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**SID JACOBSON JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER  
 TOWN HALL BUDGET TESTIMONY**

**NOVEMBER 30, 2007**

The Sid Jacobson JCC is a full service community center located on Long Island's North Shore providing a full range of recreational, health, fitness, educational, cultural, arts and social services programs. With over 2,500 membership units the SJCC serves thousands more in its well respected programs for tots and teens, the vigorous and infirm, singles and families, young professionals and mature retirees, and those with special needs.

I would like thank the New York State Division of the Budget for the opportunity to present information highlighting the key budget priorities for the Sid Jacobson JCC for the FY 08-08 fiscal year. We will focus on the following issues:

- Expansion of community based aging programs
- Programs and services for those affected by Autism
- Programs for individuals with Alzheimer's who are younger than 60

**COMMUNITY BASED AGING**

**Social Adult Day Care Services**

Social adult day care services offer therapeutic and recreational programming for older adults experiencing memory impairment or who are physically frail. Programming typically offers individuals an opportunity for recreational and educational activities that foster relationships and enhance self-esteem. These services also provide older adults who are living at home and might be isolated an opportunity for socialization and stimulation, as well as providing a respite for caregivers.

The Sid Jacobson JCC currently operates the largest social adult day program in Nassau County, with an extensive waiting list. When we received our initial New York State funding seven years ago, we were serving 20 individuals. Today with just a very slight increase in funding from

**Julia and Izzy Waldbaum Family Social Services Wing**

Gershwind/Jacobson Sports & Fitness Center • Jack Nadel Social Services Center  
 Weinberger Center for Jewish Life & Learning • Edward & Bernice Wenger Center for the Arts



Sid Jacobson JCC con't.

last years state budget included an additional \$500,000 for new social adult day care services. While Sid Jacobson JCC is grateful, additional dollars must be infused into this program to serve a much larger population requiring service.

*Sid Jacobson JCC supports the following:*

- *Increased funding for social adult day care services*

## **AUTISM**

Autism is considered the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States, occurring in as many as one in every 166 births. Despite the increasingly high prevalence of this disorder, autism research and services remain under funded. Though significant progress has been made in recent years to increase funding in these realms much more must be done to confront the challenges endured by an overwhelming number of families.

Autism is a complex brain disorder that often inhibits a person's ability to communicate, respond to surroundings, and form relationships with others. While some people with autism are mildly affected, most people with this condition require lifelong supervision and care and have significant language impairments. Experts agree that early intervention is important in addressing the symptoms associated with autism and can have dramatic effects in improving individual outcomes.

There is growing concern that with the increasing numbers of individuals being diagnosed with Autism those on the higher end of the spectrum are least likely to have access to publicly funded services. Research indicates that 33%-40% of those with ASDs have IQs above 70 and are thus not considered developmentally delayed, though an IQ of below 70 would automatically qualify them for governmental support. We are aware that one could conceivably qualify even with an IQ of 70 or above with poor adaptive skills. However, these individuals often are difficult to document, as they frequently have pockets of high-functioning behaviors that may preclude them from meeting the criteria under poor adaptive behavior skills.

Last year's budget included \$5 million annually so that the OMRDD Family Support Program can provide needed after school and weekend services to individuals with autism and their families. This program targets the most severely autistic individuals and leaves those with less severe symptoms without access to needed after school and weekend wraparound services.

Without access to publicly funded programs, these higher-functioning individuals with autism too often are "falling through the cracks", with families unable to afford the supports and programs that would help them to fulfill their potential, and maximize their quality of life. Indeed, an individual with autism with an IQ above 70, but with significant limitations in social and emotional functioning, as well as pragmatic language deficits, almost inevitably will meet with vocational failure. Their families experience extraordinary stress, and live in fear of what will happen to their children, as they themselves grow old, and infirmed.

The number of children diagnosed with Autism is growing rapidly and the need for assistance is much greater than the availability of programs and services. It is especially important to close this gap because; consistent, quality, and appropriate services can have a very positive impact on those with Autism, while those who are neglected deteriorate.

*Sid Jacobson JCC supports the following:*

- *Ensuring that higher functioning individuals on the Autism spectrum have access to the services that they need*
- *Additional funding to OMRDD for programming that specifically provides wraparound services to higher functioning persons on the Autistic spectrum*
- *Quality training/professional development in schools and out-of-school-time programs that teach direct service staff how best to manage behavior and minimize misbehavior*

### **INDIVIDUALS WITH ALZHEIMER'S** **Under the age of 60**

The need for age appropriate programming for individuals with neuro-degenerative disease has never been greater. With the "baby boomers" joining the ranks of the 60 + generation, we recognize that this group is the fastest growing and largest segment of the population. We have also learned that Alzheimer's disease is an epidemic and it *is* a terminal illness. What we did not expect was the emergence of dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease in the younger than 60 year old segment of the population. It is estimated that 10% of the Alzheimer's population suffers from "Young Onset" (also called Early Onset) dementia. That means that approximately 400,000 people under the age of 60 in the United States have dementia.

In June 2006, the Alzheimer's Association published a paper, Early Onset Dementia: A National Challenge, A Future Crisis. It was presented to a congressional committee in Washington and it clearly describes the plight of the younger individual and their family. The paper lists 6 critical needs of this group and it identifies the lack of appropriate community services, specifically age appropriate programming as vital in allowing the younger person an opportunity to remain at home as long as possible while improving the quality of life. The Association calls to action local community based organizations to begin developing specialized programming to meet this critical need.

The Sid Jacobson JCC developed and implemented a program for the young onset individual two years ago.

Since this project is so new and innovative, however, it does not qualify for traditional funding at this time. Government grants for services for people with dementia are usually funded through the Older Americans Act and therefore, only permit seniors over the age of 60 to attend. Our program operates on a day-to-day basis due to the lack of committed funding streams and only receives voluntary funding which is limited and tenuous.

*The Sid Jacobson JCC supports the following:*

- *A funding stream for social adult day care services for the Young Onset (under age 60) individual with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias*

Thank you for reviewing this testimony.

Sincerely,

Cara T. Greene, LCSW  
Coordinator of Social Services