

**JESPY HOUSE 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY JUBILEE**  
**CLIENT SPEECHES FROM SUCCESS STORIES PRESENTATIONS**  
**Sunday, February 4, 2018**



**JODY KANNER**

**Prudential**

JESPY has been instrumental in my growth and development over the past 34 years. It was here that I gained valuable work experience which transcended into my thirty-year career at Prudential.



I first learned of an opening at Prudential by my job developer who believed that I could succeed in this position. I was nervous but with encouragement and support I became confident. Throughout my time at Prudential I was able to grow professionally by assuming various new roles as the company transitioned.

When I initially started, I worked in the records department where I managed pension files. Later, I transferred to the long-term disability section and then I progressed into the Cast position. In this role, I checked test scores to determine eligibility for prospective agents. I felt honored that they trusted me to perform this function.

With each transition, I encountered challenges, but my job coach was there to support me along the way. At times I doubted myself, but my coach made me feel that I could achieve my dreams of sustaining employment.

I stand before you today after just celebrating my 30-year work anniversary at Prudential this past December. I feel confident in my position and I feel proud to not having only sustained employment but to thrive in my career. I have matured and developed great working relationships. I feel accepted by my co-workers and I feel that I add value to the company.

JESPY has been a major contributor in maintaining my independence for the past 34 years. If it had not been for JESPY, I don't believe I would be standing before you today. My future goal is to retire at my company and continue to live an enriched life at JESPY.

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**Employer's Comments:** Jody's Manager Tanja Chrapko-Weber, together with Prudential Director Jennifer O'Donoghue indicated, "One of the hardest workers in the organization, she is always willing to give back to the community. Whenever there is a volunteer opportunity, Jody is one of the first to raise her hand – not only for volunteer opportunities, but for whatever tasks there are within our organization."



**STEVEN MYERS**

**New Jersey Performing Arts Center**

I enjoy all of the JESPY activities. Thank to Shay [Remillard] and staff. My favorite thing about JESPY is going on different trips they offer.



Because of JESPY, I travel to Newark, NJ to NJPAC four days a week and I work in the mailroom. I am in charge of shredding documents and delivering mail and packages. I have been working with Ginny for 15 years and she taught me so much.

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*(Steven Myers, continued)*

I want to thank everyone who has helped me get to where I am today.

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**Employer's Comments:** Ginny Bowers-Coleman, NJPAC Director of Volunteer Services, together with Anthony Ball, Operations Supervisor, expressed appreciation for "15 years of dedicated service, 15 years of service we can trust, and 15 years of supportive counseling and guidance from JESPY"



**HERSCHEL SOBEL**  
**Essex County Veteran's Courthouse**

I have been a JESPY client for 34 years and 4 months, and I have worked at the Essex County Courthouse for 31 years and 3 months. At Essex County Courthouse I am a county clerk and working in the vault has always been a good fit for me.



Carol Novak was my counselor at JESPY that helped me get the job in 1986. I remember when I started working in the vault. It was small, and it kept getting bigger as the years went by. No matter what size it was, I was able to work well with the changes. I enjoy pulling the [file] jackets and helping my coworkers when they need help. I also keep the files in order.

I get a lot of support from my coworkers there and they have helped with my success through the years. I receive the same support at JESPY with help from my counselors.

JESPY has been a big part of my life and I am glad to be part of it.



**NIRANJAN SUMATHISENA (l.)**  
**JON SPARK (r.)**  
**Red Mango Yogurt and Smoothies**

Excerpts from WREE Supervisor Rob Slater's introduction:

Last year with the help and creativity of WREE Coordinator



Debbie Hurwitz, we had the opportunity to use RED Mango as one of our training sites. I've known Jon for almost 20 years, Niranjan for about 2. Pairing them together at this site couldn't have worked out any better.

A new place/ program can be scary to anyone: Am I able to do the job? How can I make new friends and socialize? After speaking to JESPY staff that provide support to Niranjan and Jon - everyone from job coordinators and case managers to clinicians - all agreed that the two would benefit from this opportunity.

