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Family
Service

of ORANGE COUNTY

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**To: Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County
From: Sean Gerow, Executive Director of Jewish Family Service of Orange County
2019 Program Review**

The Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County assists in funding many of the programs of Jewish Family Service of Orange County. Please find an overall review of requested information for our entire agency and then brief evaluation for each of the programs funded by the Jewish Federation.

Friendly Visitor Program

Brief description of the program:

In Orange County, many older adults and those with disabilities live alone. Some choose to live alone because they value their independence, while others are forced by circumstance to try and manage on their own. Our Friendly Visitor Program matches volunteers with older adults and adults with disabilities to provide support to those who are isolated, homebound and struggling to manage on their own. These supports include:

- Giving rides to medical appointments and other destinations
- Weekly visits for emotional support and ongoing evaluation (Friendly Visit)
- Assisting with grocery shopping
- Making reassuring phone calls
- Providing a variety of other errands and chores, as needed.

In 2019, the Friendly Visitor Program volunteers delivered over 15,000 hours of service (for example a ride, a visit, a trip to the grocery store). This reflects a growth of offering over 1000 hours of service from 2018. Partnerships with two additional municipalities have been formed and more people are being served. The need and growth of this program occurs every year. We are the sole agency in Orange County providing this type of service.

Number and ages of participants:

In 2019, the Friendly Visitor Program served 450 adults. 390 were 60 and over (60 years old is our criteria for "older adult"). Sixty individuals with disabilities,

ages 26-60 years old were also served. There are 300 volunteers actively engaged in this program. The vast majority of volunteers are over 26, yet there are a handful of children and youth that volunteer on a regular basis.

The Friendly Visitor Program offers a lifeline to older adults and adults with disabilities. By offering concrete services such as grocery shopping and transportation, the program helps participants to continue living independently in the community. By reducing social isolation and loneliness the program has a major positive impact on the physical and mental health of the service recipients. In addition to helping the participant directly, the Friendly Visitor Program offers support and comfort to family members who are unable to offer these supports to their loved ones (due to distance, jobs or other demands).

Another positive impact of the program includes giving people the opportunity to volunteer. Volunteering is meaningful and improves the human quality of life. We often hear from volunteers that while they came into the program to give of themselves, they truly receive more than they could ever imagine giving. The program becomes mutually rewarding for the volunteer and recipient.

KidsConnect

Brief description of the program:

There are two components to KidsConnect: KidsConnect Camp and FamiliesConnect. The mission of KidsConnect is to offer children with disabilities the same opportunities for socialization, personal development and community inclusion that foster independence and empower all individuals.

- KidsConnect Camp is a therapeutic summer day camp for children ages 5-19, most of whom have developmental disabilities or other type of disability; 67% are on the Autism Spectrum. KidsConnect Camp is held during the last two weeks in August on the grounds of Braeside Camp, a beautiful campground in Middletown, NY. Bus transportation is provided as lack of public transportation is a concern for most families. Although we were able to become a Medicaid waiver provider for the camp in 2019, there were several families who do not receive this service. Scholarships were offered in order to have their loved ones attend the camp. The value of each scholarship is \$1,200. This year we had 9 campers receive scholarships.

This year, was challenging for KidsConnect as we transitioned to a new source of ongoing funding (Medicaid) which has strict program requirements and specific criteria for participant eligibility. Unfortunately, we were not able to serve all those who applied to camp as we had to revise our admission policy to meet the requirements of Medicaid. Enrollment in camp was therefore lower than past years and we anticipate that as we reach out to the population that is Medicaid eligible, we will increase the number of participants in coming years. Several scholarships were also offered for children who did not have Medicaid eligibility.

Number and ages of participants:

50 participants grades K-12

Children who attend the KidsConnect Summer Camp have a phenomenal time. Many other camp programs for children with disabilities are more like school programs, and KidsConnect offers a "true camp experience." KidsConnect Camp offers all of the activities that a typical camp offers (swimming, horseback riding, sports, arts and crafts, etc.) It also helps with the structure from the transition between the children's' summer experience and the academic school year. Families feel reassured as their children are having a great time, maintaining their social skills and engage in the rhythms of a recreational program.

