

**JEWISH DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH**

February is Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month—and to cast a spotlight on this important topic, the artists of Chapel Haven Schleifer Center (CHSC) are presenting “AWARENESS: Life as We See It Through a Neurodiverse Lens”—an exhibit of artwork created by CHSC adults with cognitive and social disabilities. The public is invited to stop by the Hoos Family Art Gallery at the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven to view the exhibit, which will run through March 3.

Overseeing the February exhibit is Susan Skalka, the JCC’s Adult Program Manager. During Jewish Disabilities Month, she says, “I focus on disabilities awareness in terms of the authors and films that I choose.”

Susan notes that, not only is this the second year that Chapel Haven artwork has graced the Hoos Gallery walls for Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month, but that “This year we had an added bonus.”

That “bonus” came in the person of Diana Bilezikian, who was a Chapel Haven student 30 years ago after she graduated high school. She participated in the exhibition opening by sharing independent living tips excerpted from her 2014 book. In her book she describes independent living skills that she learned at Chapel Haven. Diana is currently writing an update to *Dear Diana*.

All of the artwork in the Hoos Family gallery was created by students in various classes at Chapel Haven. When the Head of Education Linda Friedlaender, of the Yale Center for British Art, began collaborating with Tina Manchetti, Director of Art at Chapel Haven, artists creations were exhibited in public spaces for the very first time.

“Disability Awareness is a very important and timely topic,” Susan explains. “Education about living and working with those that are neurodiverse is vital to building an inclusive society. With proper awareness the neurodiverse community can participate in in social and business environments. We see the desire to create an inclusive space through the internship program that the JCC Cafe offers to Chapel Haven members.”



**Diana Bilezikian, a former Chapel Haven student, participated in the exhibition opening by sharing independent living tips excerpted from her 2014 book *Dear Diana*.**



Working with Susan on mounting the exhibit is Tina Manchetti, Art Director at Chapel Haven Schleifer Center. The collaboration makes perfect sense. “We share the belief that artwork creates an environment where dialog transcends any differences between

neuro-diverse and neuro-typical people,” says Tina. “I have always believed that ALL individuals are artists within, given the tools, support, inspiration and comfortable environment most will flourish and happily create. I reassure my students that is not the final product but the process, it’s the journey not the destination!”

Linda concurs: “We will really know we have gotten it right when we no longer need to label individuals by their abilities.”

**THE “AWARENESS” ARTISTS:**

Rachel Warden  
Kimber Marchesi  
Jolysa Anthony

Laurel Marietta  
Danny Bress  
Jordan Hakim

Colm Ruddy  
John Orr  
David Hognin

Clare Shoup  
Chris Murray  
Irene Lee  
Rick Savard  
Jesse Kesner  
Karen Krietler  
Marcus Workman



# Mark your calendar...and start your prep!



## SEPTEMBER 15

# BAGEL RUN

DETAILS TO FOLLOW

