



Newsletter for the JESPY Community

Spring 2023 Edition

JESPY CELEBRATES 45 YEARS

An agency that successfully supports adults with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD), JESPY this year proudly celebrates our 45th anniversary. JESPY has begun to partner with local businesses to host events, including an art show and a special 'JESPY 45' sandwich wrap, in recognition of the milestone.



Established in South Orange in 1978, JESPY House opened with four clients and three staff. Since that time, our nonprofit has grown to 260 clients and nearly 100 employees. Some of the ongoing client accomplishments at JESPY House include work readiness, self-advocacy, and medal wins at Special Olympics events.

JESPY's services and programs include Day Habilitation and Engagement & Enrichment programs, Clinical & Behavioral Support Services, Athletics & Fitness, Case Management, Community-Based Supports, Residential options, and Work Readiness & Employment services.

"Our 45-year milestone solidifies that, through our specialized programs and services, JESPY is truly filling a need," says JESPY Executive Director Audrey Winkler. "Our client accomplishments in the areas of life skills development, behavioral health, employment, and more are glowing examples of what can be achieved when individuals with IDD are fully supported."

CONGRESSWOMAN MIKIE SHERRILL RECEIVES WARM JESPY WELCOME

"I am so proud to represent all of you," said Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, who represents New Jersey's 11th



Congressional District. She recently visited JESPY's Michael Och House – A Center for Aging at JESPY to meet with clients from various programs to hear about issues of importance, learn about JESPY's future, and tour the Och House.

She was greeted with flowers and welcome signs specially made by JESPY clients. Also attending the event were JESPY's Executive Director Audrey

Winkler, JESPY Board President Ahadi Bugg-Levine, and Board Members Michael Och, John Myers, Alison Lewis, and Diane Davis. Several JESPY staff members were also in attendance.



Photo left: Congresswoman Sherrill addresses JESPY clients and other attendees. Photo right: Sherrill (right) is shown with JESPY Board President Ahadi Bugg-Levine.

"I am on the Autism Caucus and the Disability Caucus and that is because this is something that is near and dear to all of our hearts here in New Jersey," Sherrill added. While addressing attendees, she shared that many of the families she's met feel comfortable with the support services that are available for their child until they reach the age of 18.

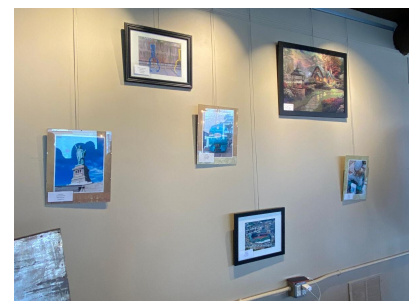
"But parents are concerned about services for their children as they become older," she said. "They wonder what life is going to look like. But all of you, as clients, are ambassadors for JESPY House and what's possible for the future."

To address the concerns of families, Sherrill is co-leading new legislation that, once passed, will include a zip code component that will make finding available programs and services easier. Sherrill also plans to work with JESPY in the future to provide information that could aid in the growth of our nonprofit.

PHOTO FINISH!

Eye-catching photographs, taken by JESPY clients, were displayed at **Elitist Coffee in South Orange** during Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March. The interesting images captured objects and locales found in and around South Orange.

Artists included in the showcase were clients who



participate in the JESPY Photography Club. For this exhibit, the photographers chose two of their photos to display. The showcase also featured other forms of client art.

A reception, which was attended by members of the community, several JESPY clients, staff, and board, was held March 14th at Elitist. Several photos were sold during the event. "This exhibit allowed us to see the world through the eyes of our clients," says Nicole Rambone, JESPY's Engagement & Enrichment Program Manager.



JESPY clients Debra D. (left) and Dominique B. (right) stand near their photos, which were sold to happy customers. In the center photo, attendees enjoyed viewing and discussing the artwork.

SENATOR ANDREW ZWICKER VISITS JESPY

"One of the things I love about what I do," Senator Andrew Zwicker said to JESPY clients during a visit this past January, "is that I get to advocate for you in Trenton. I am a member of the New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus which promotes policies that improve the lives of people with disabilities."

Zwicker represents the 16th District in New Jersey and met with clients at JESPY's Day Program to hear about their goals and community concerns. He also visited JESPY's Aging in Place residence, The Michael Och House - A Center for Aging at JESPY.