Case management

Brief description of the program:

Case management services provide older adults with resources that they need to remain in their homes. The services are directly offered to older adults and their caregivers. Specifically, our case manager

- Guides people to maintain financial stability
- Connects them to community resources
- Reviews their eligibility for government programs (Medicaid, Social Security, veterans benefits, food stamps, nursing home diversion waiver, etc.)
- Arranges for in home assistance

In this program, we serve about 150 adults, all are age 60 and above. This reflects a 15% growth over adults served in 2018 and 48% from 2017. We also provide case management services for caregivers, many who are under the age of 60.

Participants have improved quality of life as they gain access to services that they had not been aware of before. Case Management can also lessen the burden of family members who may have been providing a variety of concrete assistance and financial support.

Holocaust Survivor and Caregiver Program

Brief description of the program:

There are several components to our Holocaust Survivor and Caregiver Program. Through Person Centered Trauma Informed (PCTI) approaches, services in this program offer information, comfort and social supports.

Links, referrals and direct services for survivors:

- Make connections to reputable home health aides
- Guide them to receive financial assistance
- Make matches to offer compassionate companionship
- Limited home cleaning services
- Grocery shopping

Resources for caregivers of Holocaust Survivors, we:

- Information on benefits and entitlements
- Assist with navigating the benefits
- Make links to resources available
- Offer tools to improve coping skills

Expression Through the Arts:

- Match survivors, their caregivers with a Creative Arts Facilitator to create a project expressing a memory or special part of their life. The Creative Arts Facilitator works with them in their homes.
- Matches survivors with a professional musician to create an original song expressing the essence of their life experience. The musician and the survivor develop a bond as they work together during ten home visits to create a musical piece.
- A highly professional and widely publicized concert, attended by 300 people was held in May, around Yom Hashoah commemoration at Mount Saint Mary College. This event showcased – eight beautiful songs composed by songwriters working with survivors and featured a display of artwork created by survivors participating in the Expression Through the Arts Program.

Self-care – while the understanding that the trauma of the Holocaust remains imprinted in the body, techniques to reduce physical manifestations of stress are taught to survivors. Caregivers, as well benefit from self-care and coping techniques such as relaxation, breathing, yoga and self-massage. Practitioners of various disciplines work either 1:1 with survivor and caregivers, or lead group sessions.

Nutrition Counseling – this service is offered in response to participant requests. A nutrition counselor makes four visits to the survivor's home. The counselor purchases food, helps the participant and their caregiver (if they have one) prepare a nutritious meal which is shared with the family and leaves each participant with a customized recipe list.

Currently we serve 60 Holocaust survivors and caregivers.

The overall goal of this program is help Holocaust survivors and caregivers have increased independence and peace of mind and to improve their quality of life. Through our case management, many Holocaust survivors now have access to a variety of new resources including food, medicine, medical equipment, home modifications, home aides and financial benefits. As a result of the participations in Expression Through the Arts, Holocaust survivors feel a sense of joy through the creative process. Some have discovered new talents, while others reconnected with long abandoned artistic skills. Our Self-Care program is our most popular and it is rated highly by participants because they value learning techniques that they can use to help with relaxation. Beyond specific techniques learned, all of these programs improve quality of life because they increase socialization and contribute to a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Lunch with Friends

Roots

Brief description of the program(s):

These two programs offer exposure to different facets of Jewish life through social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities for Jewish people with developmental disabilities. "Lunch with Friends" occurs during the day, and "Roots" occurs in the evening. Both take place in Temple Sinai of Middletown. Our Roots Program includes a brief prayer service led by the temple's Rabbi. Lunch with Friends has a "mock Shabbat" component to it, as candles are lit, blessings and songs are chanted and challah is shared.

Number and ages of participants:

Lunch with Friends: about 50 participants

Roots: around 40 participants

(In addition, about 30 staff and volunteers who assist with the programs)

A sense of connection and belonging within the Jewish community is enhanced. This is expressed through lighting candles, singing songs, breaking challah together, saying Kiddush, enjoying a meal, hearing Jewish stories and more.

Counseling

Brief description of the program:

We offer short term, goal focused counseling. Counseling is offered both to people who are homebound, and those who can come into the office. Some of our clients may be uninsured while others do not have the means to pay for high co-pays and. In addition to individual counseling, we run two groups per month in various settings.

