



Understanding Our Differences

The Leader in Disability Awareness Education

Board of Directors 2019-2020

Board Officers

Co-President

Katherine Read is a community leader who worked for many years in public finance including as the CFO of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and as a Senior Managing Consultant for Public Financial Management, Inc. Katherine has been a classroom volunteer and leader for UOD. Katherine has undergraduate degrees in Political Science and Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley and a Master's degree in Public and Private Management from Yale University and a Master's degree in Education from Harvard University.

Co-President

Kim Freedman is the Program Coordinator of the Child Assault Prevention (CAP) program for Newton and Brookline, addressing bullying, violence and sexual assault through safety workshops to elementary school children. She has also been a UOD coordinator and volunteer for over 15 years. Kim received her B.A. in Economics at Dartmouth College and her M.B.A. at Boston College Carroll School of Management.

Treasurer

Dale Smith has a consulting practice serving leading Boston area institutions such as Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Neighborhood Health Plan (Allways Healthcare), Boston Children's Hospital and the Beth Israel-Deaconess system. Dale received her A.B. in Sociology from Harvard University, and her M.B.A. from Columbia University Graduate School of Business.

Clerk

Ellie Pierce is the research director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. Ellie is also a filmmaker with a special focus on disability: her short films include *Autism: A Somali-American Story* (2013) and *Les Deux* (2019). She is the former director of the ReelAbilities Film Festival in Boston. Ellie received her undergraduate degree in Anthropology and International Studies from Macalester College. She has a Master's degree from the Harvard Divinity School.

Board Members At Large

Gary Alpert is currently an Educational Specialist at Gateways. Prior to that he was the Director of After School at Jewish Community Day School of Boston (JCDS) for fourteen years and an elementary school classroom teacher for four years. Gary has a B.A. from Brandeis University in Elementary Education, Sociology and Near Eastern Judaic Studies (NEJS) and also holds an Elementary teaching certification from the state of Massachusetts.



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Debby Belt is a senior agent at Hammond Residential Real Estate. She is a former board member of the Fiedler Hillel at Northwestern University. Debby was the PTO president of Angier School, the chairperson of the Journey to Safety Committee, and has held leadership positions at Combined Jewish Philanthropies where she has chaired many fundraising and leadership development programs. She has Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL.

Debbie Berechman is the Executive Director, Global Initiatives & Community Engagement, Brandeis International Business School. She has an extensive background in higher education administration, working with all aspects of programming from admissions to alumni relations. Formerly she was the Executive Director of the MBA Program at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Debbie holds a B.A. in Political Science from Brandeis University and an M.S. in Communications Management from Simmons College.

Cara Coller changed career paths and became an advocate for children with special needs and medical complexities after becoming a mother of three children, all of whom have special needs. She runs the Watertown SEPAC and is Co-President of the Perkins Parent Advisory Council at the Perkins School for the Blind. She is also a member of her temple's inclusion committee, and actively involved with CJP, Gateways and Yachad. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a minor in Art History and Photography from the University of Miami.

Sunitha Das is currently a doctoral student at Harvard University, pursuing studies in Indian art, Hindu studies, Sanskrit and Tamil. Sunitha is a member of the Board of Overseers at the Museum of Fine Arts and is on the Board of Directors at JF&CS, serving on their Disability Advisory Committee. She graduated from Bangalore University with a B.A. and earned a B.S. from Purdue University. She also has an M.B.A. from Boston University.

Debbie DeBotton is a Food Allergy educator and advocate who currently serves on the Board of Directors at Temple Emanuel and on the Inclusion Committee. Debbie has served as a parent advocate and gained accommodations for students with food allergies within the Newton Public School System and helped create the current UOD Allergic Conditions Unit.

