

**SPRING 2024**

The magazine of Jewish Blind & Disabled

*Spread  
The Love*

# THE KEY

**In this issue:**  
Devante's story  
Our schools programme  
A new sight loss support group

**JEWISH  
BLIND &  
DISABLED**

The key to independence



# FROM OUR CEO



**I am a 'glass half full' person with a positive disposition. However, like so many people, in the last few months I have found it difficult to see the light from within the darkness.**

I have found my special moments of light from our tenants and the wider Jewish Blind & Disabled community. Just weeks after the massacre in Israel I attended Mill Hill East Synagogue's Friday night service held once a month in JBD's Frances and Dick James Court lounge.

As with many people, I was still in shock as events unfolded in both Israel and here in the UK with a rapid increase in antisemitism. After a stressful week as I looked around at this inclusive, strong and caring community I was comforted. Synagogue members and tenants alike greeted each other with a familiarity and warmth that was wonderful to witness.

All too often we read in our housing application forms that people feel their disability has created a distance between them and their Jewish identity. Maybe they struggle to get to shul or to visit friends and family on festivals. A move to JBD can for many reconnect them to the traditions and Jewish way of life they had in the past, or for others provide their first opportunity to be part of a warm, supportive Jewish community.

We made a difficult decision to firstly postpone and then press ahead with our matched fundraising campaign. Whilst Israel needs our support, we are also acutely aware that demand for our services is continuing to increase and the community here in the UK needs us. As you'll see on page 3, we raised a much-needed £500,000 in 36 hours.

Now more than ever we need to provide support to each other. We have to recognise what we as a community have and feel blessed to have this. We may have our differences but when the chips are down, the Jewish community always comes together to support each other with chesed (loving kindness).

We hope 2024 brings peace and support to all who need it.

**Lisa Wimborne**  
Chief Executive



*JBD tenants, staff and chair Marc Gordon celebrating together*

**'WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK PART, FROM THE MATCHERS TO THE TEAM LEADERS AND EACH OF THE 1,586 PEOPLE WHO DONATED.'**

**Marc Gordon, Chair**

## **MATCHED GIVING CAMPAIGN SUCCESS!**

**Our first matched giving fundraising campaign was a big success, with an amazing £500,149 being raised for Jewish Blind & Disabled over a 36-hour period.**

The campaign - 'Let's get giving for independent living' - was enthusiastically supported by our tenants, families and friends from the wider community. A huge thank you from JBD to the small group of generous supporters, who kindly matched every single donation we received.

Marc Gordon, chair, Jewish Blind & Disabled said:

*'We are so grateful to everyone who took part, from the matchers to the team leaders and each of the 1,586 people who donated to the campaign. Every donation made, however big or small, will go a long way in ensuring we can continue to support people from our community living with physical disability and or vision impairment.'*



Huge thanks too to Rob Rinder, who enthusiastically supported our campaign by starring in a series of short films together with our tenants. Rob has been a great supporter of our work for many years, having a close personal connection to the charity through his father. We can't thank him enough for helping us spread the word on social media. You can watch **'JBD, a hidden gem'** and **'What does independence mean to you?'** at [Youtube.com/@Jewishblinddisabled](https://www.youtube.com/@Jewishblinddisabled)

# News from around JBD



## FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS

Alongside our adapted apartments and the 24/7 support we provide, what makes us unique is our Jewish communities that exist within the wider local community. Recent celebrations have included Chanukah parties and daily menorah lighting, as well as communal teas in our sukkahs erected every year in each of our gardens.

Warmest thanks to everyone who organised festive parties and teas for their fellow tenants to enjoy. Many thanks too to all our local rabbonim (Rabbis Austin, Jack Cohen, Zvi Cohen, Feldman, Goodwin, Schochet, Wittenberg and Wollenberg) who led the menorah lighting and prayers; to the Mutley Foundation, whose donation helped provide lulavs, etrogs and tasty treats for all to enjoy; and to the pupils of King Solomon High School and Immanuel College who helped decorate some of our sukkahs.

## MPS VISIT JBD

**Much like waiting for a bus, not one but two MPs came to visit JBD developments on the same day.**

The morning visit came from Wes Streeting MP (Lab, Ilford North) and Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who toured Aztec House and then joined tenants for a cup of tea and a chat. Questions from tenants were wide-ranging, from access to local health services to security. That afternoon, Oliver Dowden MP (Cons, Hertsmere) and Deputy Prime Minister, visited a packed communal lounge at Cecil Rosen Court. Tenants challenged the MP on matters close to their hearts, primarily local traffic issues.

*Top: Oliver Dowden, MP. Bottom: Wes Streeting, MP with Lisa Wimborne (CEO) and Aidan McCarthy (director of housing)*



## COULD YOU BE OUR VOLUNTEER MINIBUS DRIVER?

We're seeking a volunteer to drive our minibus to take tenants on shopping trips and the occasional theatre outing. Many of our tenants struggle with accessible transport, so our minibus service ensures they can visit supermarkets and kosher shops at least once a week. We currently employ two part-time drivers and have a wonderful regular volunteer, but due to high demand we're looking for another driver.

You'll need a full clean driver's licence and we'll provide all the training you need. Please email [Simone@jbd.org](mailto:Simone@jbd.org) for more info.



