



FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

JEWISH FEDERATION MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia is to identify and prioritize the important issues and needs of our local and global community, then organize and mobilize human and financial resources to successfully impact them. Federation focuses on Jewish education, human services, family, and economic needs, and provides support for Israel and for Jews at risk elsewhere in the world.

Group Celebrates a Milestone With a New Initiative

LYNN B. EDELMAN
Jewish Federation Feature

“Several thousand Jewish developmentally disabled adults are living at home with aging parents or in apartments with little or no supervision in the Philadelphia area,” explained Judith Creed, chairperson of the board of directors of Jewish Community Homes for Adult Independence, Inc. She added that “we knew that these adults and their families needed help, but they either weren’t ready to make the commitment to group home placement or the client didn’t need all the services offered in a group home.”

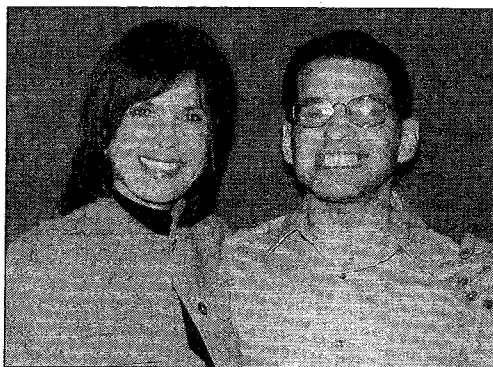
That was why, as JCHAI approaches its 21st birthday, the organization decided to develop the Independent Supportive Living program. This new program, given its start by a partial grant from Jewish Federation of Philadelphia, will offer JCHAI’s expertise on a fee-for-service basis to disabled adults living on their own in the community. JCHAI professionals can provide such services as:

Home visitation: Working one on one with individuals to assist with daily living skills, such as supermarket shopping or banking. These services help an individual become more independent while maintaining his or her own home or apartment. JCHAI can provide this service on a regular basis or on a sporadic basis, for example, if a family is on vacation or otherwise unavailable for a period of time.

Job coaching: A certified job coach will work with a client to help develop job skills.

Advocacy for families: JCHAI also assists families that desire an experienced advocate on behalf of their disabled family members.

Group Therapy Sessions: A licensed social worker provides group sessions to assist individuals on topics that include developing friendships, dating, sexuality, coping with grief and sorrow, and other pertinent life issues.



JCHAI board chair Judith Creed and her son, Jonah, a resident at an apartment program managed by JCHAI.

JCHAI was founded in 1987 by a group of concerned parents who wanted to find a place where their loved ones could live independently in a supportive family-like setting and practice their Jewish faith openly. They also wanted JCHAI to care for their sons and daughters after their deaths.

Jonah, Creed’s son, is one of JCHAI’s many success stories. “It’s great to live away from my parents, to have my own life and deal with my own situation,” he said.

Jonah Creed became one of JCHAI’s first residents 16 years ago, moving first into a JCHAI house and now living in a supportive-living apartment in Philadelphia. He has become acutely aware that increased independence brings increased responsibilities: “You have to work very hard — doing the mopping, sweeping, dusting. You have to do everything.”

“Then and now, JCHAI fills a serious void in services provided to the Jewish disabled,” said executive director Stacy Levitan, who explained that “until JCHAI, the only community living arrangements available for the adult disabled did not support their Jewish background.”

In 1991, JCHAI opened its first of three full-service residences for developmentally disabled adults. Today, the organization operates safe, structured homes in Wynnewood, Elkins Park and Northeast Philadelphia, which are staffed at all times except from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., when residents are at work. The staff assists the residents with such basic needs as cooking, cleaning and personal grooming, and also helps coordinate transportation for work, trips and social events.

For those who require less supervision, JCHAI maintains a program at the Presidential Apartments on City Avenue in Philadelphia. In these apartments, staff is present from 4 p.m. until 9 p.m. on weekdays, and during some hours on the weekends. They assist residents in preparing for dinner, maintaining their living spaces and personal grooming. However, the residents must be capable of getting up in the mornings and preparing for work independently.

At all of its sites, JCHAI supports the residents’ desire to live Jewishly. The laws of kashrut are observed; Gratz College offers residents a Jewish-education class specially designed for JCHAI; and many area synagogues offer Shabbat and Jewish holiday programming.

Response to JCHAI has been overwhelming.

“Despite the cost, the demand for adult housing of this nature is high, and resources outside the Jewish community are rare,” according to Creed. Several hundred people are on an emergency waiting list in Montgomery County alone, and only a very small percentage can be placed per year.

She estimates that about 3,000 Jewish individuals with developmental disabilities in the Philadelphia area could immediately use JCHAI’s services because their current caregivers are elderly or ill, or will need them in the near future. ♦

For more information about JCHAI residences or its new Independent Supportive Living programs, call Stacy Levitan at 610-667-7875 or log on to: www.jchai.org.



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