

PROGRAM: JEVS Human Services

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By The Jewish Exponent

February is Jewish Disability, Awareness and Inclusion Month (JDAIM), a national commemoration with deep local roots within Greater Philadelphia for the last 14 years.

This year, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia's Jewish Community Relations Council will honor the month by co-hosting a webinar with JEVS Human Services, a leader in connecting job seekers with employment opportunities for more than 80 years.

Scheduled for Feb. 28, the program entitled "The Changing Landscape: Work and Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities" will feature a panel discussion focused on the efforts being made in career advancement and inclusion for people with disabilities throughout the pandemic.

"We at the JCRC are thrilled to be working with JEVS, one of Jewish Federation's grantees, this year to showcase their efforts to provide inclusion and equity in the disability community," said Jason Holtzman, director of JCRC. "It is our honor and responsibility as the Jewish Federation to continually strive toward a more accepting, diverse and inclusive future, where Jewish spaces are welcoming for all those who want to participate."

The Jewish Federation upholds this responsibility by providing funds and needed resources to community partners and agencies that serve the disability community. Last year, the Jewish Federation allocated more than \$450,000 in Jewish Community Fund grants toward programs focused on disability inclusion both locally and in Israel.

JCRC's virtual JDAIM event is just one out of an array of programs dedicated to accessibility and inclusivity this month. The Jewish Learning Venture's (JLV) Whole Community Inclusion and the Jewish Special Needs/Disability Awareness Consortium of Greater Philadelphia, which

includes the Jewish Federation, have organized numerous opportunities throughout February to spotlight disability awareness and inclusion.

“We are excited to share a number of opportunities for community members to connect, learn about and engage in disability awareness activities throughout JDAIM,” said Chief Program Officer Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer of Jewish Learning Venture, an organization supported by the Jewish Federation.

As opposed to last year’s fully virtual lineup due to the pandemic, this year maintains a mixture of online and in-person programs that follow safety protocols. The agenda this month includes something for every age: programs for children to discover the Jewish values of inclusion, a workshop for educators to learn about inclusive classrooms, an opportunity for clergy to study with Rabbi Lauren Tuchman — one of the first blind women to enter the rabbinate — a special program for grandparents and a community forum to address mental health.

Filling out the jam-packed month of nearly 30 programs are 20 area synagogues participating in JDAIM Shabbat Across Philadelphia, where they will devote a Shabbat service to disability awareness themes.

Outside of local programming, the Jewish Federations of North America will host their annual Jewish Disability Advocacy Day (JDAD) on Feb. 23 and 24. Over the course of this two-day virtual program, people worldwide will sign on to harness their collective power and break down barriers to advance policies that can empower millions of individuals with disabilities to lead more independent and fulfilling lives. The program will feature disability rights champions, experts and legislators to discuss the current state of disability rights and how individuals can make an impact.

“Disability inclusion and advocacy is a 365-day-year priority,” said Kaplan-Mayer. “But Jewish Disability, Awareness and Inclusion Month allows us to shine a light on this issue throughout the community.”

For more information and registration details for JDAIM programs, visit jewishphilly.org/jdaim2022