



# Among Friends

Winter 2016 / 5777 Issue

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## A BLAST FROM THE PAST

MEET SOME OF OUR MOST COMMITTED VOLUNTEER ALUMNI

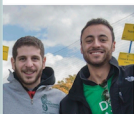
We are always happy to see many of our volunteer alumni at FC events and also to learn that they continue to stay in touch with their buddies long after their formal relationships have ended. We spoke with three alumni about the impact of their involvement with FC and why their buddies continue to play an important role in their lives.



*Team Seth on the trail*

**Seth Feldman** joined FC eleven years ago, participating in Friends at Home, going to Sunday Circle programs, and helping to found the Leadership League. Seth told us, "I stayed involved after graduating and moving because I have seen the difference each and every one of us can make FC treats every child, volunteer and parent as a member of its loving family, and I consider it an honor and a privilege to be part of such a wonderful organization."

Seth is a powerhouse when it comes to the annual Philly Friendship Circle Walk. We can't thank him enough for all he has done each year to support us, even after "graduating" and moving away from Philadelphia. Next year will be Seth's 10th as the captain of Team Seth. He says, "I look forward to coming home each year to celebrate FC and to support such a worthy cause." Go, Team Seth!



*Jonathan & Seth at last year's Walk*

**Jonathan Schwartz** was also a dedicated volunteer who participated in both Friends at Home and Sunday Circle programs. He started visiting Riffy, his buddy with special needs, when he was in high school. (Fun Fact: Back then, Jonathan and Seth were already friends. As they got to know Riffy, they became a dynamic threesome.)

"When hanging out with Riffy, one of my favorite things is trying to make him laugh," Jonathan says. "I love spending time with Riffy and hearing about his interests." When Jonathan went to college, he and Riffy lost touch. After college, Jonathan moved back to Philadelphia and got in touch with Riffy. They rekindled their friendship, which has a special place in Jonathan's life. "I really think he's a great friend and fun to be with," says Jonathan. "Even when things get busy, I look forward to when we can catch up."



*Ilana and Deborah solve up shoes and smiles!*

**Deborah Sherman** started visiting Ilana as part of our Friends at Home program, and the two turned out to be a great match. They have kept in close touch since their friendship began nearly ten years ago. Deborah says, "We call or text and hang out every few months. We might get coffee or go paint pottery." Even though Ilana and Deborah usually get together on their own, they also try to see each other at FC events, including The Philly Friendship Walk. This year, they could be found serving up tasty soup to the community and having a great time. Deborah loves that she and Ilana never go too long without speaking. "It's so nice to have someone call me to check in just to see how my day is going," Deborah says. "I think she's amazing. I love getting her calls."



### SCOUTING FOR A NEW LOCATION

**As we continue to refine our programs, a challenge that we must tackle is location, location, location!**

Since our Jewish community is geographically spread out, we currently have half of our events on the Main Line and half in Eastern Montgomery County. However, we have found that our community has been divided by our efforts to provide programming convenient to specific neighborhoods and some volunteers and families feel that FC is not available to them, despite the fact that our many programs continue throughout the year.

We are piloting the idea of moving all Sunday Circles to one central location. The commute may be a bit longer, but we would be able to connect our community, create capacity for larger events, and run more effective programs with fewer logistical transitions.

As we write this, we are currently searching for a location that is centrally located, large enough to accommodate our FC family, available on Sundays, and affordable. It is a difficult task, but we believe that you, our community, will help us find a viable solution.

Please feel free to contact us with specific ideas on locations or contacts that you feel may be able to help. We are actively working on finalizing the location for one of our upcoming Sunday Circles. Please help us make friendship more accessible to all of our youth, all the time.

# A WORD FROM OUR LEADERS DANIELLE S. & DANIEL M.

TWO LEADERSHIP LEAGUE (LL) TEENS SHARE THEIR FC EXPERIENCES



Danielle volunteering at one of our programs



Daniel (L) at a community event with his brother, Moshe

*How did you first get involved in LL?*

**DANIELLE:** I first got involved with FC when I was choosing my Bat Mitzvah project, and I found FC's Mitzvah Volunteer Program (MVP). The objective of the program is to ease you into FC and it did. After MVP, I just wanted to jump right in.

**DANIEL:** FC has always been a part of my life. Growing up, my siblings and parents volunteered for FC and my father used to run the art sessions. It wasn't really a question of whether or not I would start FC, it was more a question of when I would start.

*What leadership skills are you learning in LL that you will use in other parts of your life?*

**DANIEL:** LL has helped me develop additional organizational and management skills. Since most of my roles in LL involve planning meetings, I've had to reach out to people and get them to come to meetings as well as plan seminars or activities for the meetings themselves.

*What have you learned about working on a team that you think will be most valuable when you get into a workplace environment?*

**DANIELLE:** When working on a team, it is important to utilize your team members as your greatest resource. It is essential to remember that you are working towards the same goals and your team members are there to help.