He is also a member of the State's Budget and Appropriations, Labor, Higher Education, and Military and Veteran Affairs Committees.

During his visit, clients relayed some issues of importance, which included transportation, arts-related opportunities, and equity and inclusion. Senator Zwicker expressed that he will work with JESPY and our client-advocacy groups to effect change.

A JESPY FIRST: Client Michael J. Appointed to Walk Bike Ride Subcommittee

Following the launch of the **South Orange Board of Trustees' Walk Bike Ride committee**, which is tasked with advocating for public safety throughout the Township, JESPY client Michael J. was formally appointed to their Pedestrian Safety subcommittee.

This exciting news marks the first time a JESPY client was named to a South Orange Village committee. Michael attends monthly virtual meetings and provides a voice about mobility challenges (sidewalks, lighting, and street crossings) in South Orange Village.



"It's a great honor to be on the Pedestrian Safety committee," shares Michael, who has advocated for housing and other social issues in the past. "I really want to bring insight through the eyes of someone who is disabled."

Supporting clients in their efforts to join South Orange committees to have a voice and a "seat at the table" has been a goal of JESPY's as part of our work on our Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) grant. JESPY partners with NJ Association of Community Partners and SRS Strategic Associates on the IHC grant.

Funded by the NJ Department of Health, Division of Disability Services, the IHC grant provides opportunities for JESPY to partner with the township of South Orange Village, the local neighborhood association and businesses to make the community more inclusive.

JESPY '45 WRAP' FEATURED AT TOWN HALL DELI



Food, fun, and client engagement took place at the unveiling of the **JESPY 45 Wrap** at **Town Hall Deli** in South Orange on March 17. During the successful event, JESPY clients, staff and board member **Judy Peskin** cheerfully supported clients **Nick T.** and **Susan C.**, as they joined Town Hall deli owner **Matt Wonski** behind the deli counter to make the JESPY 45.

Dressed in deli aprons and wearing plastic gloves, Wonski showed the clients how to make the wrap, which contained chicken, avocado, lettuce, tomato, and honey mustard. Nick and Susan showed great skill as they then went on to create and roll their own wraps.

The JESPY 45 was spotlighted and sold at Town Hall Deli during Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and commemorated JESPY's 45th Anniversary. The event was organized by Tara Roberts, JESPY's Community Relations & Outreach Supervisor.



GOING TO ISRAEL!



JESPY is excited about our participation in **Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ's Centennial Trip to Israel** this July. By providing subsidies to JESPY clients, Jewish Federation has helped to offset the cost of the trip and made it accessible for 23 clients to participate.

For some clients, this Federation Mission trip will be a return visit to Israel. For others, this will be their first time visiting the country. Several JESPY staff as well as members of JSDD will also attend the trip.

The travel itinerary includes visiting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; taking part in walking, food, and culture tours; participating in 'ancient time' workshops to make pitas and olive oil; visiting the Dead Sea; and taking part in Shabbat services.

"I'm looking forward to going to Israel this year," says JESPY client Ari L., "and seeing all the sites, the cities, and different shops that are there. I haven't been, so it will be great."

JESPY is so grateful to the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest and individual donors for generously sponsoring this trip for our clients.

45 BAGS FOR JESPY'S 45 YEARS

In recognition of JESPY's 45th anniversary and as part of our ongoing support of **MEND** (Meeting Essential Needs with Dignity), JESPY is collecting 45 bags of food to help those in our community facing food insecurity.

Requested items include:

- 2 lb. bag or box of brown or wild rice
- Can of beans
- 16 oz box of pasta
- Plastic jars of peanut butter
- Plastic squeeze bottles jelly or jam
- Boxes of complete pancake mix (add water version)



- Boxes of low-sugar cereal
- Boxes of macaroni and cheese
- Cans of tuna or salmon
- Plastic jars or cans of tomato sauce
- Cans of vegetables (no corn)
- Boxes of instant oatmeal
- Cans of low sodium soup (no cream soups)

Donations are due by April 30, 2023. To donate a bag of food products, email Tara Roberts at troberts@jespy.org. If JESPY is too far or you've got little or no time to drop off a bag of food, you can have your items shipped directly to JESPY by using this Amazon [LINK](#).

