

**2011 Goodman Award
Jewish Family Service Celebration Company**

General Information

Program Title: Celebration Company
Agency Name: Jewish Family Service of Houston
Date Program Began: August 4, 2009

Initial challenge to be addressed by the Program:

Based on a community-wide assessment, it was evident that there was a significant need for, yet a lack of vocational services within the Jewish community for people with disabilities. Prior to the launch of Celebration Company there was not a Jewish communal agency providing supportive employment for Jewish adults with disabilities in Houston and surrounding areas. Data further supported that a Jewish service provider was a priority for a majority of respondents. Individuals and family members were eager for a plan that would provide viable employment opportunities where participants received compensation for their work, increased social, life, and wellness skills within a Jewish framework

Brief overall program description

Celebration Company is a three-day-a-week, fee-based, comprehensive, supportive employment based on a social entrepreneurial model with a business and marketing plan. The participants range in age from 25-59 years old with a varied degree of abilities. Some participants have a diagnosis of Down syndrome, autism, mental illness or cognitive delay. The program strives to build on individual strengths and encourages and challenges participants to develop new skills. When you walk into Celebration Company you see participants working side by side with volunteers, hand rolling Shabbat and Hanukkah candles and beautiful handmade note cards that are sold at different venues throughout Texas. Other participants are working with professional staff or volunteers learning how to fold clothes, practice conversation skills, and prepare healthy meals. Celebration Company is also a community that extends beyond the workplace. Families get together to celebrate Shabbat at Synagogues throughout the city and they gather at the opening of a participants art show at a trendy gallery.

Jewish Component

A human being mints many coins from the same mold, and they are all identical. But the holy one, blessed by G-D, strikes us all from the mold of the first human and each one of us is unique. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5. Celebration Company is deliberately Jewish. Jewish principles guide the program in a practical way and by and nurturing and meeting the spiritual and religious needs of participants. The facility and the products are kosher and overseen by the Houston Kashruth Association so any person can participate in the program, join for Shabbat and enjoy the products. The participants are actively engaged in on-going *Tikkun Olam* projects that reinforce the concept of *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bah zeh* - all Jews are responsible for one another. A rabbi from the community joins in Shabbat rituals and lunch every Friday and all holidays are celebrated with prayers and songs.

Outreach component

Early in the research when families were asked to identify the most critical and immediate need of loved one with a disability employment was among the top two priorities. Each person who identified employment was invited to meet with a member of the professional

staff at Jewish Family Service to learn more about the program, determine if Celebration Company was the right fit for their adult child, and to tour the facility. In an effort to reach families who had not participated in the community wide needs assessment, advertisements, articles in the local Jewish press, congregational newsletters, area magazines, Houston Chronicle, and local radio shows were all mediums utilized to introduce Celebration Company.

Community Building Component

Two years prior to launching Celebration Company, the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston implemented a new fundraising model and moved away from a straight allocation process to one that was intended to match donors with interests. The single greatest priority of a major benefactor has been to provide for Jews with disabilities. They relied on the leadership of the Jewish Federation to bring them and their passion to Jewish Family Service and to this day the primary benefactors remain partners in this journey. JFS convened a coalition of Jewish agencies to address the gap in services on a community wide scale. The Partners includes the following agencies: Bureau of Jewish Education, Chabad Outreach Friendship Circle, Houston Rabbinic Association, Jewish Children's Regional Service, Jewish Community Center, Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, Seven Acres Geriatric Care Center.

Outcomes

It is not enough to say that Celebration Company is changing lives. It is critical to understand *how* it is impacting lives. What is the identifiable change in behavior, attitude or belief? During the registration and intake process, clients and family members were asked to identify goals. Based on that information an individual service plan was developed. According to data collected, participants showed an increase in employment, life and social skills. For the first time many participants began to recognize facial expressions and how to express their own emotions appropriately. Some developed verbal skills, while others learned how to ask questions and engage in conversation. Within a twelve month period, over 10,000 hours of supportive employment was provided and perhaps the greatest unintended outcome was the 30,000 hours or respite care Celebration Company provided family members.

Evaluation method

Based upon a clinical assessment, an individual service plan was developed by a team of professionals. The goals identified by the participant and family members were the standards by which change was measured. On-going evaluation methods include: assessments, formal meetings, satisfaction surveys, questionnaires and review and adjustment of individual service plans.

Sustainability

Total program cost: \$120,000/year

Major income sources: Program fees, Alexander Foundation, Letter of Intent from Lorraine and Sid Brown Scholarship Fund, individual benefactors, revenue from sale of product

Continuation of the program: Jewish Family Service will continue to provide this valuable service to the most vulnerable members of the community. Long term commitment from major benefactors, program fees and growing revenue from sale of product will ensure that this program will continue to thrive.

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