



**Jewish Community Services Presentation**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on June 2, 2011**



*This speech was presented to attendees of the Jewish Community Services  
Annual Meeting on June 2, 2011.*

I am pleased to be with you here this evening to celebrate the achievements of Jewish Community Services.

My message is very simple: This is a time of maximum uncertainty! We are in reset. Jewish Community services, like all institutions in this community, must adapt. This will take courage, but you must have a sense of urgency and courage to carry out this reset.

I have the privilege of being named president of FIU—just 18 months ago. Some asked why I would want to become president at a time like this - federal and state budgets collapsing, net worth shrinking, philanthropy declining, people demoralized and losing their will! The proverbial glass was not just half full, it was empty.

That was offset by several obvious facts. First, we had thousands of students who were counting on us to get it right. Second, we understood that now more than ever, kids and adults needed more education, not less, to have a chance out there. Thirdly, that in this time of difficulty, there would be opportunity.

You see, in the good times, there is less of a need to innovate and rethink. So, you might ask, what exactly is that opportunity? For FIU, it was obvious. Our mission: to provide a high quality education to our students through instruction and research, and provide service to our community allowed us to reframe, in the midst of the dramatic economic decline of our country our mission.

A component of this reframing? To embrace a new strategy of community engagement. To use the blessings of our research and creative energies to address community issues - in essence, to be a solutions center for the community. The first step was to name Dr. Divina Grossman as our new Vice President for Engagement. Who better but Dr. Grossman: a nurse educator, an entrepreneur, a healer with a deeply embedded ethos of Tzedakah? Several lessons from this institutional reset? Faculty and professional staff were very pleased. It was the right thing to do. Demand for partnership with our institution has exceeded our ability to respond! There is need out there. It is deep, it is profound, and it must be addressed.

In many ways, there are so many parallels with Jewish Community Services: if you do not provide help to deliver meals and emergency funds to frail seniors to stay in their own homes – who will? If you do not teach basic job skills to disabled adults – who will? If you do not provide counsel for families in crisis – who will? You see, the social safety net has been shredded. Our sense of charity has been diminished. Our willingness to use state support to provide comfort is shrinking. So indeed, it is in times like this, when you must not step back, you must step up.

I know that this is difficult, but you are an anchor institution in this community. You have the opportunity, in deed the obligation, to reset and get on with your mission. And because you are Jewish, a special blessing, you understand that Tzedakah is an inherent part of our identity that helps us to realize that we are part of a community to which we have obligations. If it is the case that Judaism is a WE religion, then to quote Rabbi Irving Luchans: “we are a charitable people who take care of each other.”

Tonight is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the principles of Tzedakah, to draw strength from our teachings, to focus our energies and do the right thing through Jewish Community Services. Jewish Community Services is about hope – and a glass that is always at least half full.

Once again, I want to congratulate you for this milestone gathering and thank you for asking me to be a small part of it.