

Broward Federation awards JAFCO, other organizations with grants

The Jewish Federation of Broward County recently selected Jewish Adoption and Family Care Options as the recipient of its \$500,000 Yetta Sher Solutions Award while also awarding six additional non-profit organizations \$10,000 each for Innovation Solutions Micro Grants.

“As a funder that sees the big picture of challenges faced by the community, we felt we needed to put real money on the table and free up the thinking to allow for more creativity,” said Michael Balaban, the Federation’s president and chief executive officer. “These grants were meant to inspire individuals, organizations and agencies to develop and implement new meaningful projects in our community.”

JAFCO was awarded the \$500,000 grant to support its new Caring with a Heart training program through its Children’s Ability Center based in Sunrise. This training lab will be designed to enable teenagers and young adults with developmental disabilities to learn employable skills for catering, special events and similar fields.

“We are overwhelmed with joy and gratitude for this award,” said Sarah Franco, JAFCO’s executive director. “There is a great void in Broward related to employment of teens and young adults with developmental disabilities. More than half of young adults with autism remain unemployed. Our new catering training lab will offer these individuals extensive skill preparation and a paying job at our new Shirley and Barton Weisman & Family Event Center at the JAFCO Children’s Ability Center.”

Although Franco noted that the Shirley and Barton Weisman & Family Event Center is expected to open later this year, she said that the training program is expected to begin sometime in April.

Balaban praised JAFCO’s new program as a wonderful one that looks at creating opportunities for individuals with special needs as well as providing financial independence.

“They impressed us with their thoughtfulness, and we’ve long been impressed with the work that JAFCO has done throughout the commuting for children and young adults. This became a great way to increase our partnership with them that’s already existed.”

Franco noted that the Federation has always been a partner with JAFCO.

“We sincerely appreciate that partnership, which has allowed us to actually create the Ability Center because the Federation donated the land to us that the Ability Center sits on. There’s a long history of gratitude and partnership, and this is just another step in our journey together helping the community become stronger and more responsive to the needs of the people who live here.”

The six micro grant awardees are VeHadarta for preserving and re-integrating older adults into the workforce; Jewish Educational Loan Fund for providing interest free student loans; Gilda’s Club for its Gilda on the Go JCC Program, which supports Jewish cancer patients and families at the David Posnack Jewish Community Center in Davie; Institute of Jewish Knowledge and Learning for intergenerational grandparent-grandchild Jewish interaction; Holocaust Learning and Education Fund for its Holocaust Reflection Contest for middle school and high school students in Florida; and Temple Dor Dorim in Weston for its Shalom Belly/Shalom Family Jewish lifecycle events.

The funds for JAFCO will be distributed over two years, and funding for the micro grant recipients will be distributed over one year.