



INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROJECT NJACP – JESPY MODEL 2021 - 2023

SOUTH ORANGE, NJ

IHC Project Background

THE INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Established in 2021, the Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) grant program is an initiative of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS). IHC is administered with assistance from Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

The Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program funds New Jersey organizations and local governments engaged in projects that promote the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities in the communities where they reside. In addition, the grant funds inclusive practices that support personal growth and provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to contribute to those communities.

The NJACP-JESPY Model Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) project is based on the ongoing inclusive healthy community work of South Orange-based JESPY House and NJACP's commitment to enriching the lives of persons with disabilities. NJACP, SRS Strategic Associates, and JESPY House began work on this project in 2020 when the initial RFP was issued.

PROJECT PARTNERS

New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) is a nonprofit association with more than 65 agency members, all of whom provide supports and services to adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and traumatic brain injuries. NJACP strengthens the ability of its membership to provide quality services for people with IDD. An advocate for adults with disabilities since 1980, NJACP has been at the forefront of increasing the visibility of matters pertinent to its membership and the individuals in their care. They represent the IDD community and members with state government and the legislature to ensure issues of importance are recognized, understood and addressed. NJACP is the project leader and grantee. njacp.org

JESPY House, a key IHC project partner, provides essential services and programs to 260 adults ages 18 and older with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Located in South Orange, NJ, JESPY's mission is to promote individual choice, self-direction, and community living. JESPY advocates for the rights of those with disabilities; works to increase public awareness surrounding disability issues and concerns; and provides support to assist clients in the areas of case management, employment, clinical services, residential options, recreation, and athletics & fitness. During its 45-year history, JESPY has enabled clients to achieve their full potential in leading independent lives. jespy.org

SRS Strategic Associates, LLC (SRS), a strategic collaborator and consultant on this project, maintains a focus on health and human services and continually fulfills its mission to assist organizations who serve individuals with disabilities and special needs to become and remain sustainable. The leadership has more than 70 years of combined experience leading provider services, government and community relations and advocacy for persons with disabilities. srsstrategic.com

IHC Project Overview

The NJACP-JESPY Model (IHC) Project was designed to ensure that persons with disabilities have a visible presence in their community and representation in local government.

Created to affect inclusive healthy communities (IHC) change through the execution of this project, the NJACP-JESPY Model involved the implementation of **Policy/Practice Change, Community & Systems Change and Environmental Change.**

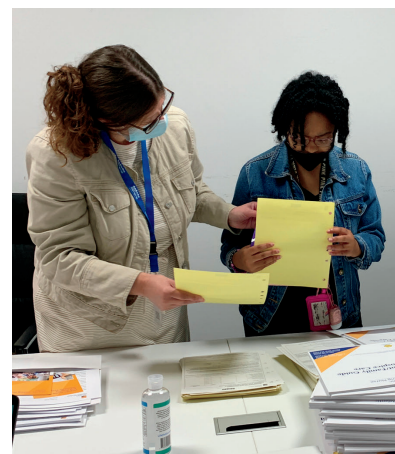
Policy, System, and Environmental (PSE) Change strategies are approaches to behavior and culture change that aim to create lasting improvements in individual and community health and well-being. PSE change seeks to make healthier choices more practical and accessible to all members of a community. The methodology the NJACP-JESPY Model utilized was originally developed by the United States Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

The project partners executed a Sustainable South Orange Community Action Plan and provided a scalable model that could be replicated in other New Jersey towns with a focus on increasing sustainable engagement of people with disabilities.

Since its inception in 1978, JESPY House has worked diligently toward creating a more inclusive community for its clients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, specifically in the areas of employment as well as residential and community-based supports. While progress has been made, clients continued to face roadblocks that prevented complete participation in community life. Some of the barriers included mobility and transportation issues, inequitable community inclusion, and a lack of participation in decision-making at the local government level. The focus of this grant project was to remove some of these barriers, allowing JESPY House and its clients to make increased, substantial inroads in the South Orange community.

