

# A closer look: Jewish Residential Services

Forty-three-year-old Emily smiles warmly, waves goodbye and walks briskly toward her bus stop. She does not want to be late for her newly acquired part-time job.

Ten years ago, you would not have expected Emily's smile or the bus trip, and certainly not the job. Back then, she was an isolated, unhappy person, lacking confidence and was overwhelmed by even the simplest tasks of daily life.

Emily was diagnosed with a serious mental illness in 1985, during her junior year in college. For the next 13 years, she struggled without success to get her symptoms under control. Periodic crises, hospitalizations and unsuccessful living arrangements punctuated her life.

Finally, in 1998 her family learned about Jewish Residential Services. That's when her life slowly began to change.

Emily gradually developed her own determination in concert with the continuing support and dedication from JRS.

JRS operates an array of residential and rehabilitative programs for people who need support in their everyday lives because of psychiatric or intellectual disabilities. Connecting with JRS allowed Emily to return to her own community, close to her family, with the guidance, support and warmth she needed to re-establish a satisfying and productive life for herself.

Emily took advantage of JRS Supported Living, a scattered-site apartment program in and around Squirrel Hill that provides individual support for adults working to overcome the effects of serious mental illness. Professional support was available anytime she needed it.

JRS also operates Leonard Staisey House, a congregate supported living program for adults with mental illness. Both programs provide participants with coordinated treatment, managed medications and daily living skills that allow them to become vital members of the community.

Emily also benefits as a member of the Howard Levin Clubhouse, JRS's daily psychiatric rehabilitative program for adults with persistent mental illness. There, she re-learns many skills she took for granted when she was younger — cooking meals



Jewish Residential Services photo

**Jewish Residential Services program participants and friends gather for a seder at Charles Morris Hall.**

for the Clubhouse daily kosher lunch, typing stories for the monthly newsletter, and interacting socially with others.

As her skills and confidence improved Emily thought about getting a job. She took advantage of the Clubhouse Transitional Employment Program to gain work experience, and eventually felt prepared enough to apply for a part-time position with a local business.

Today, Emily still has a mental illness, and she still must work every day to manage it effectively. But now, she also has a job, friends — and a life.

JRS also offers housing programs for adults with intellectual disabilities. Charles Morris Hall opened in 2000 to provide permanent housing for 12 adults. With spacious one-bedroom apartments, staff support, group activities, and round-the-clock help, Charles Morris residents achieve their dreams of living independently. The waiting list for an apartment is so long that JRS recently purchased a second building in the heart of Squirrel Hill, that facility will house an additional 10 individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Now, after 15 years of serving the community, JRS will reach out to a new population.

"A recent survey we conducted pointed out significant gaps in services for young adults with intellectual and autism spectrum disorders as they transition into the adult world," Executive Director Deborah Friedman said. "We are taking action by exploring new programs with the potential to meet these young people's needs and the needs of their families."

To learn more about JRS programs and services, and how they help to improve the daily lives of adults with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities, call (412) 325-0039 or visit [jrspgh.org](http://jrspgh.org).

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