*Can you describe some things you have done in your job as a LL co-chair?*

**DANIEL:** I have helped create the meeting agenda as well as plan and run activities at various meetings. I contact other members of LL to check in on their projects and confirm their meeting attendance. I also act as the FC coordinator for my school.

*What has been your favorite part of LL so far?*

**DANIELLE:** My favorite part has been being able to sneak a peek behind the scenes. I'm learning more about how much is done to ensure the best outcome for FC and how it expands year after year.

*If you had to describe LL to someone who didn't know what it was, what would you say?*

**DANIEL:** Officially, LL is meant to be the teen board of FC, helping to coordinate programming and events. However, I think the real purpose of being in LL is to be role models and be exemplary of FC values.

*How has being in LL differed from being an ambassador?*

**DANIELLE:** As an ambassador, my position was more focused on discussing leadership and learning about it. This year, in LL, we are actualizing what we learned and that will only increase as the year continues.



## SPOTLIGHT ON A RELATIONSHIP

MEET JOEY AND RAFFI: A NEW F@H PAIR

Teenage volunteer Joey has recently begun to visit Raffi each week and is enjoying every minute of it. While these two young men have only been spending time with each other for a few months, their relationship has quickly grown into something invaluable for both of them. "About two months ago I had no idea what this would turn out to be," said Joey. "However, I love hanging out with Raffi. I am so happy all the time when I am with him and he teaches me so many positive qualities."

Like any other teenage boys, Joey and Raffi spend time playing outside. Joey is also teaching Raffi how to play games on his Xbox. They even assembled the sukkah at Raffi's parents' home (and two weeks later, they took it down again). "It is very exciting and gratifying for us to see his whole face LIGHT UP when Joey arrives. He's so excited to have that time with him; he's willing to organize his whole day around him," say his parents, Myriam and Margot.

Raffi previously had another F@H buddy with whom he bonded very deeply who stopped visiting after he graduated from high school. There was a period when Raffi didn't have a F@H buddy, and everyone really hoped the FC staff would find someone new for him. "It was really important for us to find him another Friends at Home buddy," Myriam and Margot explained. "The socialization he experiences through having a peer come into his everyday setting is different from what he gets at other FC programs."



Joey and Raffi: Having fun and being silly!

There's a lot that goes into making a successful F@H match, including looking for volunteers and families that will be a good fit and are in the same geographic area. In this case, which is typically how we do things here at FC, Rabbi Zev met with Joey first. Then he took Joey to Raffi's house to interact with both of them and make sure it would be a successful pairing. Finally, FC staff took care of administrative details like background checks and exchanging information. And then, this F@H pair was free to just be, well, friends!



# INCLUSIVE ADULT CREW AT PHILLY FRIENDSHIP WALK

This year's Walk turned out to be a beautiful event. The weather cleared just in time for our festivities. We saw many of our familiar community members, welcomed new friends, and raised money for our critical programs. Our Walk crew pulled out all the stops to make the event a success, including our adult crew members with special needs. There was so much natural inclusion happening within our crew, and it only enriched the experience for everyone.

Those running or walking along the trail were given encouragement and support from FC member Nathan H. and his dad, Seth. "Nathan really enjoyed helping out on the walk. He was really in his element. New 'friends' were constantly flowing past and most people engaged Nathan in brief conversation as they walked by," Seth told us. "Although he was disassociated from the fundraising aspect of the event, he was very much immersed in the social and 'normalizing' aspects. We both had a terrific time, and hope to be able to do this again next year."

The registration table also had help from Aubrey T., who welcomed Walkers to the event and gave them their t-shirts. The registration table can be a bit chaotic when everyone starts to arrive, but Aubrey kept her cool and took it all in stride.



Aubrey T. held the ribbon at our kickoff ceremony



Coach Nathan motivated everyone along the Walk trail

We also had a great showing from some of the adults from JCHAI, who brought their largest group yet to fill the ranks of our crew, helping out with setup, staffing the food booth, and making yummy popcorn. Beth Rosenwasser, JCHAI's Director of Community Engagement & Program Development, relayed that many of JCHAI's young adults thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Our new Director of Operations, Marsha Stamm, who also served as one of our crew chiefs stated, "This was my first year working at the walk. I feel so grateful for the way the community stepped up to fill all the spots on our crew and proud of how everyone worked so well together!" She added, "This is what Friendship Circle is all about!"

## THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE ART SHOW RETURNS THIS JANUARY

SAVE THE DATE! JANUARY 15, 2017

For the second year, The Philly Friendship Circle will host an art show and reception that will allow the community to see the work of our talented FC youth. This year, we will be featuring photographs captured by our youth, along with their buddies, at FC programs. We have been privileged to see these photographs as they have been taken. We promise you, they are a sight to behold!