The NJACP-JESPY Model was designed to address the following:

- Adopt policies that are inclusive of people with disabilities as part of efforts to plan and create healthy communities;
- Plan and implement sustainable strategies that deliver the benefits of healthy communities to people with disabilities;
- Advance sustainable policies, systems, and environmental change that address the pre-existing physical, environmental, social, and economic challenges that prevent people with disabilities from having full access to the opportunities that support health and well-being.
- Measure the effectiveness of all strategies utilized for policy/practice, systems and environmental changes outlined as part of the NJACP-JESPY House Model.



JESPY clients work in multiple business sectors in South Orange and surrounding areas.

IHC Project Road Map

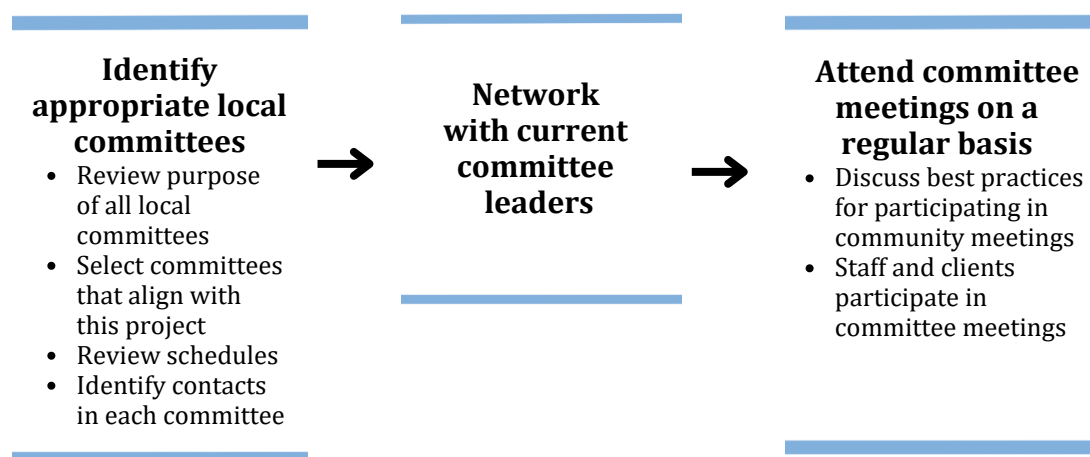
The NJACP-JESPY Model was designed as a multi-tiered effort created to realize IHC change that impacts JESPY clients and other individuals in the community where they live and work. It can also be replicated in surrounding communities, impacting the lives and environments of persons with disabilities across New Jersey.

The measurable goals were defined and achieved through the following "targets of change". Each Change was designed to establish and provide opportunities, increase client participation in areas that previously lacked representation, and produce/create a healthier, fully inclusive, and more environmentally-sound community.

The NJACP-JESPY Model project was comprised of two cycles: Cycle 1 transpired from January 2021 – June 2022. Cycle 2 occurred from July 2022 – June 2023.

