



Samost JFCS NEWS

APRIL 2016

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Southern New Jersey

SKY IS THE LIMIT Special Needs Programs Flying High with Possibilities

For 20 years, the JFCS Special Needs Program staff, generous supporters, and volunteers have combined efforts to ensure that unparalleled initiatives exist, so that individuals with special needs have opportunities to obtain meaningful employment, broaden their social horizons, and develop their untapped potential. The creativity, passion, and skill devoted to these programs are second to none, and JFCS is excited for the possibilities they will bring in the coming year.

SAIL PROGRAM (Supports to Achieve Independent Living) Cruising Under Blue Skies

The SAIL Program provides social and recreational opportunities and life skill supports for high functioning young adults who have graduated from high school. So often, when the school bus stops coming, so do the social opportunities. Activities offered by SAIL fill the gap, and provide enriching experiences which include cultural events, informal get-togethers, lifelong learning classes, community service projects, and participation on Special Olympics teams. Over the last year, SAIL has witnessed tremendous growth, currently boasting over 50 members.

Helping to grow the attendance of these events is the creation of fun, low-cost ideas that utilize the space at the Jewish Federation Annex at 1721 Springdale Road. Moreover, consistent updates to the SAIL Facebook page with photographs and information help to draw more people in.



The program has also addressed the desire to explore events in Philadelphia. "I believe the act of boarding a bus and traveling over the bridge to Philadelphia for an event represents excitement and a break from normal routines," says JFCS SAIL Coordinator Michael Rhodes. "We have attended many Philadelphia 76ers games, a Harlem Globetrotters game, a Philadelphia Flyers game, Eastern State Penitentiary's haunted attraction, and four WWE televised events."

“Untapped potential is the difference between where a person is now and where he or she can be. Bo Bennett”

The newest JFCS Special Olympics floor hockey team, with a full roster of 16 players, received a bronze medal when they participated at the Fall Festival for Hockey Games. A second Special Olympics basketball team was created to accommodate the desire to play, with SAILORS Blue and SAILORS White, each having eight players. "The interest of our SAIL members in Special

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Olympics sports is remarkable, many are trying a team sport for the first time. There is nothing like seeing the excitement on our members' faces, and those of their family members, after scoring their first basket, goal, or shot," says Michael.

States one proud mother of a SAIL participant:

Since joining the SAIL program, Jeff is much more outgoing, and is willing to try new things, such as floor hockey with Special Olympics. This was a huge leap for Jeff since his physical condition makes it difficult to join in sports activities, but our group leader gave us the push we needed. I can honestly say that watching my son put on a hockey uniform and stand on the floor with his teammates was one of the proudest moments I have had as a mom!

JFCS Special Olympics Coach Dan Meyers sums it up perfectly, "The most important thing is the sense of belonging and feeling of accomplishment that participating in the games gives to the participants. To me, that is the purest form of sport."

To find out more about the SAIL Program, or become a coach for our Special Olympics teams, please call Barbara Abrams at 856-424-1333 or email babrams@jfedsnj.org.



SOAR (Social Outings And Recreation) Program Takes Flight

The new SOAR Program, which launched in December and is generously funded by the Jewish Community Foundation, addresses the same needs as SAIL, but for individuals with moderate intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, who need greater

oversight. SOAR offers its members the opportunity to do community-based activities with peers on the weekends.

Linda Newman, a parent of a SOAR participant and driving force behind the creation of the program, states:

We saw how happy our son Max was when he had weekend recreational/social events in the community to look forward to, such as bowling, movies, and water parks through the Dubrow BBYO. However, when he turned 21, he was no longer eligible to participate in that school-age group. To continue to give Max and his peers these experiences, it was imperative to my husband and I that we find an organization willing to create a program for their level.

When she approached JFCS at a Special Needs committee meeting, the initiative was unanimously supported - and SOAR was born. Linda says that SOAR is successful due to the group of dedicated volunteer parents who help to plan events and coordinate attendance of members. She also mentions that high school and college-age volunteers, along with JFCS dedicated staff member Corey Panati, help to make this tremendous program a reality.

The program is currently welcoming volunteers and new members to SOAR. For more information, contact Barbara Abrams at 856-424-1333 or email babrams@jfedsnj.org.



WHY NOT?

Why not employ individuals with special needs?

WHY NOT, INDEED!

All individuals have the right to seek real jobs, for real pay, and live meaningful, productive lives by working within their community.



