



# Celebrating 25 Years of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

Supporting Jewish Families & Children



*The Howard Levin Clubhouse, a program of Jewish Residential Services, offers a range of social and vocational supports to individuals whose lives have been impacted by mental illness.*

**T**wenty years ago, JHF's Healthy Jewish Community Project (HJCP) identified a range of important, unmet needs which have informed JHF's support of the Jewish community ever since. In addition to identifying significant needs among our community's seniors (which generated the ongoing development of the Jewish Association on Aging), the HJCP uncovered health-related challenges facing many members of our community.

For example, JHF has provided multi-dimensional support since the HJCP discovered that families with special needs children and adults were experiencing difficulty finding needed care. And in typical Pittsburgh fashion, the community also responded upon finding that adults living with mental illness or intellectual disabilities struggled to access housing and supportive services, and felt marginalized.

JHF provided "first dollar" funding for Jewish Residential Services (JRS) at its inception. More than 20 years later, JRS serves more than 250 people with disabilities and their families through residential and day programming. Their Clubhouse is a gathering venue offering a range of supportive services and

vocational counseling to adults who live in the community. JRS enables young adults to live safely and independently, and remain connected to the wider Jewish community.



*The Friendship Circle creates lasting friendships and community connections between teen volunteers and special needs kids. (Photo credit: The Friendship Circle)*

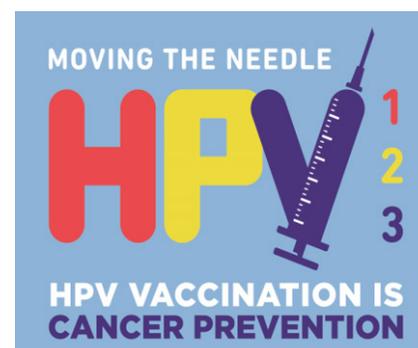
Connection is also the goal of the Friendship Circle, directed by Mordy and Rivkee Rudolph, which helps children and young adults with special needs become more integrated members of their neighborhoods.

Over the years, JHF has provided start-up funding, community education funds and, currently, assistance as the program transitions to new facilities with expanded programming.

In the late 1990s, JHF provided seed funding for special needs initiatives for students at Yeshiva Schools, Community Day School and Hillel Academy. These programs

have now become part of the schools' regular programs. JHF also funded a school nurse initiative at each of those locations, in partnership with UPMC Shadyside Hospital. Currently, JHF is funding a new education and outreach initiative—Genes & Vaccines—to bring necessary, age-appropriate information on the importance of early awareness of Jewish genetic diseases, and our responsibility to vaccinate our children against serious, preventable diseases.

The Genes & Vaccines curriculum is being designed by Nina Butler, EdD, and Jonathan Weinkle, MD. Supporting this effort is a Pittsburgh-wide JHF initiative that urges parents to protect their children with the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which can prevent the development of a host of cancers.



For young adults, JHF gave seed funding to JGenesPGH, an organization providing education and support for genetic testing, particularly among members of the Ashkenazi Jewish community. Thanks to additional funding provided by The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Fine Foundation, the Jewish Federation, and the Larry and Rebecca Stern Family Foundation, JGenesPGH's screening initiatives over the past four years found that one

in every 3.6 people is a carrier for at least one of 26 Jewish genetic diseases. Director Dodie Roskies emphasizes that, "Half of these diseases are in children who don't live beyond 10 years."

Finally, when needs arise, JHF responds to health and safety challenges with one-time grants to communal organizations. Following the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, JHF made grants to Jewish agencies, organizations, and synagogues for security-related expenses.

Similarly, JHF recognized the life-saving role of AEDs (automatic external defibrillators) for those experiencing a heart attack. The Foundation provided AEDs to any communal institution that requested them, as well as training for staff and lay leaders.

**This year, give a special Chanukah gift to your children: the cancer-preventing HPV vaccine.**

Learn more at: [hpvpittsburgh.org](http://hpvpittsburgh.org)

*Over the next year, this monthly series, marking JHF's 25th anniversary, gives us a chance to remember, take stock, express gratitude, and celebrate successes.*

*Learn more about JHF's journey to better health and health care by ordering our 25th Anniversary ROOTS magazine (contact Carla Barricella at: [barricella@jhf.org](mailto:barricella@jhf.org)).*

**Next Month: Responding to the Needs of Disadvantaged Jewish Households**