CYCLE 1 January 2021 – June 2022

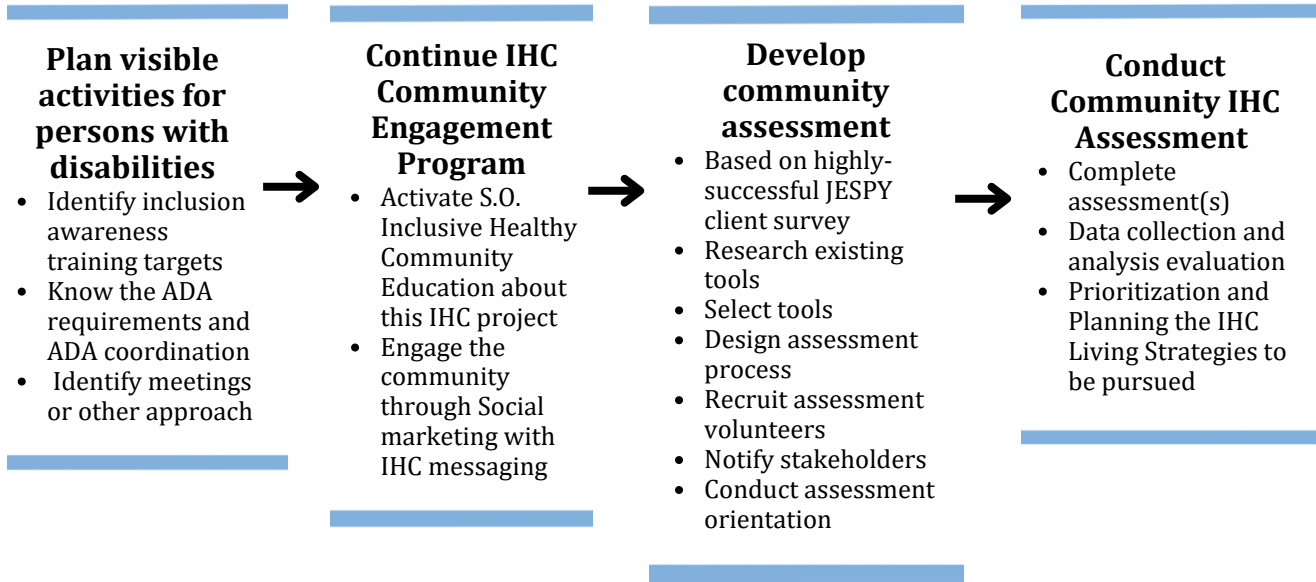
GOAL 1: POLICY/PRACTICE CHANGE - Work to pass new policies/practices related to IHC and to include persons with disabilities as local government committee members. Steps to achieve goal:



OUTCOMES

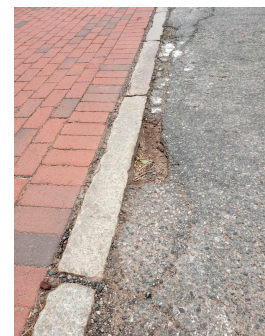
- **Met with the South Orange Cultural Arts committee, the Health and Safety Committee, and the founder of Community Care and Justice program** to educate them about the IHC grant and the opportunities it brings to South Orange.
- **Discussed the potential for the addition of a JESPY client to attend monthly meetings** of the Academy Heights Neighborhood Association. The discussion was with the organization's group leaders. Two members of the Association participated in a Community Coalition and worked alongside JESPY on community-related projects.

GOAL 2: SYSTEMS CHANGE - Infrastructure change within organizations. Address inclusion and visibility of persons with IDD and other disabilities within local government and the community-at-large. Steps to achieve goal:



OUTCOMES

- **Formed and implemented a Community Coalition** with clients, family members, JESPY board members, local business owners, community members, and South Orange officials.
- **JESPY clients conducted and completed 16 community infrastructure and mobility survey assessments.** They made recommendations concerning infrastructures (sidewalks, curb ramps, etc.) that impacted pedestrian movement and safety of individuals with disabilities and the community at large. The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) surveys and project report were completed to help ensure that pedestrian provisions at crosswalks and intersections complied with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines and ADA Construction Standards. The project report was disseminated to providers and others through in-person distribution and social media. The executive summary of the report is available upon request.



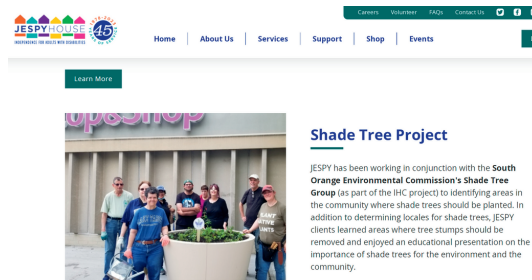
Clients survey locations throughout South Orange, including the South Orange Train Station.