If you didn't have the opportunity to come to last year's Art Show, it was a wonderful community event that allowed the artists to showcase their work and take pride in their creations. Art was also available for purchase, and many people chose to add a piece to their home collections. One satisfied customer was Bonnie Coplon, whose grandchildren volunteer at FC. She was enthusiastic about her purchases. "The art was amazing! So many truly beautiful pieces," Bonnie told us, adding, "We loved seeing the pride the children had in their work."

Our youth will continue to take photographs at Sunday Circle and then complete all the steps a professional photographer takes when putting together a gallery show: selecting the best shots, titling, captioning and framing. All of this is done under the watchful eye of our art director, Rebekah Narli, who will see the process through from beginning to end, just as she did last year.



Attendees chose their favorite pieces to bring home



An artist displays his work

Rebekah is excited to be part of the Art Show again. "It is just the most beautiful process in the world," Rebekah says. "What I really notice most is the collaboration between the volunteers and their buddies, and how integral the volunteers have been in assisting their buddies. And of course, the kids' work really does get highlighted."

The Friendship Circle Art Show is once again being generously sponsored by Bear Givers. Their EmpowerArt program enables children with special needs to give back to their community through meaningful artistic contributions. Visit their website to learn more about their programs at [www.BearGivers.org](http://www.BearGivers.org).

We hope you will celebrate the creativity of our youth on January 15, 2017. The photographs will be for sale, and all proceeds go directly to FC programming.

## GETTING TO KNOW...JARED R.

A STAFF MEMBER SHARES HIS FAVORITE THINGS



**Q: What is your favorite holiday?**

**A:** My favorite holiday is Passover. Each year, my Dad and I put together our own haggadah with fun, interactive songs and activities. The seder is also great since it is the one time of year I get to see many of my family members who live far away.

**Q: What are your favorite things to do with friends?**

**A:** Some of my favorite things to do with friends are going to the movies, bowling and sporting events. This year, my friends and I went to the opening night of the 76ers.

**Q: What is your favorite thing about winter?**

**A:** I am not a big fan of winter. Winter used to be fun when I was a kid and we got off from school when it snowed. As an adult that is not the case, so snow is more of a nuisance now. I also love to run outside, but when it's cold it's no fun!

**Q: What is your favorite thing about working for The Philly Friendship Circle?**

**A:** There are so many great things about working for Friendship Circle. We have a great staff and I love taking and laughing with each one of them. I also love planning exciting and different activities for Sunday Circle.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JARED R. OR ANY OF OUR OTHER STAFF, VISIT OUR WEBSITE, [PHILLYFRIENDSHIP.COM](http://PHILLYFRIENDSHIP.COM) AND CLICK ON ABOUT US.

## WHO WE ARE

The Philly Friendship Circle connects teens and young adults to youth with special needs and their families through a full range of social offerings.

Inspired by the power of genuine friendship, our youth cultivate understanding, kindness and responsibility while ensuring a caring and inclusive community.

*Executive Board*

Elise Black, Teen Advisor • Rebecca Cohen, President • Jonathan Seltzer, Treasurer  
Gail Simon, Secretary • Lata Raffel, Communications

*Our Staff*

Rubén Zee Baran, Executive Director  
Chani Baran, Director of Community Engagement  
Victoria Branca, Administrative and Marketing Coordinator  
Emily Caplan, Accounting  
Jared Pashin, Outreach and Friends at Home Coordinator  
Jared Rosenblum, Program and Curriculum Coordinator  
Marsha Stuenkel, Director of Operations



Thank you to  
**Samantha Leibowitz NY**  
for being a Marathon Sponsor  
of The Philly Friendship Walk!

[samanthaleibowitz.net](http://samanthaleibowitz.net)


## SAVE THE DATE

*For Our Annual For Our Circle Gala*

**APRIL 2, 2017 AT THE HILTON CITY AVENUE**

Stay tuned for the announcement of this year's hostesses!

## MAKE SOME NOISE

FOR  Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia **JFGPI**

The Philly Friendship Circle is beyond grateful to be the recipient of a substantial grant from The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia for the years 2017-2019.

This three-year commitment will allow us to continue to provide crucial programming for youth with special needs, their families and our teenage volunteers. It will also allow us to expand our programming and put our strategic planning into action. Please join us in giving thanks to the JFGP for this generous grant by attending **Super Sunday on February 12, 2017** at the JSA Warehouse, 10540 Dutton Road in Northeast Philadelphia.

## MAKE AN IMPACT

HELP US...



SUPPORT US...

-  Join our Chat Club and donate monthly.
-  Donate for a loved one in honor of its memory.
-  Support FC when you shop online. **AMAZONSMILE** - Choose Friendship Circle Philadelphia Region, Inc. 90-0909091 - Cross Philly Friendship Circle.
-  Consider establishing a legacy gift.
-  Inquire about Corporate Matches. (800) 666-6666. United Way Donations (44542). Sponsorship of an Event.