

COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

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JFS offers helping hand to all

Where can you find a caregiver for a frail elder or disabled adult, adopt a child, celebrate your Healthy Partners walk to Hawaii with a luau, get free help with citizenship paperwork or job coaching as a newly arrived refugee, meet with a volunteer mentor for overwhelmed new moms, or take a bilingual



yoga class in Russian and English?

Thousands annually discover all of these offerings and many more in one place: Jewish Family Service of MetroWest (JFS), a non-profit Framingham agency which has provided social and community services in the MetroWest and greater Boston areas since 1979.

Because it is founded on traditional Jewish values of social responsibility and concern for all members of the community, JFS serves, throughout the life cycle, people of diverse ages, faiths and backgrounds.

Collaboration with the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston enables new parents as well as parents of children under age 5 to connect with each other and the MetroWest community. "Continuing Connections" is a way for Adoption Choice families to stay connected to the agency and to one another.

Collaborating with the United Way of Tri-County, the Framingham School Department and private donors, JFS serves Framingham's predominantly bilingual/bicultural children at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School with after school programs - one for third- and fourth-graders with specific educational needs, another for fifth grade girls designed to decrease the science and math learning gap between boys and girls entering middle school. In collaboration with the Framingham ESL Plus program, JFS

provides English language instruction for parents of Wilson students.

"It's a great partnership," says Robin Welch, Wilson School Principal. "The kids spend time with mentors becoming better students and the mentors know they're making a difference to an economically and educationally needy population."

At no cost, Natick children, ages 1-4, and their parents, can share mutually nurturing time with elder residents in a multigenerational activity group because of a JFS partnership with Whitney Place and Natick Family Network of Natick.

JFS quality care for elders in the MetroWest community goes beyond distributions from the Lucy and Joe Press Food Pantry, rides to medical appointments, legal aid, volunteer companions and help getting an auto-alert lifeline.

At the Callahan Senior Center, Healing Partners' Bereavement support group, which has been running for 20 years, honors the spiritual, intellectual and emotional needs of those who grieve.

Aiding people to age in place with the help of Caregiver Homes of Massachusetts' community-based care program, and Signature Home Care, the only agency with sliding scale home health care, JFS' Generations Care Management provides high quality, 24-hour in-home services for elders and disabled adults, including certified nurse assistance.

Susan Conrad, professor and chairwoman of the nursing department at Framingham State College School of Nursing, says of their Community Nursing Class partnership with JFS: "Our students are all registered nurses studying for a B.S.N degree. When we pair them, one on one, with families from JFS, they can offer their nursing expertise while learning about community health and home care from elders who become their teachers."

Built only with extended bridges, never restrictive moats, JFS even partners with more than 20 community restaurants and caterers who contribute buffet food for the JFS annual gala dinner and silent auction.

Working through partnerships and sustained collaborations in an intersection of common goals, Malka Young, LICSW, Director of Community Impacts, views JFS as "walking with, rather than doing for.

"Our file cabinets don't match, because we maximize our resources and stretch our dollars. Ninety-one percent of our funds go directly to our programs. We're good stewards of other people's money."

For further information see www.jfsmw.org. For volunteer opportunities contact Diana O'Brien at dobrien@jfsmw.org.

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