



Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC

Interview with Laura Friedman,
Robert Wojciechowski and
Stephanie Johnson

We were delighted to sit down with Laura Friedman, Executive Director of Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC at Bridgewater to discuss their aquatics only to find that we had the pleasure of meeting with both Stephanie Johnson (Aquatics Director) and Robert Wojciechowski, Maintenance Director at the same time.

Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC just celebrated their 25th year. Built in 1999, at its heart, this is a non-discriminatory social service agency catering to the residents of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties. Their membership and staff have grown tremendously over the last quarter century. Open 7 days a week, they pride themselves on being available to help the community in any way possible. They have partnerships raising funds for multiple agencies and social service outreach programs and whatever you are looking for, you can find there from aquatics to kids' camps, special Olympics to special needs and adult education to JCC education. Most services they offer are free of charge. It's always such a great testament to the culture of an organization when the staff are long-standing and in this meeting the minimum staff tenure was 15 years.

We have been working together since late 2008 and we were calling to discuss how their move towards a more sustainable aquatic environment back in 2008 affected their organization.



*"We have a thriving aquatics center, and **our pools are the touchpoint for getting people in the door.** The salt systems are a big selling point, and the pools are definitely in the top 3 draws as to why people are joining."*

As Aquatic Director, Steph, who has worked there from the outset pointed out that when they started out, they used chlorine and then switched to bromine due to people complaining about health issues such as itchy eyes, skin irritations, trouble breathing, coughing, lung issues and the smell. The bromine was just as bad.

According to Steph, *"I understood the **benefits of salt, so it really was a no-brainer to switch over and it's well worth the money!** We made the right decision for our members when we switched over to the TMI system. All the **swimmer feedback was positive after the conversion** and the looks on people's faces when they hear about our system – they love it! The **board of health always finds us in compliance** so they like it too. It really has been nothing but positive."*

On the maintenance side, Robert had this to say: *"The TMI system is much easier to work with. **Dumping salt in the pool is heaven sent compared to working with chlorine.** If you do the routine maintenance everything runs smoothly. The Tech Support has always been available and working with TMI is a breeze."*

Laura had done a **Spotlight** with TMI back in 2014 at which time she spoke about how it was to work with TMI: *"**We believe that we have more efficient support from TMI's Remote Support program than we would have had with a local dealer. We can pick up the phone and get answers (almost instantly).**"*

