Lori Kronzon and Elana Silver have been close friends since they were 17 years old, sharing in monumental milestones such as serving as bridesmaids in each other's weddings and being among the first hospital visitors to welcome their respective friend's new babies. They even found ways to share their Upper East Side/Upper West Side neighborhood gap when they both lived in New York City, often meeting with their young families in Central Park. When the Silver family moved from Manhattan to New Jersey, Lori and Elana remained close: however their day-to-day routines diverged until a series of unexpected events brought their families together in new and meaningful ways – and the JCC was the connecting thread.

Elana, a Bergen County native, moved back to the area from New York City, often meeting with her husband Liron, fully intending on raising their twins Jonathan and Keren as "city kids." Both Lori and Liron come from families imbued with serious musical study, so a musical education for their children was of great importance to them. They began investigating music school options when their twins were 3½ years old. "We made inquiries at some of the well-known NYC conservatories," says Lori, "and while the programs were amazing, nearly all of them offered the majority of their mandatory classes and recitals on Saturdays, and couldn’t accommodate our Shabbat observance."

"By complete chance, I happened to share my frustration with my friend, Carey White Miller, who I knew to be an incredibly talented and accomplished violinist. What I did not know was that Carey also happened to be the Artistic Director of Violin Groups at the JCC Thurnauer School of Music. Carey gave Thurnauer a stellar endorsement, equating it to the finest NYC pre-college conservatories. "

"For years, my kids did everything at the J except study music," Elana explains with a laugh. "But once Jonathan and Keren entered the picture, we added Thurnauer to our JCC routine. Ethan plays classical guitar, Sarah studies flute, and Emily studies both piano and flute. Their musical interests have grown into something incredible that all five of them share. They are 100% committed to their instruments, their group classes, the recitals and the social interactions the school provides."
time constructively. Just a few years later, we see the unbelievable impact the JCC programming has had on our children’s development. The confidence and self-esteem they have derived from their JCC activities have become an invaluable part of their identities.”

On a typical weekday, all five kids are actively engaged at the J. Ethan has guitar lessons and plays with the guitar group; Sarah and Emily take flute lessons and participate in flute groups; and Emily takes piano. Jonathan studies both piano and saxophone while Keren takes a cello lesson and then joins her friends for rehearsals in the Strings Camarata. After class, all the kids often gather in the Cafe for a snack before the Silver kids hit the pool for their intensive swim team routine. On Sundays, the kids frequently head to the gym to run the track or play basketball, while Lori and Elana debrief each other on their week or head to the gym for Pilates, Yoga, or a great Spin class.

I can’t overstate the value of these experiences,” Lori concludes. “The Thurnauer School of Music and the JCC community have given our children experiences they never would have known. They study music with children from around the globe and it gives them an expanded view on life through the platform of music, which is universal and unifying. The community we have found at the JCC is a gift.

Recently, our children performed at a recital and one of the JCC and Thurnauer founders, Sandra Gold, was sitting in the audience with a close friend, watching one of her grandchildren perform. It was so touching to see, and I turned to Elana and said: I want that to be us one day, coming to the JCC to watch our grandchildren play music here.”

It’s been an incredible journey, and both Lori and Elana credit the JCC for being a constant, connecting thread in their lives.

As Elana shares, “My life truly revolves around the Center, and the more I think about how it all came to pass, the more I appreciate its unique and special value. I introduced Lori to the JCC, but she introduced my family to Thurnauer; and now our children share these incredible bonds that reflect a blend of both our family’s interests. I find this pretty amazing.

The quality and caliber of the programming are beyond compare, but it’s the way the JCC brings people together and shapes the course of their lives that makes it stand apart. It’s something I will be forever grateful for.”