We offer short-term counseling: one reason is so that over the course of time, we can be effective in seeing more people. During the initial session the therapist and client set goals. There are times however, when after six sessions, we find that the clients did not reach their goals, and need more sessions. Many clients are faced with complex issues and therefore, short term counseling is not the best route for them. At times, we will extend the number of sessions. Other times, we will refer the individuals to another form of treatment.

During the course of the year, we see about 43 clients individually (a 50% increase from 2018) and about 80 people (an increase of 10 participants) are involved in group counseling (with little overlap). Most of the clients are 60 and above.

Information and Referral /General Agency

Brief description of the program:

On a daily basis, our phone rings with people seeking services and resources. If we don't offer the service that can meet their needs, we never say "no, we're sorry that we cannot help you." We will always guide and refer them to resources. At times, we will make the call on their behalf, introducing the person in need to the agency. We are part of WELCOME Orange, a collaboration of agencies and organizations whose doors are always open to welcome members

of the community. Each agency and organization provides a welcoming environment for the people they support.

We also refer people to our Financial Empowerment Program (the Diane Finkelstein Fund for Families in Crisis is part of our Financial Empowerment Program. This also includes Premier Cares – for people with severe urological and gastrointestinal diagnosis). This is our charitable arm, where Tzedakah is put into action. When people are most stressed due to illness we give them financial and emotional support.

Aside from the phone calls, we do outreach at events throughout the year. People come to our table or speaker and ask for services. When Jewish Family Service started out as part of the Federation, Information and Referral was the very first service offered. It continues to the heart of what we do; we connect people to resources.

Number and ages of participants:

830 people; this is an estimate based on call volume received. This estimate is based on: 4 information and referral calls per day for 4 days a week, 52 weeks a year. (We are open five days/ week, but this accounts for holidays.) This remains the same as the referrals we receive are a constant part of our day to day operations.

Other

In addition to the programs discussed above, please be aware that there are some programs that are not directly funded by the grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County. They include: Teens Connect (a program for LGBTQ Teens), the Financial Empowerment Program (including the Diane Finkelstein for Families in Crisis Fund), and the Alzheimer's Program.

Stories

With every program we operate, and every interaction we have, there is a story. I would like to share with you one of those stories to help you with learning of the impact of our work.

Program Story:

The following is from a participant who received services – "In life, challenges come our way, challenges we can't imagine. We face them with family and friends love and wanting to help. It wasn't until we reached out to you where we received the most help. We thank you for your generosity in helping us through difficult times and supporting us as we struggled. Your kindness and generosity mean more than you can imagine.

Martin and Lucy

A member of an Orange County synagogue was diagnosed with cancer. They spent several weeks in the hospital for treatment. Members of their synagogue rallied the family to assist as best they could. When Martin came home from the hospital he fell and broke his spine. He spent several more months in the hospital and rehabilitation. During this time he was forced to close his business. Family and friends realized they could not provide all of the services necessary. JFS was contacted by concerned congregants because of the overwhelming needs of the couple. JFS staff immediately went into action

and assisted the family in securing funds through the Diane Finkelstein Fund and Premier Cares which provided assistance in rent and hiring an aide. Our Case Manager provided assistance in getting another aide to help the family. JFS also worked with a congregant who was a seasoned volunteer through the Friendly Visitor Program. The family now receives Friendly visits and transportation which provides much needed respite to Lucy during the day. The family is aware and appreciative of the depths of services and resources provided by JFS.

Mary called one afternoon looking to schedule some rides. She was looking to go to the Chiropractor every Monday; she followed by saying "Sometimes I get a little stiff" which we shared a laugh over. We let her know as soon as we could find a volunteer we would get back to her. As we were entering Mary's information we noticed her date of birth, April 27th 1916. Having to make sure, we double checked and yes, she is 103 years old. Mary is active, funny and sharp as a tack. We were able to set Mary up with a regular volunteer and brings her to the Chiropractor, weekly. Mary expressed such gratitude for our services and says that Monday afternoon appointment loosens her up and keeps her going all week. The volunteers who have taken her have all commented on just how amazed they are by her. Her laugh and candor for life is incredible and a lesson for all of us.