executive Director); Development Manager (Loren Finger) and Marketing Manager (Danielle Salomon).

Stories for the Soul

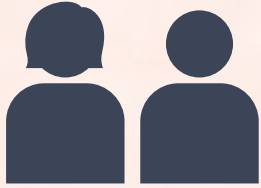
COVID restrictions forced the major event to be reimagined as a completely virtual affair. Having the event online opened our audience up as well as the possible speakers we could obtain.

Internationally renowned best-selling author, eminent psychologist and Holocaust survivor, **Dr Edith Eger** headlined ***Stories for the Soul***, AJFN's free online event. While we had hoped to have 150 people attending in person, we had over 800 people register online, with many hosting other family and friends to watch the event together, bringing our viewing numbers to approximately **2,000 people—starting thousands of new conversations about fertility in the community.**

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Key Numbers



2 New Team Members



10 Miracle Babies Born



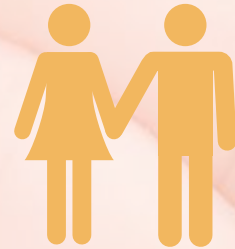
7 Pregnancies Announced



37 IVF Treatments Funded



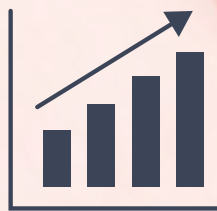
56 Care Packs Delivered



53 Couples Supported



80% Increase in Number of IVF Cycles Funded



300% Increase in Demand for AJFN's Services



2,000+ Community Members Tuned Into Our Events



140K+ Reach on Social Media

\$330K+

\$330k+ Raised for Our Miracle Making Day Appeal

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The Year in Review

AJFN Fertility Knowledge Bank

AJFN is determined to lead the way in education around fertility in our community and beyond and have devised the creation of the AJFN Fertility Knowledge Bank (FKB). In another world-first, the FKB will be a robust collection of free online educational resources including pre-recorded videos, articles, podcasts and links to other websites and resources about every stage of the fertility journey and will be accessible to anyone in our community and beyond. We are delighted to have been successful in securing a grant from the Wolper Jewish Hospital Foundation that will fund the establishment of this important community resource. The launch is planned for October 2021 and will be a vital part of our mission to educate the community about fertility.

Supporting Couples

Whilst we have had many exciting achievements this year, our greatest impact is through the couples that we support and the miracle babies that would not exist without the AJFN community. Over the past year our dedicated volunteer Support Committee have **delivered 56 care packs, 10 Shabbat dinners**, and spent countless hours counselling couples with visits, phone calls and texts via our **Peer Support Program**, with 17 new peer relationships being formed. COVID severely impacted so many couples in the midst of their fertility journeys and we had a 300% increase in financial grant applications, which thanks to your generous support, we were able to meet. *continued on page 8 >*

“ I’m in tears reading this email. Thank you just doesn’t seem to be enough, but it’s all I have right now. Thank you so so much for your emotional support and for AJFN’s financial support. Thank you for making this part of the journey smooth and easy. Please thank the committee for their generosity and compassion. And thank you for never making us feel unworthy or ashamed.

—Applicant on hearing of the support AJFN offers

AJFN Services

If you or someone you know is experiencing infertility, AJFN offers assistance.



Awareness

- Breaking the stigma and opening the conversation
- Advocacy



Emotional Support

- Peer Support Program
- Psychologist referrals
- Care packs
- Shabbat meals



Education

- Educational seminars and online resources



Financial Support

- Grants directly toward fertility treatment costs (means tested)

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The Year in Review

Infertility Awareness Shabbat

Spreading awareness around infertility and working to break the stigma is something that we are passionate about as we know that it helps couples feel less alone. We participated in the global Infertility Awareness Shabbat in March (headed up by Yesh Tikvah), with rabbis and special guest speakers talking about infertility at over 20 shules around Sydney. A strong social media campaign saw our reach increase by 500%, expanding beyond our regular networks.

With the support of Rabbi Dovy Rapaport of Kehillat Kadimah, we partnered for an educational event on Shavuot exploring ***Judaism and Fertility: A professional, halachic and personal view***. The program included leading IVF specialist A/Prof Gavin Sacks from IVF Australia, Rabbi Rapaport and Lori Levin and Lara and Richard Volpe discussed the personal impact of navigating infertility. Events like this are valuable in opening up the conversation around fertility in our community and helping couples on their journey feel heard and supported.

Miracle Babies

There is no greater privilege for us than the announcement of the birth of an AJFN miracle baby. We have welcomed **6 baby boys** and **4 baby girls** this year, bringing the total number of AJFN babies to **35**. This is only possible due to the ongoing support of our generous donors who have enabled us to help every couple that has sought our support. There may not always be a happy ending for every couple, but we ensure that everyone can at least have the chance to *try* without cost being a barrier to their dreams.

We are looking forward to the year ahead with many more exciting developments on the horizon including the launch of the AJFN Fertility Knowledge Bank, scope for expansion into Melbourne and the release of our completed film ***One in Six***.

*When we come together as a community,
we can create miracles.*

“AJFN does such important and meaningful work, helping those struggling to conceive and helping to bring miracle babies into this world. We are very excited and proud to be part of the financial support group and look forward to many years of association.

—AJFN Donor



'One in Six' Documentary



The emotional story of Janine and Shimon Davidowitz's agonising fertility struggle truly resonated with all who witnessed it, which translated into an astounding fundraising effort, with over \$330k raised, enabling us to help **fund 37 treatments for couples**. Aside from the overwhelming response in attendance and the generosity of our donors, the short video of chapter one of their story shared helped reach so many new people who now have a better understanding of the work we do and the heartbreaking reality that one in six couples in our community face.

We are continuing to develop a *world-first* 30 minute documentary following Janine and Shimon's journey (which left our audience with a cliffhanger at the end of 2020's event) and will be doing an advanced screening of this film, titled **One in Six**, at our 2021 Major Event on 8 November. Following our event, *One in Six* will continue to be screened across Australia and abroad and we are excited to announce that ABC's *Compass* will be broadcasting our film in early 2022.

Exclusive advanced screening of *One in Six* at our Major Event on 8 November 2021

If you are experiencing a challenging fertility journey you are not alone.

We are here to help.

Please reach out in complete confidence.

02 7906 8366 | info@ajfn.org.au

