

Securing Our Future

By **Barry Shrage**, President, Combined Jewish Philanthropies

I would like to share with you the reasons why I love the Rashi School; why I think the Rashi school's success is the community's success, and why the future of the Rashi School is so important to the future of the Jewish people and our Jewish community.

In a world where religion is becoming synonymous with murder and serious religious education at times seems more about intolerance and hate than inclusiveness and love, Rashi provides the right model ...**a model of diversity and loving-kindness and values** that are beautiful and that might even be redemptive for all religion and for humankind.

Rashi makes our traditions, our rituals and our spirituality, our sense of responsibility for each other as a Jewish people come alive for children and families alike. It is also a school with a clear message of social responsibility, of meaning and purpose, and a clear vision for our Jewish future.

Rashi is successful because it generates a community whose members care deeply about the school and about each other. Rashi's children learn the importance of caring for the people of the world, not just as an idea, but as a religious responsibility that is an outgrowth of their core identity as Jews.

Today, Jews are yearning for an integrated sense of who we are, combining our identity as Jews and our sense of responsibility for the world, our connection to the Jewish people, and our connection to all of humankind. It's a vision that takes seriously our responsibility for reaching out to interfaith families as an increasingly important part of what we do and who we are. Our very future depends on institutions that can relate to these families' yearning to be fully American and to be part of the Jewish people; their yearning for identity and for serious spiritual engagement.

There is no institution that does this better than The Rashi School.

All of you know of wonderful private schools with beautiful campuses and significant endowments. Those who fund those endowments of those beautiful private schools, some wealthy and some of far more modest means, do so because they believe, appropriately so, that those schools will preserve and carry all the beauty of western civilization and culture for their children and for future generations of Americans.

We all believe in the *beauty and spiritual grandeur of our Jewish culture*, our civilization, our history and philosophy and our values. We all believe that our children's lives will be enriched by exposure to this great Jewish heritage here at Rashi just as they are enriched by their exposure to Shakespeare and Homer and Aristotle.

We all must also believe that *this* institution, upon which the future of our community and our people depends, is just as worthy of support as any of those other great institutions of American education.

This project [to build a new school building in Dedham] is important not only to our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, but it is also important to our parents, and grandparents – because of the connection that The Rashi School makes between our past and our future, because of the vital role that The Rashi School will play on the Hebrew SeniorLife Campus, and because of the role that Hebrew SeniorLife will play in the future of our school.

Our children will learn that they have a past through their contact with the residents of Hebrew SeniorLife and, in turn, the residents of Hebrew SeniorLife will learn that they have a future through our Rashi children.

Future generations will bless us for seizing this opportunity and making this project a reality for our children and future generations of American Jews. It is an honor for me to be part of this great effort.