At Red Mango, Niranjan's and Jon's work is appreciated. They prep and clean yogurt machines and dining areas, making sure that customers have a great experience during their visit. In addition, this past year they have both become more socially active and proactive when it came to advocacy.

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**Employer's Comments:** Red Mango Store Owner Hao Wu began with "We feel very lucky to have them at our store for almost a year. They have great patience, good persistence and are doing a very good job at Red Mango. I thank JESPY House very much for bringing these two awesome gentleman to us".



**HEATHER SCHWAM**  
**Supercuts Hair Salon**

I started at JESPY in 1999. I was very shy and didn't want to socialize with the other clients. I graduated Beacon College in Florida with a BA in Human Services. I originally wanted to do social work, because I wanted to make people feel good about themselves. But as you all know, that changed.



I met Robert Slater in 1999 at my first job through and enclave called SPUR. I met friends and I slowly and over time became more expressive. Robert Slater became a key person in my journey of independence. He was my job coach for almost 19 years. Now I don't need one anymore, but I wanted to acknowledge him and all his years of dedication and service.

A few years later I was working at GAP Kids. That is when I got the encouragement from Julia and Xiara to go to cosmetology school. School took several years due to epilepsy. But I finally graduated in 2007 and outgrew my epilepsy. Over the next several years I worked both salon jobs and retail. Sometimes holding down two jobs at once.

In 2011, I met Sherry. Sherry was wonderful; she became my new case manager and therapist. She helped me find my tutor Deborah who helped me prepare for my state board exam. I studied hard for six months straight. Sherry was encouraging and took me and my model Janet Alleman to take my boards on November 30, 2011. I passed on my late Poppy's birthday. Sherry is no longer my case manager, but I still work with her for therapy and I wanted to acknowledge her as well for the last 7 years of dedication and commitment.

I got engaged to Sean in 2011 and then got married in 2013. Sean has been my rock and my motivation to be more independent. As I moved from salon to salon I really wanted to find a salon that felt like home. None of them really did. I struggled because no one wanted to mentor someone so new.

I came to Supercuts in 2015. There I met Kristina. Kristina was not your typical manager. She was patient and caring and no matter what, she never stopped believing in me. She believed in me when sometimes I stopped believing in myself. After hard work and constant repetition, I went from a lot of "redo's" to becoming one of the top requested stylists in Livingston.

In addition to all my hard work I am also a top seller of product and I have just been asked to manage the social media for Supercuts in Livingston. We will be having a Supercuts Livingston Facebook page so please support me and press "like"!

I work hard, and I can't believe how far I have come. I now socialize with a circle of friends that I value and love. They are like family. I strive to succeed in all areas of my life now. I have an amazing set of parents and my sister that supports me. I have a great husband that supports me and a wonderful career where I can use my bachelor's and make people feel beautiful on the outside as well as in.

JESPY has been a wonderful place for me. For those who know me well I'm an avid knitter in the JESPY knitting group and I am taking more advanced classes outside for knitting. Thank you, Sandi, [Koterba] as well for being there to guide me in that area. I am grateful for all those who have stayed with me on my 19-year journey.

**ROGER BARON****Genova Burns, Attorneys-at-Law**

Now it's a very special privilege for me to get recognized at this year's JESPY Jubilee for the work that I've been doing.

For almost a year, I've been working a full time job at Genova Burns, which is a law firm that represents many prestigious companies and other important organizations in the New York-New Jersey area and other parts of the northeast. I got the job with the help of Debbie Hurwitz and Michelle Rampersant, who work in JESPY House's Work Readiness and Employment Engagement department.

When I started at Genova Burns, I worked in Office Services, in other words, the mailroom, doing tasks like sorting, delivering and collecting the mail, scanning documents for the secretaries of lawyers, and preparing binders for lawyers. Within a few weeks, I became the firm's Marketing and Business Development Assistant, and from there I've been doing a whole lot of very interesting tasks. These tasks have included:

- 1) Helping the firm sponsor events by outside organizations by getting attorneys to attend events, and designing advertisements in InDesign to send to the organizations for them to put in their program booklets;
- 2) Writing, rewriting, editing, and proofreading material for the Genova Burns website including employee biographies and firm news
- 3) Composing promotional brochures about Genova Burns practice groups and attorneys and sending them to attorneys for them to give to prospective clients;
- 4) Working on documents that respond to Requests for Qualifications and Requests for Proposals from townships and counties to help the firm get work from them. This has included proofreading the documents, doing the attachments and even composing documents.

