

Inclusion Committee Announces Progress...and Needs Your Help

Shelley Kapnek Rosenberg, Chairperson

The Inclusion Committee is proud to announce that the Board has approved a new Inclusion Fund that will assist in the Committee's efforts to make Or Hadash a truly welcoming and accessible place for everyone. The Fund will be listed on the congregation's website, yearzeit letters, and any place that all other congregational funds are listed. This is extremely important, since many of the Committee's projects are costly, requiring changes and adaptations to our beautiful, but aged, home. The Inclusion Committee works hand-in-hand with the Building Committee to make sure that all of these projects are done in both the most economical and attractive manner possible. This year, the two Committees have completed the renovations of the all-gender accessible bathroom behind the bimah. For the first time, this bathroom actually accommodates people who use electric wheelchairs.

A "kick-off" gift to the new fund will pay for rebuilding the ramp from the Solarium to the Sanctuary. The Inclusion and Building Committees learned last fall, during a professional assessment of our building's accessibility, that the existing ramp is a problem for people using wheelchairs, walkers, or even canes. Since there is no platform at the top, there is nowhere to safely stop to open the doors to the Sanctuary. The renovation will include a platform and wrought iron railings on both sides of the ramp.

An additional project that is being contemplated, once funds are raised, will be to create additional wheelchair accessible parking spaces that are on level ground. Currently there is only one space and it is on an incline, yet another problem for people using assistive mobility devices.

National Inclusion Month is in February and the Inclusion Committee is helping to plan two special programs. On Saturday evening, February 10 at 7:30, the Inclusion and Adult Education Committees will partner to screen "Temple Grandin," the award winning story of a professor with autism who is an eloquent spokesperson for people with autism. We will be joined that night by Gabriel Kaplan-Mayer, the Jewish Learning Venture professional who works with special needs issues and who is the parent of a child who is on the autism spectrum. On Friday, February 23, at Inclusion Shabbat and Shabbat Zemirah, the congregation will be hosting Rue Landau, Esq., Executive Director of the Human Relations Committee of Philadelphia, who will speak on inclusion.

Please come to the events, let us know if there are inclusion projects that you recognize, and think about helping the Inclusion Committee help Or Hadash by making a donation to the new Inclusion Fund.