Our inclusion philosophy is woven into the fabric of each and every department at the J. We work to build community where everyone acknowledges and respects people’s differences, while celebrating our inherent uniqueness and individual gifts. We strive to include everyone of all abilities and ages in our programs.

Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)

The words Tikkun Olam mean “acts of kindness performed to repair the world.” We often use the phrase “Tikkun Olam” to describe volunteer work or good deeds.

The Sabes JCC’s inclusion philosophy centers around the idea that everyone – no matter their abilities – wants to have the same choices and opportunities as everyone else and this includes the opportunity to give back to one’s community.

Anita Lewis, the JCC’s Inclusion Director, describes Tikkun Olam as a program designed to develop relationships between adult participants, foster a sense of belonging, and create opportunities to give back. “For some of these adults, this is a reconnection from shared experiences at school, Hebrew School and Jewish camp,” she said. “My dream is to provide opportunities for all adults of this age group of all abilities to impact their community in a meaningful way.”

This winter, JCC inclusion participants teamed up with JFCS NextGen for a special Tikkun Olam project. Working together, they made fleece blankets for Sharing and Caring Hands located in downtown Minneapolis. The blankets were personally delivered by the JCC inclusion participants and were received with immense gratitude and respect.

“It was such a fun time,” said Rebecca, a Tikkun Olam participant, “I enjoyed making the blankets. I got to see old friends, and do something good for other people.”

Other examples of our Tikkun Olam Projects include: making photo boards for Shalom Home; painting vases for the Domestic Abuse Shelter; and collecting books for the Women’s Prison Project.

AN INCLUSIVE SUMMER EXPERIENCE

Summer camp provides kids the unique opportunity to make new friends and learn new things in a positive environment. But, the very idea of camp can seem challenging to parents and kids with special needs – how can I be sure that my child will get the attention they need? Will my child be able to fully participate? Will my child’s special needs be supported appropriately?

At the Sabes JCC, we strive to provide support for the inclusion of children with special needs into all JCC programs. Camp Olami is one of the many areas where we shine, where inclusion means having the same opportunities and choices as everyone else. It means being with friends who share interests, not disabilities.

For six-year-old Gabe Sanders, Camp Olami is a magical place that fills him with excitement and happiness. Having just completed his second summer, Gabe participates right alongside his peers. His camp advocate, Brezzy Mader said, “Gabe’s independence skills have really come a long way. His communication and social skills are growing daily. He is having so much fun making new friends, learning to share, and becoming self-sufficient.” Some of Gabe’s favorite activities include flag pole, singing his favorite song “Pop & Co.” and swimming.

Camp Olami offered Gabe, and all of our campers the opportunity for personal growth, happiness, friendship and skills that only Camp can provide.

“Gabe’s personal growth and daily joyfulness is extraordinary. Watching Gabe’s peers embrace the concept that we are all different, with unique gifts – yet one community – is truly the essence of what thoughtful inclusion is all about.” — Anita Lewis, JCC Inclusion Director