

VOLUNTEER OF THE WEEK

Stacy Levitan's brother, Doug, was born 38 years ago with Down syndrome. As he grew into adulthood, his parents naturally became concerned about his future once they were no longer able to care for him. So his mother, Arlene Jarett, became involved with the Jewish

full-time hours to JCHAI.

JCHAI operates group homes for the developmentally disabled in Wynnewood (where Levitan's brother lives), Elkins Park and Northeast Philadelphia, as well as apartments in the Presidential City Complex on City Avenue. The organization endeavors to allow all its residents to be as independent as possible and to learn skills that are useful in living and holding jobs. It respects their Jewish culture and religion - a respect, Levitan says, that is often lacking in other facilities.

"My brother has become more of a participant in his own life," Levitan says of his experience with JCAI. "He feels more of a sense of community." He works at Ludington Library and "feels very, very proud of himself."

Levitan praises the staff of 17 for its dedication to the residents, especially the supervisory staff. She also credits her mother for her active volunteer work with the disabled. "She's my model," she says.

As chairperson, Levitan acts as the "face of the organization" and is involved in everything from fund raising to troubleshooting to handling the group's \$1 million budget. She puts her professional contacts to good use, enlisting former colleagues to contribute time and legal work. Among the lawyers who help out is her husband, Jonathan, who is general counsel for a nursing home management company. He's "incredibly supportive," Levitan says.

Levitan says she gains "a lot of satisfaction" from working for JCHAI. Not only has she witnessed the improvement in her brother's life and future prospects, but she has seen the same improvement in other resi-

Profile

NAME:

Stacy Levitan

VOLUNTEERS FOR:

Jewish Community Homes for Adult Independence

RESIDES IN:

Wynnewood

Community Homes for Adult Independence (JCHAI), an organization founded by parents to provide housing and independence for developmentally disabled adults.

In time, Levitan became active as well; she now serves as chairperson of the board of directors.

Levitan is an articulate, committed woman of 40 who grew up in St. Louis, moved to the Main Line as a teen-ager, and attended Harriton High School. She graduated from University of Pennsylvania Law School and worked for years in commercial litigation and other areas of law for a Center City law firm.

Five years ago, she took a break from her professional life to spend more time with her children, Jacob, 10, and Maya, 6. For Levitan, however, not having a paying job is not the same as not working. She now devotes nearly



JON NIMERFROH/Main Line Times

dents as well. "The families are so grateful," she says.

And, just as she followed in her mother's footsteps as a volunteer, Levitan sees her own children following in hers. Both volunteer for causes that are meaningful to them. "It makes me feel so good," 6-year-old Maya said about helping out at

JCHAI.

For information about the Jewish Community Homes for Adult Independence, visit www.jchai.org or call 610-667-7875.

Joel Fram is a regular contributor to the Main Line Times. To suggest a Volunteer of the Week, e-mail him at frambook@aol.com.