Our Soups and Sweets special needs culinary training program prepares young adults for employment in the food service industry. To date, 70% of the graduates have obtained jobs and are following their dreams!

Try some delicious Soups and Sweets offerings at your next professional event or family gathering - all sales support the program!

To place your order, call 856-533-8090 or email soupsandsweets@jfedsnj.org!

ONE WOMAN, ONE AGENCY and Two Decades of Hope and Help

Without question, everyone faces challenges in life. Some people, however, seem to get more than their fair share. One such individual is JFCS client Loretta. For close to twenty years, she has been the beneficiary of the compassionate and caring staff, and diverse services offered by the agency.

Loretta's story with JFCS began two decades ago, when the mother of two came to the agency, desperately in need of counseling. Suffering from generalized anxiety disorder, Loretta was in a constant state of worry and distress. Even the most mundane tasks were unnerving. Taking the step to enter into counseling was frightening, but she recognized that if she wanted a better quality of life, she needed to learn tools and techniques to help manage her stressors.

Those coping skills proved vital for Loretta when she was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma in December of 2010, and the treatment required hours of grueling chemotherapy. Shortly after going into remission, she suffered a recurrence of the cancer, along with very difficult side effects from the treatment. Then, in October of 2013, Loretta's beloved husband fell extremely ill. Initially believing it to be the flu, the family knew the problem was much more serious when he could not remember the names of friends, grandchildren, or the President of the United States. He was diagnosed with a rare brain virus. A result of his illness was that Loretta could no longer rely on her spouse for things he traditionally did, like driving her to - and helping her to understand - her own medical appointments.

With this in mind, Loretta's counselor, Sandy Kabel, JFCS Assistant Director, Clinical Services, connected her to the JFCS Patient Partners Program, which provides trained volunteer advocates who drive clients to their doctor appointments, record information during the visit, and ensure follow through with next steps. "I was helping her deal with her husband's diagnosis and her own through counseling, but I knew we had a program just down the hall from me that could help her with other pressing needs," says Sandy.

Suzi Abrams, a registered nurse and JFCS Patient Partners Coordinator, set Loretta up with Lyn, a Patient Partners

volunteer. "Lyn is amazing," says Loretta. "I get very, very nervous at the appointments, and Lyn writes down the information for me. She really has to go through a lot; sometimes my treatments last for hours. I have CAT scans, and follow up appointments. It's not easy, but she does it," says Loretta.

Soon after they met, during a routine doctor appointment, Loretta became extremely ill and required admission to the hospital. Lyn, a retired HR manager, would find herself deeply embedded in a medical emergency, and spent over 14 hours by Loretta's side, providing comfort and advocacy. "I was so happy Lyn was there with me. Having someone by your side can really give you peace of mind," said Loretta.

In 2014, Loretta had the opportunity to go on trial medication to combat her cancer, and JFCS was there every step of the way. Through continued counseling, patient advocacy, transportation assistance, and loving support, Loretta and her JFCS family formed a formidable alliance against her unwelcome disease. "I don't have a lot of family around here. I don't have a load of friends. My close friends live elsewhere," said Loretta. "Having the people of JFCS is important to me. They have always been there when I have felt alone and scared. I love Suzi. I love Sandy. I love Lyn."

The feeling is mutual.

"Loretta had a hard upbringing, grew up in poverty, put herself through school - and she always picks herself by her bootstraps and moves on," says Sandy. "Her energy has won my total respect. She's gotten knocked down, and just keeps getting up."

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ABOVE AND BEYOND TO HELP OTHERS...

“Reach out and touch somebody’s hand. Make this world a better place, if you can.”



Those lyrics, sung by Diana Ross back in 1970, remain just as relevant in 2016. The Rhona Fischer (z"l) Family Assistance Program (FAP) embraces the meaning behind that song, helping thousands in Southern New Jersey every year, so that they may begin to write their own songs of hope and independence. The FAP program is designed to address emergent needs in times of vulnerability and economic challenge, with a goal of helping people to help themselves.

As the needs of our community have grown, so has the breadth of services offered by the program. Whether someone needs help putting food on the table, finding a job, escaping an abusive relationship,

paying bills during cancer treatments, accessing public entitlements, or a host of other scenarios, the program is here to make this world a better, more compassionate place.

