

Child Services Agency Plans Ninth Annual Fundraiser At Glen Head Country Club

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Glen Head Country Club aerial view (Photo source: [Glen Head Country Club](#))

An established child services agency based in Florida now is growing roots in the New York area, thanks to the diligent efforts of a Long Island support group. That's the observation of Old Westbury resident Pearl Halegua, who for over a decade has spearheaded educational and fundraising efforts on behalf of JAFCO.

JAFCO, which stands for Jewish Adoption and Family Care Options, has developed a strong local presence through a hard-working New York area "friends" group. Next month, JAFCO will host its ninth annual Long Island fundraising event, titled "Fun in the Sun," from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday, August 2, at Glen Head Country Club, Glen Head.

JAFCO is a nonprofit organization that serves abused and neglected children as well as those with developmental disabilities. Last year, the group celebrated its 25th anniversary as a one-of-a-kind social service organization. It began as a small foster care and adoption agency with a mission to fill an unmet need in the Jewish community, but JAFCO leaders view it as their privilege to help all families and children in need, regardless of religion or heritage.

Based in south Florida, JAFCO currently is housed on two campuses. At the first location, its exemplary Children's Village, the group serves abused and neglected children through its Family Preservation, Foster Care, Adoption and Mentoring programs.

JAFCO's newest location is its Children's Abilities Center. Now in its fourth year, the center is the first of its type in the United States to offer family support, therapy, child enrichment and respite, all under one roof. In the words of JAFCO Executive Director Sarah Franco, this facility fills important needs, as "one of six children born today has developmental disabilities."

JAFCO professionals continue to introduce programs both at its Children's Abilities Center and the Children's Village. A unique offering of the Abilities Center is its Respite Program. While children with developmental needs enjoy themselves in a fully supervised, state-of-the-art setting, their parents can enjoy a much needed break by spending time on their own. In fact, if parents attend a wedding or another late-night event, it is possible for children who are ready for extended respite to stay in the center's private, six-room guest house. During an overnight, each child has a private bedroom and bathroom, with at least two staff supervisors.

News about the Children's Abilities Center has migrated northward, and its respite program recently met important needs for a Long Island family. The mom had learned about it at a Long Island JAFCO luncheon, and while visiting Florida, was able to arrange for her child on the autistic spectrum to spend time there. This young person had a positive experience and wants to return for future visits.

Personal awareness of JAFCO programs continues to enhance the organization's New York-Florida connections. Recently, a Long Island woman familiar with JAFCO's work and facilities directed a Florida family in need to the organization, resulting in a positive outcome for a child in a family crisis.

There is no doubt that such New York and Florida connections with JAFCO will increase as awareness continues to build in local communities, according to Halegua.

The JAFCO Long Island/New York board, which works with Halegua to plan this year's event, helps educate others about the organization's mission to strengthen families. Board members include Kim Floam, Joan Grant, Alexis Kaminoff, Lisa Levine, Amy Levy, Linda Moskowitz, Ronna Niederman, Rose Schechter, Stacey Spitalnick, Susan Tashlik and Dorine Wulwick.

For more information, or to attend this year's "Fun in the Sun" day, please contact Pearl Halegua at phalegua@gmail.com.