



Contact: Lauren Alexander, 609-213-3945, lalexander@mmjccm.org

Rabbi Joanna Samuels Named Chief Executive Officer of Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

New York, NY (September 14, 2021) -- Today, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan (MMJCCM) announced that **Rabbi Joanna Samuels** will serve as its next Chief Executive Officer. Rabbi Samuels succeeds Rabbi Joy Levitt, who is retiring at the end of December, after nearly 25 years of leadership at the organization and serving as CEO since 2006.

"I am thrilled to lead this outstanding and dynamic institution. The MMJCCM represents what is best about Jewish communal life: a strong sense of values and identity - and an open and welcoming tent. The MMJCCM serves our Upper West Side Community with superb programs and opportunities, while serving as a leader in the field. It is an honor to build upon the incredible efforts that have been made thus far, and to imagine, together with the board, the staff, and the community at large, what the future will hold," shares incoming CEO **Rabbi Joanna Samuels**.

Rabbi Samuels is the founding executive director of New York's Manny Cantor Center, a part of Educational Alliance and a new model of a Jewish community center and settlement house. Prior to founding the Manny Cantor Center, Samuels was the Rabbi of Congregation Habonim in New York City. She also worked as an advocate, strategist, and mentor for women's advancement and gender equity in the community at Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community. A nationally respected spiritual leader and social activist, Samuels graduated from Barnard College, and received rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow and was the first female rabbi honored by the Drisha Institute.

"I am delighted that Rabbi Samuels will be bringing her considerable talent, intelligence, and deep commitment to the Jewish people and New York City to the JCC," says MMJCCM's current CEO **Rabbi Joy Levitt**. "She is exactly the right leader for this moment and I look forward to working closely with her in the months ahead."

"After an exhaustive search with many qualified and exceptional candidates, I am thrilled we were able to find a CEO with Joanna's talent and experience. The board and I are very

excited about the future of the JCC under Joanna's leadership. We are so appreciative of Joy's vast contribution over her two decades at the JCC and look forward to the work she will be doing with us in building a center for innovation for Jewish community and peoplehood," says **Jeff Feig**, Chair of the MMJCCM Board of Directors.

"We're delighted that Rabbi Samuels has been chosen as the new CEO of MMJCCM. She has a stellar record of leadership and is the perfect person to guide MMJCCM in this critical moment for our community," said **Eric S. Goldstein**, CEO, UJA-Federation of New York.

When Samuels assumes the role on January 1, 2022, she will set a strategic vision for the future of the JCC, and play a critical role in resource development, day to day operations, and management of the organization's budget.

Under Rabbi Levitt's leadership, the non-profit MMJCCM has grown into one of the largest JCCs in the country. Highlights of Rabbi Levitt's tenure at the JCC include imagining and opening the 14-story, state-of-the-art JCC building; overseeing the creation of groundbreaking programs such as the ReelAbilities and Other Israel Film Festivals, Jewish Journeys, Adaptations, and the Parkinson's Wellness Program; as well as launching ten Centers of Excellence and expansion sites at JCC Harlem and Camp Settoga. Levitt has also shepherded the JCC throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, responding to critical needs in the community and successfully pivoting JCC programming and events online in record numbers.

About the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing Jewish landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. It also presents a robust slate of virtual programming, serving an even wider community. The JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. Throughout COVID-19, the JCC has pivoted to meet the community online, exceeding 102,000 registrations to over 3,000 virtual classes and programs in the earliest part of the pandemic. Since its inception, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that reach beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at mmjccm.org

###