So far, I've been getting great kudos from my marketing supervisors, the human resources director, and others in the firm. They mainly say that I'm doing a great job and an excellent job. The people there are nice, friendly, helpful, and willing to teach. I have a JESPY job coach, Courtney Krandal, who comes in periodically and gives me great feedback from the people in the firm, addresses my concerns, and gives me reassurance.

Genova Burns is a great organization to work for. I believe in the firm's culture of representing its clients at "the highest standard of excellence," providing them with a full range of expertise and practice areas while servicing them in a "personal, relationship-oriented manner," and providing excellent communication and service to its clients. Last but not least, the job is very easy to get to. I just get on the train in South Orange, go to the Newark Broad Street station, and walk a couple of blocks to the firm.

I want to thank a number of people for helping me become successful in my job at Genova Burns:

- 1) The Work Readiness and Employment Engagement staff at JESPY House for helping me get the job, and especially Courtney Krandal for all her support;
- 2) The staff at Genova Burns, for hiring me, moving me up quickly, and giving me a chance to use my wide variety of skills to help the marketing department promote the firm to the public, thus helping Genova Burns, and
- 3) My brother Andrew Baron, for giving me a lot of help and support over the years in my career and my life, after my parents died.

*(Continued on next page)*



*(Roger Baron, continued)*

I'm very proud to be a part of Genova Burns. I very much appreciate their having JESPY House as a client and sponsoring this event, and I hope to remain with the firm for a very, very long time to come. Now a few words from Rebecca Moll Freed, one of the attorneys in Genova Burns.

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**Employer's Comments:** Rebecca Freed, Attorney at Genova Burns, was impressed with how quickly Roger moved on from Office Services to the Marketing Department where his skills were better utilized. "Our ads have never looked better. Our lists of sponsorships and spreadsheets have never been more organized. We are very fortunate to have Roger working with us at Genova Burns."

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**ALEC REED**  
**Day Program Client**

Hello, I'm Alec Reed. I've been coming to JESPY House for around 5 years. I was a little nervous at first, but on that first day I met two clients that I became friends with and we're still good friends.

From that day, I went on to meet many more people and make a lot more good friends. Me and my friends can go out on our own and even get together outside of JESPY.

When I first started, I really didn't go out in the community much, and could only go out with staff. Then, I started going out with friends, and soon was able to go out by myself, any day I wanted. It was the same with Special Olympics. The first overnight trip I had to room with a staff member. The next time we went away, they saw that I was able to stay on my own, so I roomed with a client. Staff at the Day Program even trust me to take clients out that can't go out on their own.

I've been a part of the Life Skills program, where staff helps me learn skills to live on my own, find a job and stick to a budget. They reinforce in more detail, things I learned in high school. I really like the new apartment we have to work out of. It makes a big difference, doing Life Skills in a real apartment. It's more hands-on and visual, which is how I learn.

Thank you and see you again next year!

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**SEAN MCKENNA**  
**Day Program Client**

When I first started at JESPY House five and a half years ago, a friend of mine named Jen used to take me to the Subway restaurant in South Orange every day during lunch, and she used to take me to road trips and JESPY Café activities. Now, I do everything on my own. I go to the library in South Orange, I set up all of my Access Links rides and even go to New York City.

When I started at JESPY, I lived with my family in Livingston. Now I have my own apartment in Millburn.



**RODAL HUDSON**  
**Day Program Client**

Hello, my name is Rodal Hudson. I've been coming to JESPY for a little over a year. My first day was January 3, 2017. I was so excited to come to JESPY that I just showed up that day. Erika was surprised and she said, "Don't worry, it's OK, we'll work it out". And look at me now!

