



Pearlstone



Big News: Pearlstone-Hazon Merger!

IF YOU WILL IT, IT IS NO DREAM- THEODORE HERZL

July 8, 2021

Dear Friends,

We write today with great pride for all we have accomplished together since Pearlstone's founding almost 20 years ago, and even greater excitement for what lies ahead. Yesterday, the Pearlstone board of directors voted unanimously—just a few days after the Hazon board did the same—to approve a merger between [Pearlstone](#) and [Hazon](#), launching a powerful new organization that will catalyze the JOFEE movement ([Jewish Outdoor Food Farming & Environmental Education](#)) and the field of Jewish retreating for years to come. The new national organization will be called Hazon, with Pearlstone serving as national headquarters and with additional major impact hubs at [Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center](#) in Connecticut and also at [Hazon in Detroit](#).

Jakir Manela, Pearlstone's CEO, will serve as the new CEO of Hazon, as visionary CEO-Founder, Nigel Savage, passes the torch to Jakir with his full endorsement and excitement for the future. The new board of directors will include equal representation and leadership from both organizations, and the Pearlstone Advisory Board will continue to oversee our local operations and impact, ensuring that the Pearlstone experience is stronger and more impactful than ever. As a result of this new prominent national leadership role, we anticipate significant growth in our impact through immersive retreats, dynamic outdoor experiential education, hands-on farming and land stewardship, and community sustainability initiatives.

Pearlstone has always been one of the most innovative living laboratories for 21st century American Jewish life, and our [master plan](#) and capital campaign are transforming the [Pearlstone Campus for Living Judaism](#) into a groundbreaking new kind of Jewish institution—an Immersive JOFEE Campus that will grow to impact over 40,000 annual participants. Both Hazon and Pearlstone embody Living Judaism—activating our wisdom tradition to serve our most basic commandment: to repair the world. And both Pearlstone and Hazon have struck a deep chord engaging young children to senior citizens in immersive experiences integrating Jewish wisdom and inspiration, food and farm, song and spirit, community, sustainability, and justice.

The combined organization will manage an estimated \$12 Million budget, over 150 staff, and will directly engage nearly 50,000 program participants annually. The merger is not premised on any job losses, and after extensive due diligence with our merger consultants at [La Piana](#), we can already see that the combined entity to be more impactful with integrated budgets and operations.

Through strategic partnerships across the Jewish world in North America and Israel, and through our own legendary programs—[Teva](#) and [Adamah](#), [Family Farm Camp](#), [Farm & Forest School](#), [the JOFEE Network Gathering](#), the [Hazon Seal of Sustainability](#), [Jewish Youth Climate Movement](#), and more—the new organization will integrate Pearlstone

headquarters and Hazon's leadership of the [JOFEE network](#) in order to catalyze culture change and multiply our impact locally, nationally, and globally.

It is amazing to reflect on how far we have come these past 20 years, and breathtaking to contemplate the exponential impact we can have moving forward together. Our commitment to partnership has been at the heart of our success all these years, and no relationship has been more central than our partnership with [The Associated; Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore](#). We are deeply committed to continuing this strong partnership- with Associated support focused on our local Baltimore community and look forward to sharing lessons learned with allies nationwide who hope to bring this deep Jewish environmental awareness to their own communities.

Join us on this exciting new journey ahead! Click [here](#) to see our joint statement on the merger, and [here](#) to see frequently asked questions. You are welcome to reply to this email to let us know what you think—we are eager to hear from you!

Together we are committed to making Pearlstone, Hazon, and the JOFEE & Jewish retreating movements stronger and more impactful than ever before. And this kind of authentic partnership—both locally and nationally—is exactly what's needed now as we stand at a historic inflection point for America, for the Jewish community, and for the planet. **Together** we will navigate the years ahead, **together** we will face the climate crisis, and **together** we will bring joy, inspiration, and love to youth & families, young adults, leaders, and communities everywhere. As we begin merging Pearlstone & Hazon, our guiding light is our commitment to building a healthier and more sustainable future for Baltimore and for America, for the Jewish people and for all people, for all humanity and for all Creation.

AND IF NOT NOW, WHEN? - RABBI HILLEL

In Partnership,

Richie Pearlstone, Founder

Josh Fidler, Founding Board Chair, Master Plan & Capital Campaign Co-Chair

P.J. Pearlstone, Past Board Chair & Capital Campaign Co-Chair

Marc Terrill, Associated President & CEO

Beth Goldsmith, Associated Board Chair

Emile Bendit, Pearlstone Board President

Rachel Siegal, 1st Vice President & Community Sustainability Chair

Becky Brenner, 2nd Vice President & Treasurer

Aaron Max, Immediate Past Board President

Rachel Steinberg Warschawski, Former Board President

Ilene Vogelstein, Former Board President

Michele Lax, Former Board President

Pacy Oletsky, Former Board President

Carol Press Pristoop, Founding Executive Director

Jakir Manela, Chief Executive Officer