TRAINING, COUNSELING, AND RESOURCES FOR JOB SEEKERS

October marked the launch of Career Strategies, a vocational services program for individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking a job change. This program, a proud partnership between JFCS and JEVS Human Services, empowers individuals of all ages to find satisfying employment suited to their skills, interests, and abilities.

New Jersey has the 33rd highest unemployment rate in the U.S., at 6.5%. While this may not seem particularly high, the reality is that many JFCS clients and community members are struggling.

For some, the effects of the recession still linger, and they have not been able to re-enter the workforce, or re-enter at the level they once were. Others become derailed from their career goals during times of challenge, such as job loss, illness or divorce. The marketplace itself is challenging, and has little tolerance for those whose careers have staggered or who are not proficient with the most recent technology.

To fill these needs, Career Strategies offers one-on-one job counseling and a variety of workshops on resume writing, interview skills, networking, job search strategies, and computer literacy. The program is unique in that it has a devoted Job Development Specialist who actively seeks jobs for Career Strategies clients. This individual not only hunts for jobs, but also

conducts post-employment follow up, to ensure a smooth and successful transition into the new position. In just a few months, the program has welcomed nearly 3 dozen clients, and hosted more than 75 individuals in various workshops.

The mission of the initiative is to focus on the positive, and help candidates develop the necessary skills to appeal to potential employers. Sam, a Career Strategies client, was depressed, with low self-esteem. He was embarrassed at his current living situation with his parents, and unfocused in previous attempts to seek employment after being a small business owner. He lacked motivation to move forward. His relationship with Career Strategies resulted in prioritizing his career goals, planning out a job search process, engaging with others via group workshops, and improving his networking skills. He is now not only reenergized to dive back into the job-seeking process, but also feels better prepared and hopeful of finding success to turn his employment and living situation around.

For more information on the Career Strategies Program, call 856-673-2502 or email CSNJ@jevs.org.



RHONA FISCHER (z"l) FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EXPANDS SERVICES TO MEET NEEDS

OUTREACH INITIATIVES ABOUT COLLEGE CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT



Sexual assault on college campuses is a serious and alarming problem. According to a recent survey conducted by the Association of American Universities (AAU) involving 150,000 students from 27 universities (including all Ivy League colleges except Princeton):

Among female college students, 23% said they experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact - ranging from kissing to touching to rape - carried out by force, or while they were incapacitated because of alcohol and drugs. Nearly 11% said the unwanted contact included penetration or oral sex.

For years, universities have sought to cover up these incidents, as they threaten reputation and tuition dollars. Thankfully, courageous victims, aggressive media, and concerned legislators are shining a light on this national crisis. Campus sexual assault has been recently highlighted in the groundbreaking film "The Hunting Ground," which the JFCS Project SARAH (Stop Abusive Relationships At Home) Program, in partnership with the office of Senator James Beach, showed to nearly 200 community members in October. Jennifer, a mother of an 18-year old, collegebound daughter, was shocked by the film's content. "You just don't think that these things really happen. You think that this is the stuff from horror movies, or after-school specials. I think every parent just wants to believe that this isn't real."

Hilary Platt, Coordinator for the Project SARAH Program, says that education is the key, and preparing students for college culture will be one of the main focuses this year. "Our mission is to face this head on, to open the conversation and bring this out into the light, so people don't have to live in shame, and these attacks don't get brushed under the rug." Through Building Healthy Relationships, Platt has been engaging middle school and high school students for several years on what it means to be in a healthy relationship. A recent outgrowth of these programs is Packing For College, a college preparatory program designed specifically for 11th and 12th graders.

Packing for College educates students on the statistics of dating violence on college campuses, providing valuable resources and prevention tips. It also covers issues of consent related to sexual assault, and the consequences of sexual text messaging, or "sexting." In addition to these workshops, which will be held throughout the year, project SARAH will be holding an event called Protect U for parents and students on May 24 at 7 PM at the Katz JCC. The evening will feature a panel presentation focused on giving students the tools, plans, and knowledge needed to keep them safe on college campuses.

To register for the upcoming Protect U event, or for more information on how you can attend or hold a workshop, please call Hilary Platt at 856-424-1333 or email hplatt@jfedsnj.org.



NEED FOR FOOD ADDRESSED

More New Jersey residents are living in poverty than in the past five decades, translating to roughly 2.8 million adults and 800,000 children. (Courier-Post,

February 2016) To make things worse, food stamp benefits for nearly 11,000 of those individuals will expire in a few months.