Deborah Doktor is a retired educator. She was a lower and middle school General Studies teacher at Solomon Schechter Day School in Worcester, MA and served as Lower School Coordinator for one year and Middle School Coordinator for two years. Deborah is a current Citywide Volunteer for UOD. She has a B.A. from Elmira College, an M.A. from Boston University, an M.Ed from Anna Maria College and a Paralegal Certificate from Northeastern University

Jini Fairley is currently the ADA Coordinator for the City of Newton. She began her involvement with UOD in 1981 when her oldest child was in 4th grade. She was a volunteer, unit leader and school coordinator for almost 20 years.



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Amy Fleischman, MD is a pediatric endocrinologist who has worked at Boston Children's Hospital for the last 20 years. She was a PTO and school sports program volunteer for the last 11 years. She has a Master's degree in Clinical Investigation from Harvard/MIT, an M.D. from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and a B.S. in Biology from Yale University.

Laurie Gershkowitz is a community leader. She concentrates her philanthropic endeavors on raising money for cancer research, supporting Jewish causes, and raising awareness for people with disabilities. She is co-president of Sisterhood and board member at Congregation Mishkan Tefila and has served on the executive board of CJP Women's philanthropy. Laurie has a B.S. in Communications Disorders from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and an M.B.A. from Suffolk University in 1993.

Marcia E. Herrmann, MD is a retired pediatrician with experience in anti-bullying programs, violence prevention, and advocating for children and families with disabilities through her work at Harvard Vanguard Kenmore and Boston area hospitals. She was a volunteer for Understanding Handicaps in her children's classes and a UOD Citywide Volunteer. Marcia has served as President of UOD. She has an A.B. in History and Science from Harvard University and an M.D. from Boston University School of Medicine.

Deborah Marlino is a retired professor of marketing and former business school associate dean. She has served on the faculty at the MIT Sloan School of Management and at Simmons College, and has held senior administrative positions both at the Simmons College and Boston University Schools of Management. Deborah holds degrees from the University of Tennessee (B.A., M.B.A.) and UCLA (Ph.D.).

Barbara Meltz is a retired award-winning journalist. She worked at The Boston Globe for 30 years, where she was a nationally syndicated parenting columnist. She is the author of "Put Yourself in Their Shoes, Understanding How Your Children See the World." She is a trustee of the Newton Free Library. Her other volunteer work includes leading parenting discussions for adult English language learners.

Eric Navales is a Managing Director with L.E.K. Consulting, a global strategy consulting firm. He has been a Board member of UOD for 2 years and was the organization's Boston Marathon fundraising runner in 2016.

Erika Pond is a community leader. She worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist specializing in pediatric dysphagia in both private practice and hospital settings. She has been an active volunteer in her community, including volunteering for Understanding Our Differences in her children's classrooms and as a parent coordinator. Erika has undergraduate degrees in Biology and



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Psychology from Duke University and a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology from Vanderbilt University.

Pete Sperber is school adjustment counselor in Woburn Public Schools and has been a school social worker at Jewish Community Day School of Greater Boston. Pete also volunteers in the area as a school crisis counselor, a critical incident clinician and a medical clown. He has a B.A. in Mathematics from Binghamton University and an LICSW.

Matt Yospin is a patent and intellectual property attorney with years of experience in providing legal services and experience in the business world. He works with businesses, entrepreneurs, non-profits, and inventors in a range of intellectual property and contractual work. He has a B.A. in Environmental Science from Columbia University and a J.D. from Boston College Law School.

Emerita

Board President Emerita

Carol Beard has been a Newton resident for over 50 years and was the founder of the program that has become Understanding Our Differences. In the 1970s, when her twin sons were diagnosed as developmentally delayed before their third birthday, she worked tirelessly to give them a "regular" childhood. She has been active in many other local non-profit organizations, including a long history with Newton Wellesley Weston Committee for Community Living.

Executive Director Emerita

Beth Mendel served as Executive Director of Understanding Our Differences from 1997 to 2011. Currently Executive Director Emerita of UOD, and Member of the Corporation at Perkins School for the Blind, she is retired and enjoys spending time with her family and grandchildren. She majored in mathematics as an undergraduate and went on to earn an M.B.A. degree.