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Monday, January 13, 2025

JCC of Greater Pittsburgh Breaks Ground on Facility to Support Inclusion at J&R Day Camp in Monroeville

WHAT: The Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh (JCC) breaks ground on an innovative project aimed at creating a regional leader for inclusive summer camps, supported by a \$2 million state grant. This expansion will help meet the needs of a growing number of neurodivergent campers and their families while at the same time ensuring a high-quality experience for all campers. Elected officials, including Senator Jay Costa and State Representative Nick Pisciotano, will be in attendance.

WHERE: James & Rachel Levinson Day Camp, Henry Kaufmann Family Park, 261 Rosecrest Drive, Monroeville, PA 15146

WHEN: 9:00 AM - January 13, 2025

About the Project: The Cove Dining and Multi-Purpose Building

The JCC of Greater Pittsburgh, a leader in inclusive summer camps, has received a \$2 million grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to expand facilities at the Henry Kaufmann Family Park in Monroeville. The funding, from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project, will support improvements that benefit the entire community, with a special focus on neurodiverse children.

The project will introduce The Cove, a reimagined, year-round, temperature-controlled dining and multi-purpose facility. This will significantly enhance the camp experience and create new opportunities for neurodiverse children. Construction begins on January 13, 2025, with completion expected by June 2025 in time for the summer camp season.

Design for Neurodiverse Children

The Cove's design incorporates principles from the ASSPECTS framework (Autism Supportive Space Evaluation Criteria for Transition Spaces) to create a welcoming, supportive, and engaging environment. Key features include:

- **Flexible, Multipurpose Spaces:** Accommodating diverse needs and preferences, including sensory sensitivities around food and the need for stability in routines.
- **STEM and Multi-Media Areas:** Providing “out of group” options for children who need alternative environments to succeed.
- **Sensory Comfort:** Covered outdoor spaces, private escape areas, natural light, adjustable recess lighting, and temperature control for sensory comfort.

Growing Need and Commitment for Inclusive Programs

“One in 44 children in the U.S. is diagnosed within the autism spectrum—up from 1 in 250 just 20 years ago. The JCC is committed to redefine what’s possible and create a welcoming space for every child.” said Jason Kunzman, JCC President and CEO. Scott E. Seewald, JCC Board Chair, added, “We are proud to expand our inclusive efforts, and we’re excited to partner with the Commonwealth to make this vision a reality.”

“Staff are trained in Positive Behavior Support (PBS) strategies to foster inclusivity and growth for all campers. We’re excited to continue providing high-quality, inclusive camping experiences for every child,” said Rachael Speck, JCC Chief Program and Innovation Officer.

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