When you have a child with special needs, what opportunities exist for them post-secondary school? “Not many,” shares Susan Cohen. “That’s why the JCC has such a special place in our family’s hearts!”

Susan’s daughter Rachel, a 29-year old with some challenging developmental disabilities, has been attending the JCC’s Adult Day Program for 8 years. “Rachel is stimulated and challenged each day with activities and social experiences that give her the tools she needs to progress in all areas of development. She takes Zumba classes, studies music and art, and cooks with her friends. She learns how to take care of herself, how to interact with others and other invaluable life skills each day. When she comes home at night, she shows us dance moves she’s learned and shares stories about her day. She is more engaging, more vibrant, more smiley than on any day she has off. And that smile on her face says it all. It means everything. It means the world,” says Susan.

Like any parent, Susan’s hope is to see her daughter find happiness and a sense of purpose in life and Rachel finds both here at the JCC. It’s a place where she can be in the mainstream of life and surrounded by people who are eager to interact with her so she never has to feel alone. This incredible experience spills over into our community. “Rachel and I might be in town and run into people she’s met at the JCC and they enthusiastically approach her, greet her by name, and then introduce themselves to me. It’s moments like this that make us so grateful—to be given an opportunity to connect with others in our extended community this way. It’s good for Rachel, good for our family and good for the community we live in.”

“Over the years, I have observed how the JCC takes enormous heartfelt responsibility to provide for special populations—for kids with special needs like Rachel, or the frail elderly, or kids with cancer. What goes on inside these beautiful walls, with all its incredible programming and people, is a beautiful thing. And I believe that the JCC cares for everyone in this community because they view everyone in this community as important.”

“When I think back to the days when I first began seeking out programs for her as a little girl, I remember how disheartening it was to see how limiting or boring or isolating most programs were. But when I found the JCC, I was immediately optimistic. I could tell right away that this was where I wanted Rachel to be. And now, all these years later, I am so proud of all her achievements—her trips into the community where she can practice her social skills and money management and other invaluable life skills that will translate into more independent living.”
One of Rachel’s biggest struggles is with expressive language, being able to communicate her feelings, and just last week she had a milestone, a real ‘ah-ha’ moment. “We were listening to music together and suddenly Rachel said she missed Valentino, her teacher Maria’s dog. I told her to ‘use her words’ and from that point on, Rachel’s language has evolved into a charming young lady. And she keeps gaining social experience just as every moment adds up. Rachel is developing an educated mind, being able to communicate her feelings, increased self-esteem, independence and acceptance they gained from being a member of our JCC community.”

Looking for a way to mark a special occasion such as a wedding, anniversary, bar/bat mitzvah, or a birth of a child, or to honor someone’s memory? Make a donation to an individual endowment fund in their honor. All gifts over $18 are recognized with a card to the recipient and listed in this publication. For more info or to make a tribute please contact Fran Roszer at 201.408.1404 or visit jccotp.org and click “Donate.”

21ST CENTURY FUND
From Randi and Michael Kollender to Laura Freeman in memory of Grace Miller
From Lynn and Jonathan Norton to The Gelsey Family in memory of Myrna Gelsey
AL & SUSAN WHITE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION FUND FOR YOUTH
From Susan White in memory of Al White’s August birthday

ARLEEN & CHUCK WAYTE SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR FAMILIES IN NEED
From Amy Zagon to Sharon and Peter Kestenbaum in honor of their daughter Lori’s marriage
From Amy and David Zagon to Jennifer Schiffman in honor of being named the JCC’s Volunteer of the Year
From Amy and David Zagon to Annette Scala in honor of receiving the Staff Recognition Award
From Amy and David Zagon to Tina Guberman in honor of her dedicated service to the JCC
From Chuck Wayte, Brock Trucking, to Myrna and Yale Block in memory of their son Brian
From The Zagon Family to Eric Klein and Family with sincere condolences on the loss of his beloved grandmother
From Amy and David Zagon to Alissa and Zach Epstein, congratulations on the birth of their baby

From Amy and David Zagon to Annette Scala in honor of receiving the Staff Recognition Award
From Amy and David Zagon to Tina Guberman in honor of her dedicated service to the JCC
From Chuck Wayte, Brock Trucking, to Myrna and Yale Block in memory of their son Brian
From The Zagon Family to Jennifer Schiffman and Family with sincere condolences on the loss of her beloved father

BERIT & MARTIN BERNSTEIN CONCERT FUND FOR SENIORS
From Berit and Martin Bernstein to Robert Silber and Family in memory of his mother Edith Silber
BERIT & MARTIN BERNSTEIN OPEN FORUM FUND
From Berit and Martin Bernstein to Phyllis and Paul Tauber in memory of Phyllis’ mother Pearl Frank

BERNIE AND RUTH WEINFILSH SHIRAH FUND IN TRIBUTE TO MATTHEW LAZAR
From Temple Emanu-El to Carol Kopelman in memory of Bernie and Ruth Weinfilsh
From The Dornfield Family to Jody Konstadt in memory of Bernie and Ruth Weinfilsh
From Your friends in Shirah to Judy Frank Kershner in memory of Rabbi Jack Frank
From ShiraH members Richard and Phyllis Rosen

From Bernice Weinstein to JoJo Rubach in honor of receiving the Staff Recognition Award
From Amy and David Zagon, to Tina Guberman in honor of her dedicated service to the JCC
From The Zagon Family to Jennifer Schiffman and Family with sincere condolences on the loss of her beloved father
From Marilyn Linder to The Weinfilsh Family in memory of Ruth and Bernie Weinfilsh
From Arnold R. Sollar and Elaine Sollar Eisen to Jody Konstadt in memory of Bernie and Ruth Weinfilsh
BERNSTEIN-SLOTE MEMORIAL FUND FOR SENIOR COMPUTER LITERACY
From Bob and Carol Srote-Bernstein to Roslyn Lampert for her work
CAMP DREAM STREET- PEARL SEIDEN SUMMER PROGRAM
For children with cancer and other blood disorders
From Kids4Caring to Lisa Robins, thanks so much for coming to Kids4Caring
From Debbby, Dov, Elizabeth and Abigail Bacharach to Sylvain Siboni and Family in memory of Jacques Siboni
From Debbby, Dov, Elizabeth and Abigail Bacharach to Judy and Sylvain Siboni in honor of Arielle Siboni’s marriage to Joshua Grassman
From Pearl Seiden to Nancy and Peter Brown in memory of her mother Bernice Weinstein