- **Increased visibility and opportunities for JESPY clients** among the South Orange business community through educational events to promote awareness. A presentation was made at a South Orange/Maplewood Chamber of Commerce meeting highlighting an employed client during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. JESPY is a member of the Chamber's Events Committee.



A JESPY client (wearing red) discussed her employment. She is shown at left with JESPY's Work Readiness Supervisor. In photo right, she is seated with her supervisor, who manages the Building department for the Township of Maplewood.

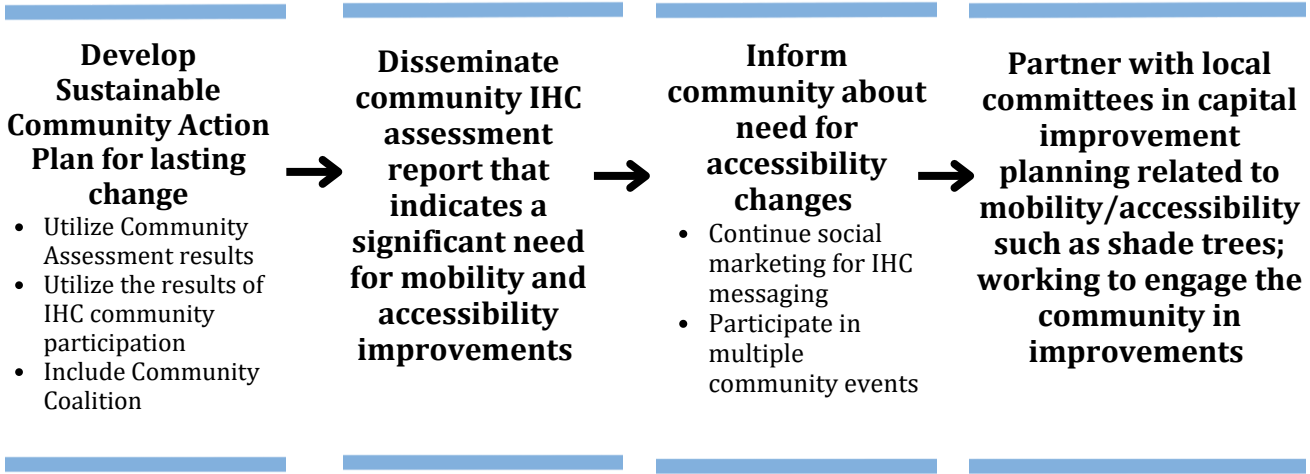
- **Created SOCIAL MEDIA posts and distributed press releases** for the NJACP–JESPY Model that provided wider exposure for the project; established ways to make new contacts; offered a means to reach constituents based on their interest in programs and projects similar to Inclusive Healthy Communities; assisted with online interaction with the general public and constituents; and helped to build a digital presence for the model during Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.



The website for the NJACP–JESPY Model IHC project (top left) was developed in 2021 by NJACP and featured information about the IHC program and related projects. The JESPY website (top right) featured articles and posts about community involvement activities related to IHC. To share information about the model, JESPY distributed press releases (below) to local press outlets. Additional articles can be found at <https://jespyhouse.org/Media>. NJACP distributed information via its twice weekly E-News. NJACP and JESPY shared grant processes on *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *LinkedIn*. The NJACP-JESPY Model also submitted blogs to the IHC website and Facebook page.



GOAL 3: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE - Improve mobility and accessibility. Steps to achieve goal:



OUTCOME

- **JESPY clients worked alongside the South Orange Environmental Commission's Shade Tree Group.** As part of their participation, clients attended an educational presentation on the importance of shade trees for the environment. In addition, they took part in a project geared toward a healthy environment and beautification by planting and maintaining pollinator gardens at Stop & Shop. The IHC donation of trees was the impetus for instituting a process to accept further donations from community members.



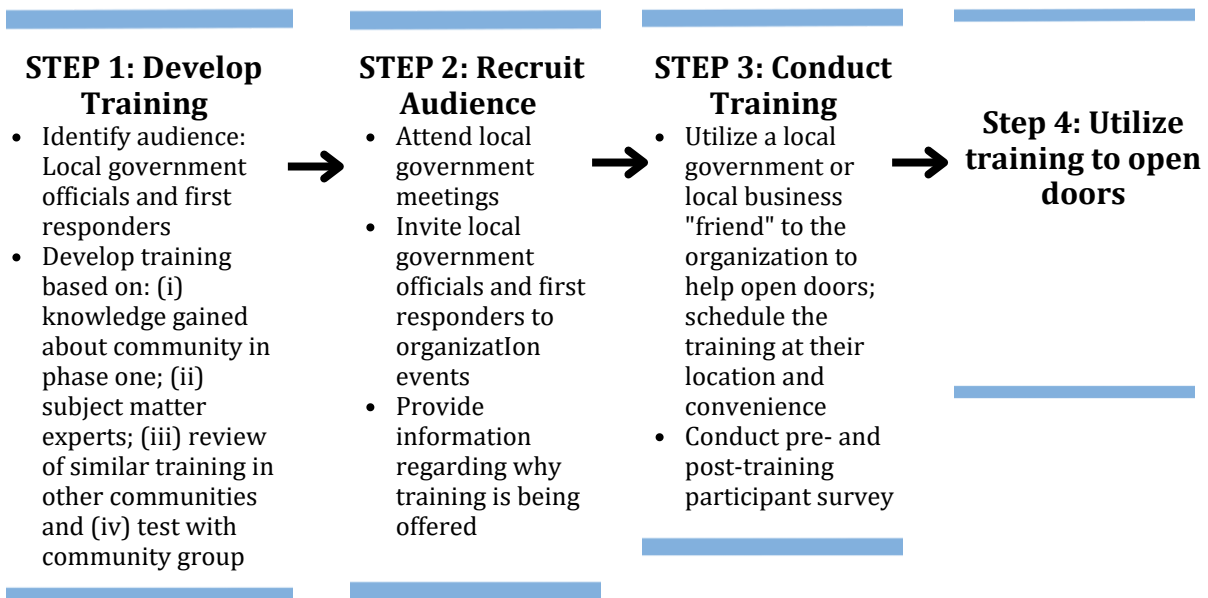
Shown here with members of the South Orange Environmental Commission's Shade Tree Group and JESPY staff, clients began participating in the Group during the summer of 2021.

CYCLE 2

July 2022 - June 2023

GOAL 1: POLICY/PRACTICE CHANGE - To include persons with disabilities as local government committee members.

OBJECTIVE I: Educate local government officials and departments through disability awareness training designed for local government. All planning, development and executed activities included persons with disabilities. Steps to achieve goal:



OUTCOMES

- **Conducted two community trainings which focused on how to build an Inclusive Healthy Community.** Trainings, presented to department heads from South Orange Village and Maplewood, addressed the importance of positive changes in attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Attendees included representatives from Community Services, Finance, Community Development, Public Works, Municipal Court, Fire and Police departments, and Library Services. **After the training, participants submitted feedback via surveys.**



The presentation to attendees was interactive and informative.

Participant Feedback
"Our staff benefitted from the explanation about inclusive language."

"It could be helpful to include individuals with disabilities in the master planning process for the township."

- **State and local political representatives engaged with JESPY clients to discuss government processes and hear clients' issues of concern.** Included among the legislators were Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, who represents the 27th District, and South Orange Village President Sheena Collum, who came to JESPY to discuss challenges faced by clients and presented a Resolution and Proclamation recognizing JESPY during Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (below left), who represents New Jersey's 11th Congressional District, and State Senator Andrew Zwicker (below right), who represents the 16th District in New Jersey, met with clients to learn about JESPY's future and tour The Michael Och House - A Center for Aging at JESPY.