South Jersey is not immune to this crisis, as The Betsy and Peter Fischer Food Pantries witnessed a dramatic increase of 25% in the number of food-insecure families served last year. "Almost 7,000 individuals were given over \$200,000 worth of food," says Andi Loew, JFCS Director of Volunteers. "We rely heavily on donations of food to stock our shelves, and are thankful for the support from the community, which helps us offset the difficulties

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FAP EXPANDS SERVICE Continued from page 5

our neighbors are facing. Sadly, we do not anticipate a decline in need anytime soon.”

Food insecurity does not discriminate. “We recently received a call to help a disabled, elderly woman. She was living out of a hotel. When we delivered the food, the woman had only 3 water bottles in her possession as far as food and drink. The lack of food can compromise health, so I am glad we could be there. We have to be,” says Andi. Many times, Andi notes, people are surprised to find out just how mainstream the problem of food insecurity is, stating that many of those coming to the pantries could be your next door neighbor, your child’s baseball coach, or even someone in your extended family.

New concepts for food-collection are needed now more than ever, as we must pursue every avenue to nourish as many individuals as we can. In furtherance of this goal, JFCS is holding a six-week long food collection until Passover, in collaboration

with synagogues and organizations, increased from a week-long initiative last year. The hope is that donations will increase as families have a longer, more convenient time-frame to take advantage of the opportunity to give. Moreover, the opportunity exists to host a food drive online (www.jfcsfighthunger.causevox.com), and we have seen the rise of children organizing their own drives for Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, school projects and in lieu of birthday presents.

We are constantly heartened by the caring individuals who are trying to make a difference and end hunger. If you would like to hold a food collection at your place of work, or through your social group, please reach out. Or, if you have another idea as to how we can bring in more food, we’d love to hear it!

For information on giving to the Betsy and Peter Fischer Food Pantries, call Andi Loew at 856-424-1333 or email aloew@jfedsnj.org.



EXPANDING THE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

At JFCS, we are immensely grateful for all of the veterans who have bravely stood for our freedoms, and consider it our duty to now support them. Transportation to critical medical care continues to be the biggest hurdle for this population. Through our Take

the Wheel program, we pair veteran and non-veteran drivers with veterans in need of their service, so that they can get to their appointments and needed treatments.

“When our veterans are unable to travel to the VA medical centers and clinics, their continuity of care is jeopardized. Take the Wheel is not only available to aging veterans, but we are also here for those younger veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) that cannot drive,” says Nina Staiman, Take the Wheel Program Coordinator.

Our goal for the coming year is to make Take the Wheel a ‘go to’ service for area veterans, both as clients and volunteers. Nina states that continued community awareness is the way to make that happen. “I believe outreach is the cornerstone to the success of the Take the Wheel program,” she says. Already, Nina has met with the

Camden County Office of Veterans Affairs, the County of Burlington Department of Human Services Division of Military & Veterans Services, and the Disabled Veterans National Foundation to talk about needs and opportunities for partnership, and will continue to educate the community at large through meetings and events. One such veteran-centered event is the “Flagging of the Graves,” which will take place on Sunday, May 22nd. JFCS will be collaborating with the American Legion Post 372 to flag the graves of veterans at the Locustwood Cemetery on Route 70 in Cherry Hill. Says Nina, “We hope to have a lot of volunteers attend to continue to show their appreciation for our veterans who have passed.”

The mission of the program, and the motivation of the volunteers is inspirational. Ed, a volunteer driver, said “I enjoy my time with the veterans, especially those from World War II and the Korean War, and hearing their stories. Since I didn’t serve in the armed forces, I am now giving time to help those that protected my family’s freedoms. It is an honor.”

JFCS is grateful for the generous sponsorships of Verizon/NJ Shares, Rothkoff Law Group and the Golkow Family in memory of Robert Berman, for enabling us to do this important work.

40% of veterans say transportation is the biggest hurdle to getting care

For information on the Take the Wheel Veterans Program, call Nina Staiman at 856-424-1333 or email nstaiman@jfedsnj.org.



GETTING REAL ABOUT AGING

Boomers find step-by-step planning and unique services to address the changing landscape of growing older



Aging is not what it used to be. People are living longer, and thriving! Through advancements in technology, medicine, and healthy living, people are staying active and strong. In these times, it is easy to forget that preparation is still important. Unfortunately, many wait until an urgent situation arises before thinking about the future.

