

## TRANSITIONS TO WORK

### Creating Employment for All Abilities



### Community Inclusion

Following Thanksgiving and heading into a season of religious and spiritual celebrations for many, we are reminded how important it is for society as a whole to be inclusive. Transitions to Work continues to create culture change around inclusive hiring. Others are doing similar work in different environments, including communities of Faith. Thinking about the thanks we gave last week, and looking forward to the joys we share in the holiday season, let's be grateful for and share joy with everyone. Creating culture change in the workplace, in places of worship, in schools, on the playground, and at your dinner table all take one thing- each individual appreciating others for the unique strengths they bring to community. From The Idealist, "When we truly love people, we must meet them where they are, not where we think they should be...we must respect them for who they are, not who we think they ought to be". Below are a few highlights on creating culture change.

### Creating Inclusive Synagogues in Greater Boston

The Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project (RSIP), is designed to support synagogues in creating communities where people of all abilities are valued equally and participate fully. With funding generously provided by the Ruderman Family Foundation, three synagogue communities have been selected to participate in a communal effort to make their own congregations welcoming and inclusive, while also sharing best practices and learnings with the wider community. The RSIP synagogues are Temple Emunah, Lexington (Conservative), Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, Newton Center (Modern Orthodox), and Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley (Reform). Over the course of the next year, these congregations will work toward self-defined inclusion goals and meet as a group to work through an inclusion curriculum and training. They will share their successes and support each other through challenges. With learning gained from this pilot effort, CJP plans to include more synagogue communities in the years to come. Jay Ruderman, president of the Ruderman Family Foundation, says that they've invested in this program because synagogues hold such an influential place in the life of the Jewish community. "A synagogue that does not welcome people with disabilities can alienate not only one individual but his or her entire family," he explains. "This is not only an important social justice issue, but also an urgent continuity issue for our community," he adds. When done well, experts say that inclusion benefits the entire community.

### Promoting Inclusion in Other Faith Communities

On a local level, the First Congregational Church of Hamilton in Hamilton, MA recently held the Hamilton Disabilities Conference. A Conference goal was to learn ways to serve people and families with special needs. Workshops included "Autism Spectrum Disorders: Background,

Barriers, and Building Bridges”; “Seeing Through My Eyes: Navigating Marriage, Family, the Workplace and Church with Blindness and a Guide Dog”; and a “Young Adults with Disability Panel: Involvement in the Church”.

More globally, The Vatican’s health care office recently hosted a week-long international conference on autism bringing together more than 650 people from 57 countries. Pope Francis concluded the conference by speaking and meeting with autistic children and their families to raise awareness. As reported in The Boston Globe and other newspapers, the Pope urged governments and institutions to respond to the needs of people with autism to help break “the isolation and, in many cases also the stigma” associated with the diagnosis. “It is necessary to be the commitment of everyone, in order to promote encounters and solidarity, in a concrete action of support and renewed promotion of hope,” the Pontiff stated.

*Transitions to Work* continues to connect with new employers to educate on inclusive hiring and build employer partnerships. Please let us know if you or someone you know might be interested in exploring *Transitions to Work* as a fit for your or their company. We appreciate the leadership of our employer partners in hiring individuals of all abilities for employment opportunities. Please support these companies and spread the word by joining *Transitions to Work* on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/transitionstoworkboston](http://www.facebook.com/transitionstoworkboston). To learn more about *Transitions to Work* or view inclusive hiring tools, please visit: [www.cjp.org/transitionstowork](http://www.cjp.org/transitionstowork).