GOAL 1: POLICY/PRACTICE CHANGE - To include persons with disabilities as local government committee members.

OBJECTIVE II: Have at least one person with disabilities become a member of local government or being appointed to a community endorsed committee, with all planning, development and executed activities including persons with disabilities. Steps to achieve goal:

Prepare persons with disabilities to attend local government/community endorsed committee meetings

- Review local government committees schedules, meeting attendee rules and practices
- Inform persons with disability about local board of trustees/government



Network to exchange information and develop government/community endorsed committee members

- Enlist these individuals to be part of the project community coalition
- Attend open community meetings on a regular basis
- Engage committee members through individual meetings



Person(s) with disabilities become official member(s) of government/community endorsed committees

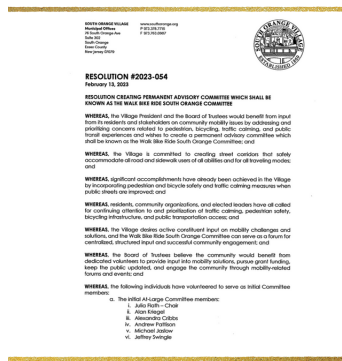
- Make a formal application to a committee with an open seat and/or process
- Use social media to recognize the accomplishment and thank relevant officials

OUTCOMES

- **JESPY House partnered with Walk Bide Ride and the South Orange Police Department** to distribute wrist bands, bike bells, and reflector clips at the South Orange train station to advocate for and inform the community about pedestrian safety. These items were made possible through IHC grant funds. In addition, gift cards were distributed by clients to crossing guards during Crossing Guards Appreciation Week.

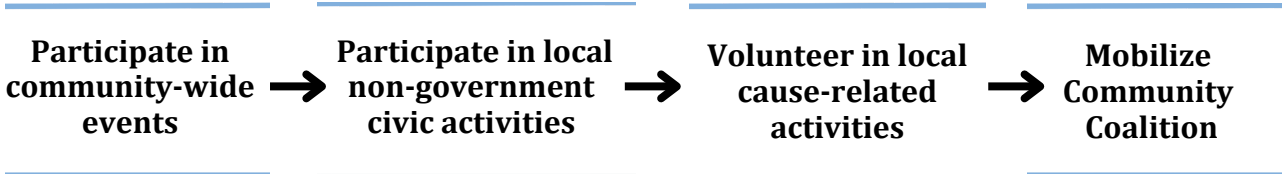


- **JESPY client Michael J. was named to the South Orange Walk Bike Ride's Pedestrian Safety Sub-Committee.** Michael assists the committee in advocating for safer and improved walkability. The first JESPY client named to a South Orange Village committee, he attends monthly meetings and provides a voice about mobility challenges that include street crossings, lighting, and sidewalks.



Michael, a longtime advocate for persons with disabilities, is shown top left at a past South Orange Village Township meeting. A Resolution acknowledging Michael's appointment is top right.

GOAL 2: SYSTEMS CHANGE - Infrastructure change within organizations: increasing inclusion and visibility of persons with IDD and other disabilities in local government and community at large (meetings, events, and activities).
OBJECTIVE: Increase visibility and understanding of the community-at-large of the valuable contributions that persons with disabilities can make when given opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life, such as the planning, development and execution of activities including persons with disabilities. Steps to achieve goal:



OUTCOMES:

- **To assist with Ukrainian aid relief, several persons with IDD knitted and crocheted Ukrainian flag pins** that were sold at stores in South Orange. Proceeds from the sale of the pins, totaling \$1,500, were given to Pastor Sviatoslav Hot of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Maplewood to support Ukrainian relief efforts (shown below left).
- **Individuals with IDD held food drives to support MEND (Meeting Essential Needs with Dignity), a local hunger relief organization (shown below right).** JESPY client Jessica M., an active volunteer at a local MEND food relief center, assists with packaging items several days per week and has become a valued volunteer at the organization.





