

# NEWS

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

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For Immediate Release

### **Federation's MetroWest ABLE Wins Inaugural Ruderman Prize in Disability**

*Award Recognizes the Best in Inclusive Opportunities for People with Disabilities*

Whippany, NJ, June 13, 2012 — [MetroWest ABLE](#), a program of [United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ](#) (Federation), has been chosen as one of 10 recipients world-wide to receive the inaugural Ruderman Family Foundation Prize in Disability.

The Foundation received over 150 applications representing seven countries, with MetroWest ABLE one of only three programs in the U.S. to receive the prize. The award recognizes the recipients' work in fostering the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the Jewish community. Each winning organization will receive a grant of \$20,000 to continue its work.

"MetroWest ABLE delivers hope, inspiration, and opportunity to many with disabilities," said Jay Ruderman, president of the Ruderman Family Foundation. "MetroWest ABLE fully exemplifies what the Ruderman Family Foundation looks for when choosing an organization worthy of a Ruderman Prize — and what we look for when choosing a mission we believe strongly in supporting. You are at the cutting edge of progress in our communities, and we hope this award will bring wider recognition and appreciation for your work," he continued.

In its four years of existence, MetroWest ABLE has become a national leader in creating and implementing inclusive opportunities for people of all ages with disabilities through its *Kehilla Shlema* initiative (creating a whole and complete community). MetroWest ABLE embodies Federation's dedication to including the active and meaningful participation of all of its members through access into every aspect of Jewish life by coordinating a network of partner agencies and advocates that serve individuals with special needs and their families. MetroWest ABLE is funded by the United Jewish Appeal Campaign of UJC MetroWest, and grants from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, Linda Bunis Haller Foundation, the Joyce and Leonard Kulick Fund for Special Needs, and the Jewish Community Foundation of MetroWest NJ.

Signature accomplishments include:

- Key elements of *Kehilla Shelma* are replicable in other community.
- *Shabbat Shalem*, an annual community-wide synagogue project that recognizes the importance of the inclusion of individuals with special needs now in its fourth year, *Shabbat Shalem* has engaged some 32 congregations in a variety of programming to make their synagogues more inclusive.
- A user-friendly, comprehensive Synagogue Self-Assessment Program to be used by Inclusion Committees to evaluate their congregation's level of accessibility. To date, Inclusion Committees have been formed in over 20 congregations.
- A Synagogue Challenge Grant program that awards matching funds for programs or capital improvements that enhance accessibility.
- A synagogue summit where 17 synagogues shared best practices and articulated the challenges of being inclusive. One outgrowth of the summit was the creation of a resource guide that includes program ideas and a list of local and national resources.
- The "I AM ABLE." campaign, a series of 10 ads highlighting the accomplishments of a person

with disabilities in our community who admonishes the reader/viewer not to call them disabled, but to recognize them as ABLE.

- The MetroWest ABLE website: [www.metrowestABLE.org](http://www.metrowestABLE.org).
- A training program for high school students who function as “shadows” so that children with special needs can participate in Jewish community activities with their “typical” peers.
- “Vodcasts” of family education workshops to ensure access to the larger community.

“We are so incredibly honored to be among the first awardees of the Ruderman Prize in Disability. MetroWest ABLE looks forward to continuing to promote a fully inclusive community, with access to all aspects of Jewish life in Greater MetroWest,” said Rebecca Wanatick, community inclusion coordinator, MetroWest ABLE. “The Metrowest leadership has for many years been mindful of the special needs of members of the community who face developmental, physical, and emotional challenges. It is our hope that this recognition will enable and encourage us to expand our efforts to improve the lives of the community we serve,” said Mort Bunis, MetroWest ABLE chair.

Learn more about MetroWest ABLE by contact [Wanatick](mailto:Wanatick) at (973) 929-3129 or by visiting [www.metrowestABLE.org](http://www.metrowestABLE.org).

*United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ (UJC) stands at the center of a network of partner agencies dedicated to providing comprehensive social services and meeting the educational, vocational, recreational, and social needs of Jews locally, in Israel, and in 60 countries around the world. Responding to emergency and disaster situations around the world is another important part of the UJC mission.*

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*United Jewish Appeal is the fundraising arm of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ*