

Jewish Family Service clients share fun and hope for the future at holiday party

CINCINNATI A father with his children, an artist and a former photo journalist joined 21 other clients on Monday, December 30, 2013 to celebrate the New Year at the Jewish Family Service Barbash Family Vital Support Center. Although experiencing similar life challenges, friends and newcomers alike bonded over shared experiences and hopes for the future.

The vision of supporting clients' social needs to achieve wellness at the Jewish Family Service Barbash Family Vital Support Center has come to life. Clients gathered to enjoy a Chinese themed lunch that was prepared by Jewish Family Service staff and volunteers. The room was filled with positive energy as everyone talked, got to know each other, and shared stories. Old friends caught up about the past year's events, and new friendships were formed with those they were meeting for the first time.

When lunch came to an end, the large activity room was divided into three smaller rooms to accommodate multiple group activities. The Center's goal of providing peer-based programs that promote self-sufficiency by encouraging clients to form healthy relationships with each other was in full swing.

One group gathered to decorate calendars featuring Jewish holidays for the upcoming year. Children and adults enjoyed crafting together while swapping stories and sharing new calendar design ideas. The calendars quickly transformed from plain paper to works of art, complete with colorful stickers and magnificent drawings and designs.

The middle room had a tranquil and a relaxing atmosphere as clients and staff gathered for a session of chair yoga. This activity gave many clients a healthy skill set to start 2014 on the right note.

The last room, the kitchen area, was filled with laughter as people joined together in friendly conversation and each other's company while cleaning up after the luncheon.

"The number of participants keeps growing. As we introduce new activities, it is heartwarming to see the response. Our clients have asked Jewish Family Service to offer this place of engagement and learning and we are seeing the results of everyone's hard work and planning," said Fran Gafvert, Jewish Family Service Director of Vital Services.

Gafvert thanked the community organizations that provided important funding to promote wellness and recovery to families in need: Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., and Interact for Health (formerly The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati). She also thanked the Bernard and Pamela Barbash family, the George and Anne Heldman family, and the other individual donors whose generosity help Jewish Family Service strengthen lives every day.