Gail Belfer, Director of the JFCS Senior Services Department says, “As parents and loved ones age, many react at the time of crisis, rather than plan in advance. Realizing that the services of licensed professionals are available can act as an ‘insurance policy’ and support system. It is often the adult children, those of the baby boomer generation, who initially contact JFCS to express concern, or inquire as to how JFCS can help mom or dad.”

The master’s-trained, licensed social workers at JFCS empower boomers and their parents to take control of their personal circumstances and develop short and long-term goals to maintain a healthy and meaningful lifestyle. The holistic approach to aging means considering every aspect of an individual’s life, including the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social components. Lee, age 60, says that he now calls JFCS for two reasons – for his own needs and for those of his parents:

I called initially to get meal delivery and a homecare nurse for my parents, who live nearby and wanted to remain in their home. I soon realized that I needed some of the services offered by the senior department as well, including one-on-one counseling, and also a support group for caregivers. I think everyone should understand that each stage of life requires assistance – and that it’s okay to ask for it.

The Senior Services Department offers resource consultations, which may include valuable referrals for remaining independent at home, housing alternatives, public entitlements, caregiving, bereavement, and issues of adjustment. In doing so, JFCS remains on top of trends and the needs of our community members.

“The recently recreated group entitled ‘Encore!,’ sponsored by Timothy Rice Elder and Estate Law, helps widows and widowers age 60 and older, who lost a life partner more than two years ago. Grief, relationships with family and friends, planning for the future, dating, and finding a ‘new normal’ are some of the topics discussed,” says Rebecca Rosenau, Associate Director of the JFCS Senior Services Department. “At that stage of loss, personal growth and healing has a specific set of issues.”

With a rising population of older Americans, there is also an increased number of caregivers. Frequently exhausted and overwhelmed, they desperately need support for themselves while they are supporting others. JFCS facilitates a monthly support group, open to the community, and hosted by Arden Courts Memory Care Assisted Living. This group is unique in that the caregiver may bring the individual they are caring for. While the caregiver attends a confidential, supportive session, respite care is available for the care recipient.

Proper planning is essential, so that life can be enjoyed without anxiety or fear of the future. The Senior Services Department of JFCS is here and excited to participate in the process. **For further information on all of the services offered through JFCS, please contact Gail Belfer at 856-424-1333 or email gbelfer@jfedsnj.org.**



ONE WOMAN Continued from page 3

Lyn says, "I consider Loretta my friend, and we share a lot. We have jokes between us, and have a special relationship. I can honestly say that being a patient advocate is probably one of the most important things I have ever done. I am proud of how Loretta has gotten through this. She inspires me."

Suzi still gets a tear when she talks about Loretta. "She is a fighter. We believe in her, and we are all in her corner."

Now cancer free, confident, and strong, Loretta reflects on the harrowing days of her past. "I don't know what I would have done without all of the help I have received from JFCS. I really don't. I am so grateful for all the different ways they helped me, and continue to help me, through the years, through so much," says Loretta.

“ JFCS has always been there when I have felt alone and scared. I love Suzi. I love Sandy. I love Lyn...”
- Loretta, JFCS Client

Loretta is not alone. So many people in our community rely upon JFCS in times of challenge. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and volunteers, we can make stories like these happen every day. It is only with the support of others that we are able to provide help, reassurance, and hope for a better tomorrow.

To find out more about any of the programs mentioned in Loretta's story, please call 856-424-1333.

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For information on sponsorships, planned giving, or other giving opportunities, please call Beth Wynne at 856-424-1333 or email bwynne@jfedsnj.org.



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JFCS ANNUAL MEETING AND RECOGNITION OF BOARD, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS

TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2016 AT 7:30 PM

KATZ JCC, 1301 Springdale Road, Cherry Hill, NJ

Free to attend, registration required by calling 424-1333, xt 1420

FLAG PLACING ON VETERANS' GRAVES

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2016 AT 10:00 AM

Locustwood Cemetery, Rt. 70, Cherry Hill, NJ

HIGH HOLIDAY FOOD SORT FOR BETSY AND PETER FISCHER FOOD PANTRIES

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2016 AT 9:30 AM

JFED Annex, 1721 Springdale Road, Cherry Hill, NJ

To volunteer for flag placing or food sort, please call Andi Loew at 856-424-1333 or email aloew@jfedsnj.org.