AS THE YEAR 2007 APPROACHED, the National Ramah professional leadership team gathered to discuss how to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Ramah Camping Movement, which began in Wisconsin in 1947. I sat in my office with our senior leadership: Amy Skopp Cooper, our national assistant director; Jeff Goodman, our national business manager; and Nancy Scheff, our communications director. Along with Mort Steinberg, the immediate past president of the National Ramah Commission (NRC), and Jeff Kress, assistant professor of Jewish Education and a senior research assistant at the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), these outstanding leaders helped develop the vision for this celebration that is finally coming to a conclusion with the publication of this volume.

In October of 2007, National Ramah hosted “Ramah: Onward from 60,” a conference and celebration at JTS that was attended by more than 400 people. In addition to a keynote speech by the new JTS chancellor, Arnold Eisen, the day included a panel discussion on the impact of Ramah, featuring Ramah lay leaders Ab Flatt and Julie Beren Platt and philanthropist Harold Grinspoon; Jerry Silverman, then president of the Foundation for Jewish Camping; John Ruskay, the president and chief executive officer of UJA–Federation of New York; and Peter Geffen, founder of Kivunim and the Heschel School in New York City. Excerpts from Chancellor Eisen’s keynote speech and the panel discussion are included in this volume. The conference also included breakout sessions led by Howard Blas, Steve Brown, Margaret Danishefsky, Joe Freedman, Michael Greenbaum, Ariela Keysar, Jeff Kress, Joe Reimer, Shuly Rubin Schwartz, and Yaara Shteinhart-Moghadam, many

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MITCHELL COHEN

Celebrating Ramah at 60
of whom have authored chapters in this volume. Of course, there was Israeli
dancing and Jewish music throughout the celebration.

In the evening, everyone watched the premiere of a new short docu-
mentary, Transforming Lives: Ramah at 60, an excellent presentation that cap-
tured the feelings of Ramahniks across the generations. We thank Charles
Wantman, president of Audio Vistas, who generously donated many hours of
his professional services to the production of Transforming Lives. Amy Skopp
Cooper was instrumental in creating the vision for this project and in the plan-
ning of the entire conference and celebration.

We are grateful to the many speakers, participants, and discussion lead-
ers who brought their expertise and passion to the Ramah sixtieth-anniversary
conference and celebration. National Ramah was fortunate to have a terrific
group to organize this event. Nancy Scheff supervised all aspects of our com-
munications. Orlie Prince, the conference coordinator, masterfully handled
registration and logistics, in conjunction with Eileen Kern, the NRC book-
keeper. Our marketing and communications assistant, Michael Edelstein, was
instrumental in the implementation of all aspects of event production. Scott
Topal, a longtime Ramah Nyack staff member, helped to create a terrific multi-
media presentation. Jeff Goodman oversaw all event planning and made cer-
tain that no detail was overlooked. He coordinated the efforts of the National
Ramah team, which included Judy Greene, Steven Gross, Shoshana Holzberg-
Pill, and Shana Zionts, as well as a group of energetic student volunteers.

Finally, I want to thank my wonderful friends, Ab and Phyllis Flatt of
Toronto, for their financial support of all the events celebrating Ramah’s sixti-
eth anniversary. Ab and Phyllis are longtime supporters of Camp Ramah in
Canada, as well as Ramah camping throughout the world.