

Embracing Inclusion: Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month (JDAIM)

Dear *Chaverim*,

Every February, Jewish communities around the world acknowledge **Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month (JDAIM)**. Established in 2009, JDAIM is a time to raise awareness, foster inclusion, and advocate for individuals with disabilities within Jewish life and beyond.

The Torah teaches that all people are created *b'tzelem Elokim* — in the image of G-d. This principle calls upon us to embrace diversity and ensure that every individual, regardless of ability, has access to meaningful participation in Jewish life. JDAIM serves as a reminder of this sacred responsibility. JDAIM also highlights that differences are not deficiencies, but rather can be strengths that harness unique attributes.

Throughout the month, many synagogues, organizations, and schools host special programs, discussions, and advocacy efforts to promote accessibility and inclusion, and share information about simple ways for us to be more inclusive. Many Jewish institutions also use this time to assess their own accessibility and consider necessary improvements.

Inclusion is not just about physical access; it's about belonging. JDAIM encourages communities to move beyond awareness and toward true acceptance, where people of all abilities are valued, heard, and empowered.

In Jewish Ottawa, we are committed to caring for our entire community, but we recognize that we must do better. Inclusion is not just a program or initiative; it is a way of being. Cultivating an inclusive mindset is essential to strengthening our efforts.

As part of this commitment, Federation is participating in *Pushing the Boundaries: Disability, Inclusion, and Jewish Community*, a conference taking place in May in Toronto. Federation's Jodi Green is actively involved in planning the conference. A former Tamir employee who worked to integrate Jewish life into programs for individuals with disabilities, Green now serves on the Pushing the Boundaries National Advisory Committee. She

collaborates with Jewish leaders across Canada to advance accessibility and inclusion within their organizations. Learn more in this recent Ottawa Jewish E-Bulletin article.

As we observe JDAIM, let us recommit to creating a more inclusive Jewish community — one where everyone has the opportunity to learn, pray, and connect without barriers. Together, we can build a world where disability inclusion is not just a goal, but a reality.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a safe and enjoyable Family Day weekend,



Adam