CELEBRATE AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



Autism Awareness Month, which takes place each April, is designed to promote an increased understanding about autism. The national celebration, which began in 1972 as National Autistic Children's Week, was created to eliminate the stigma related to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Autism Society started Autism Awareness Month to advocate for change in communities, schools, and elsewhere; and to increase and advocate for awareness.

JESPY House serves more than 30 adults with Autism to help them live a fulfilling and independent life. To do your part, learn more and speak to others about autism and share the hashtag #AutismAwarenessMonth on social media.

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS



JESPY House recently announced the addition of healthcare industry professionals **Alison Lewis** (left) and **Alec Grabowski** (right) to the JESPY Board of Trustees.

Alison Lewis - Having spent 20 years in the healthcare industry working in the areas of training, sales, and marketing, Alison Lewis' career has been involved in bringing quality of life and life-extending medicines to market and helping

patients gain access to much-needed therapies.

“My desire in becoming a JESPY Board member is centered around helping people with disabilities lead independent lives and being intentional about leaving a legacy,” says Lewis. Her work on the JESPY Board, she shares, is part of her strong belief in the importance of being of service and making a difference in the lives of others.

Alec Grabowski - With a career has spanned nearly 15 years in healthcare administration and the past 5 ½ years as a senior healthcare executive, Alec Grabowski has overseen and led for-profit and non-profit hospitals and health systems across the country.

Grabowski’s leadership has been recognized by growing, expanding, and improving clinical services across hospitals by partnering with physicians, clinicians, communities, and organizations.

“During my tour of JESPY, I had the opportunity to see all the amazing work that goes on and how happy our clients are,” he says. “I knew instantly that this was something I wanted to be a part of.”

JESPY CLIENT CORNER

With schedules bursting at the seams, JESPY clients have been busy taking community trips; engaging in cultural and craft-related activities; and participating in competitive sporting events. Take a look!



ABOVE: (photo left) Clients toasted to a great time while dining at TGI Fridays. As part of an Engagement & Enrichment trip (center), clients participated in an 'Ellen's Dinner Club' outing at Panera. The club was created in honor of beloved JESPY client Ellen B. who loved sharing meals with her friends. (Right) A day at Medieval Times, spent taking in the show and a meal, is always a great time!



ABOVE: (Left) Clients attended the show "Hercules" at Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn. An visit to the Liberty Science Center (center) in Jersey City was educational and informative. (Right) A night of bowling was an awesome group activity.



ABOVE: (Clockwise - starting left) Volunteers from Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ recently visited JESPY on several occasions. They made and filled colorful Purim bags with JESPY clients that were donated to seniors. During other visits, Federation volunteers created Purim crafts with clients and made Shabbat kits - in blue bags - during a CommUnity Mitzvah event.

In addition, members of the Fed Women's Philanthropy group (a leadership development group that is part of Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest) enjoyed the opportunity to tie dye with JESPY Day Program clients.



TOP ROW: (Left) Clients at the Michael Och House - A Center for Aging at JESPY held their own '70s party, complete with tie-dyed shirts and other fashions from the '70s. Clients who participate in JESPY's Engagement & Enrichment program cooked a recipe that will be included in a community cookbook that will be printed by the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ.

MIDDLE ROW: (Left) Day Program clients also prepared a soup recipe to be included in the Jewish Federation cookbook. **(Right)** Athletes on the JESPY Thunder basketball team won a Bronze medal at a recent Special Olympic Games.

BOTTOM ROW: JESPY's Athletics & Fitness department held a well-attended client awards ceremony.

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PURCHASE PLANTS & SUPPORT JESPY

With the spring season here, it's the perfect time to purchase plants and flowers for planting or as gifts for Mother's Day and other special occasions.

Metropolitan Plant & Flower Exchange will donate \$10 to JESPY House when you make a purchase of \$50 or more.



Metropolitan has New Jersey locations in West Orange, Paramus, Closter, and Fort Lee. Be sure to download and complete the form, available [HERE](#), and present it at the time of your purchase. This offer expires June 30, 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Audrey Winkler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "A".

Audrey Winkler
Executive Director

Please visit us at www.jespy.org
for more information about JESPY House services.

SUPPORT US