Photo top left: Community members and South Orange Township officials attended a groundbreaking ceremony for South Orange Commons, a 26-unit affordable housing development for low-income families and adults with IDD.

Top right: To commemorate JESPY's 45th anniversary and in celebration of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM), JESPY partnered with Town Hall Deli, a staple in the South Orange community, to create a signature sandwich, the JESPY 45 Wrap.

Left: During DDAM, photographs taken by JESPY clients, were displayed and sold at Elitist Coffee in South Orange.

GOAL 3: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE - Reduce environmental barriers and make physical infrastructure changes in the community that were identified during the Cycle 1 Community Assessment.

OBJECTIVE: Improve mobility accessibility. All planning, development and executed activities included persons with disabilities. Steps to achieve goal:

Partner in capital improvement physical infrastructure project(s) for mobility & accessibility



Participate in Mobility Committee and infrastructure project(s) such as shade trees to improve IHC

OUTCOME

- **JESPY clients continued their work with the South Orange Environmental Commission's Shade Tree Group** by identifying locations where shade trees should be planted. They took part in monthly Group phone calls; worked with the Group to ensure that neighborhoods and areas would be serviced with a diverse species of planted trees; and joined the Shade Tree Group and the Department of Public Works (shown below) to plant three shade trees in the area of Meadowbrook Place in South Orange, which is located near JESPY's Aging-in-Place shared house. Trees were donated using Cycle 1 funds.



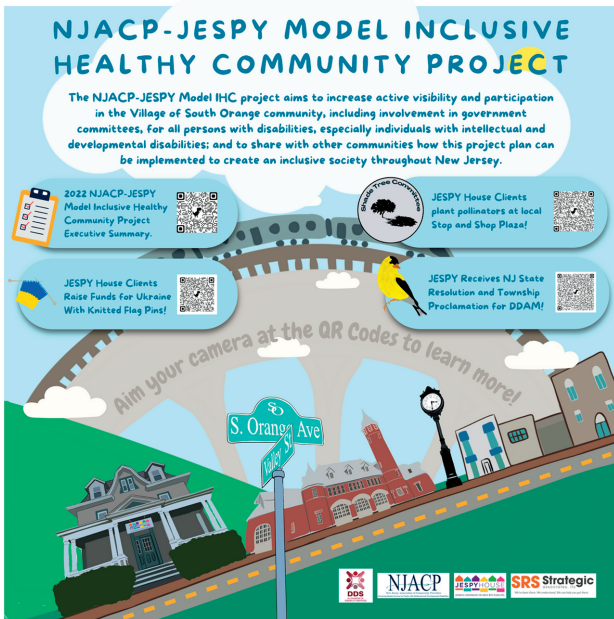


Image left: The NJACP-JESPY Model Cycle 1 Project Concept Poster.

Photos top row: As part of their journey toward community and government inclusion, JESPY clients attended an Assembly Budget Committee Hearing in Trenton, NJ regarding the NJ Governor's proposed FY24 budget. The request is to maintain funds in the government budget and a 2.5% rate increase across IDD services.

Photos bottom: NJACP-JESPY Model Project presented a screening of the award-winning documentary *In A Different Key* - a film by Caren Zucker and John Donvan. The screening was attended by NJACP-JESPY Model constituents, JESPY clients and families, and the members of the community. The film was followed by an informative Q&A with Zucker and Autism advocate Ann Wargo and was an eye-opening discussion about the challenges faced by individuals with autism and their families.



The **NJACP-JESPY Model** project was made possible through the **Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) grant program**, an initiative of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS). Inclusive Healthy Communities is administered with assistance from Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

Survey, training and other materials designed for executing this grant are available upon request. To receive, send an email to cklepser@njacp.org. For additional information, visit <https://njacp.org/ihc-grant/>.