

OH Inclusion Committee Hard at Work

Shelley Kapnek Rosenberg, Inclusion Chairperson

The Inclusion Committee has been working diligently on several fronts over the past year. A comprehensive (and free) survey from a Lehigh Valley organization, made specific recommendations in a variety of areas. Beginning with the essential, we have completed work on our now-accessible accessible bathroom. We have replaced the mirror (longer so that a person using a wheelchair can see themselves), fixed the doors so that there is privacy for a person using a wheelchair, changed the light so that it is both appropriate for Shabbat and for people with a mobility or vision issue, and insulated the pipes under the sink so that a person using a wheelchair will not burn themselves on a hot pipe. We also placed new signs to show that this bathroom is both accessible for people with mobility issues and is gender inclusive.

The next issue we want to tackle on the mobility front is the parking lot. The study indicated that the current wheelchair accessible parking spot is on a slope. While it might seem slight to people who aren't using a wheelchair, it is a problem for someone using a manual chair or even, perhaps, a walker. There is a recommendation to create two spots in the flat section of the lot across from the door. **We're going to pursue that by, hopefully, finding volunteers to work on it with our Building Committee. (If you'd like to help with the digging, please contact Doug Smithman or Shelley Rosenberg.)** There are other physical issues that we are still discussing, searching for the "best" (this word includes a variety of considerations) way to proceed. However, we want to do it "right," not just fast, so this may take some time.

The other area in which we've begun work is LGBTQ inclusion. A team that included members of the Committee (Mike Oswald, Jules Mermelstein, Wendy Elliott-Vandivier), Barbara Weisman, Rabbi Josh, and I attended a full day training program on June 7. This was the kick-off to the year-long JFCS/Keshet Program in which Or Hadash will participate, and there were 15 synagogues and organizations represented. It was interesting, informative, and when we finished, Jules commented, "I was wrong when I said that I didn't think we needed this." We created an action plan for the year that looks at three areas (policies, programming, and culture), and have already started on a few of our tasks. It was energizing and inspiring to work with the dedicated OH members who want to make sure that our community is, in fact, as welcoming and inclusive as we know it to be. **If you would like to work with us, please contact Shelley Rosenberg.**