I was shocked when they told me I would be up here talking today. I never did anything like this before. That is how much has changed and how much has happened in that one little year.

I'm seeing a lot, and doing a lot, and learning a lot. The staff work with me and my friends with cooking and cleaning and shopping. They tell us that the more we put into it, the more we'll grow, and we can get anywhere we want.

I'm learning a lot, but I'm also making really good friends. We can go to the store by ourselves and that feels good.

Last year, my life wasn't like this. Now it's transformed and there's all this stuff I never saw. I hope this next year is the biggest year for me.

I want to stay a part of JESPY. There's nothing like this place. Thank You!

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**PASSION COTTINGHAM**  
**Day Program Client**

My name is Passion. I am from Montclair, NJ. I have been at JESPY since September of 2017. I love daily living skills, going to the apartment, learning to be independent, and meeting new friends.

I enjoy working at the senior center. I say hi to them, I help them, I play Bingo with them. I also like going to Toni's Kitchen. I like being organized and helping people who don't have food. It's nice to give back. I'm thankful.

My goals are to try to eat right, read more books, and educate myself more. I've met good friends through the Day Program. My one really good friend is kind, and funny. I miss her when she is not here because I really connect with her. I enjoy spending time with her outside of JESPY. We text all the time. That's my buddy! I'm looking forward to being more involved in activities, making more friends, learning new things, and getting out of the house.

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**MICHAEL CARROLL**  
**Day Program Client**

My name is Mike Carroll. I'm from West Caldwell, NJ. I've been at JESPY for about 5-1/2 years. JESPY is phenomenal. It teaches me life skills, especially when I am at the apartment. I feel a family presence.

At the apartment, I work on social skills, cleaning, and cooking. I've grown tremendously since being at JESPY. I wasn't able to walk next door to the convenience store, but now I do, independently. I also wasn't able to cross the street without help, but I've learned how to and how to be safe in the community.

I go out more with friends, which allows me more freedom and independence. I've met so many good friends through JESPY. My goal is to live independently someday. I absolutely love the [JESPY] Café too.



**HARRIS ENGEL**  
**Day Program Client**

Thank you everyone! This is truly an honor.

When I first started JESPY House in 2010, I had just finished Livingston High School. At first, I was having a tough time transitioning from being a high school student to being a college student. It was difficult for me to be going to class and doing homework independently.

With the help of JESPY House staff, I learned how to attend classes at school and take care of an apartment at Life Skills. I also learned how to cross busy streets and pay for food at restaurants and supermarkets. I had a couple of small jobs and learned what it takes to be a good employee. In addition, I acquired the ability to check expiration dates on certain foods and beverages.

I attended County College of Morris in Randolph, New Jersey from Fall 2010 to Winter 2014, and graduated with an Associate's Degree in Electronic Music, with a concentration in voice. Being a foodie, I also took food classes at CCM's culinary program.

By the time I graduated, I had already started playing piano at my synagogue. My family thought it would be a wonderful idea to continue on with my Bachelor's Degree in Jazz Piano to help with my piano skills and to expand my synagogue duties. I am currently a jazz piano student at Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey, and I only have one more semester left after this one. In addition, I play piano as an accompanist at various temples including the now closed Temple Emanu-El of West Essex in Livingston, Israel Congregation of Manchester in Manchester, Vermont, Temple Sinai in Summit, Temple Beth Shalom in Livingston, Congregation B'nai Israel in Basking Ridge and recently, Temple Oheb Shalom in South Orange. In fact, I will be playing at Oheb's first ever Shabbat B'yachad, or Shabbat Together, where we will invite all JESPY House clients to attend. At each temple, I have obtained some skills and repertoire that will continue to help me grow as a person and as a musician.

First, I would like to thank Frank for believing that "I've got this" when he met me when I was 18. Thank you to Allison, Erika, Sherry and Mike Preston for supporting and encouraging me.

I wish I could thank Ilene Feinstein in person for her emotional support as my therapist. She used to come and see me play piano at synagogue. I know she is looking down on me and smiling.

If it weren't for JESPY House, I would not have become the person that I am today.