## EPHRAIM COURT UPDATE

Construction continues apace at our newest development, Ephraim Court in Mill Hill. The below-ground works and steels have been completed, and the scaffolding is now back up as we embark on the next phase of construction. Over the next few months, the building will start to get its brickwork and windows. When complete, the building will house 30 fully accessible flats, communal lounge and overnight room for our 24/7 house managers.

# Devante's story

Devante, 26, has lived at Aztec House for around 18 months

**'MOVING HERE WAS THE BEST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED IN MY LIFE I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER BEEN HAPPIER.'**



**'I was born with cerebral palsy and hemiplegia, which affects the right side of my body. But in just one day my life changed completely.'**

In 2014 I was on an FZY trip to Israel, and as I was returning to my hotel from a day trip I had a huge seizure. I stayed in hospital in Israel for weeks to recover, but the seizure left me with brain damage. After that, I had regular seizures, and eventually I was diagnosed with epilepsy. My condition is now mostly controlled with medication.

Life has always been pretty tough because I have

disabilities. I used to be extremely shy. I also felt I was in my older brother's shadow as we were so close in age, and I envied his popularity, while I had no school friends. All this led to me having depression.

At King Solomon High School I had counselling. I knew I had to get rid of that terrible shyness and eventually the counselling made me feel more confident. Now, I work part-time as a support worker for young adults with disabilities, and I volunteer with kids at an after-school club in my spare time. I hate to see

people being left out because I know how tough it is. I make sure everyone joins in. My motto is 'spread the love,' which I've had tattooed on my arm.

Before I moved to my JBD flat I was finding life a real challenge. Space in my mum's house was limited and there was always so much going on. I needed my own space to figure things out. It wasn't great.

When my mum first told me I had the chance to live at JBD I was so happy you wouldn't believe it! I desperately needed my own space. Right now I'm in the best place of my life.

**WHEN I FIRST MOVED IN, JBD REDECORATED THE WHOLE PLACE FOR ME, NEW CARPET, EVERYTHING. I'M OVER SIX FOOT TALL, SO THEY ALSO ADJUSTED THE HEIGHT OF THE KITCHEN COUNTER AND THE LOO TO SUIT ME.**

I don't think I've ever been happier in my life.

My JBD flat is so nice, and I was so excited because I got to design everything myself. My mum is my rock and I love her so much. She helped me buy stuff, it was exciting and I was so happy because I'd never had my own space before.

When I first moved in, JBD redecorated the whole place for me, new carpet, everything. I'm over six foot tall, so they also adjusted the height of the kitchen counter and the loo to suit me.

I know the house managers call the other tenants twice a day to check in, but I'm very independent and they respect that, so they don't call me. The managers are so supportive and they look out for me, which I appreciate.

Now the flat is all set up it has been so good for me, mentally and physically. I couldn't ask for nicer people to live with. I have my own space, I do my own thing. I love it here and I'm so happy that it's hard to put into words.



Now I've finally got my own space. From being super shy and never talking to anyone, now I want to talk to everyone and make friends! At last I feel like I'm properly set up; I've got my job, my lovely home and my relationship with my family has improved since I moved here.'

# Our schools programme



JBD tenant ambassador Neil with his grandchildren Avital and Leor

**At Jewish Blind & Disabled, we know that we can play a role in increasing understanding of disabilities and in turn changing attitudes. We believe this should begin with young people.**

The schools programme (kindly funded by the Desmond Foundation), led by trained JBD tenant school ambassadors, helps students have a better understanding of what it's like to live with vision impairment and physical disability. It also introduces them to the importance of aids and adaptations which can enable a person's independence.

2022/2023 saw us presenting to over 1,500 students, including in some non-Jewish schools where there is a significant cohort of Jewish pupils. Our school workshops and assemblies are tailored to work from reception to GCSE students, always focusing on enabling our tenant ambassadors to tell their stories in their own words.

If you're a teacher, parent or governor and you'd like Jewish Blind & Disabled to visit your school, please email [talial@jbd.org](mailto:talial@jbd.org)



*'It really supported our children in understanding disability first hand. Your tenant ambassador Diana did an incredible job of talking to the children and helping them see the world from the perspective of someone with disabilities.'*

**Key stage 1 teacher at a north-west London primary school**

*'The session was fantastic and very engaging for the children. They loved passing around the bionic arm and hearing the personal stories of Joel and Adam. The session was also very practical and there was a lot of laughter and learning when the children had to get dressed using one hand or navigate blindfolded.'*

**Key stage 2 teacher at a Hertfordshire primary school**



*'Seeing students learn from, and engage with, people with disabilities by deepening their understanding and empathy is a real privilege. Showing students that people with disabilities can live independently with dignity and choice is a message that I hope will stay with them and guide their attitudes towards the disabled community.'*

**Talia, leader of the schools programme**



*'I volunteer on the schools programme because I enjoy interacting with the kids. When I explain about what it's like to have disabilities, and that some people have disabilities you can't see, I think it really opens their eyes.'*

**Neil, who has been a tenant ambassador for three months**

# Essential help to stay independent in your own home

We take many calls from people who'd like to continue living at home but know they need to make some changes to ensure their home remains safe, easy to get around and fully accessible.



This is where our Independent Living Advisory Service (ILA) comes in; providing occupational therapist assessments for any adult from the community living with sight loss or physical disability (and based within the M25).

Our occupational therapist will visit them in their home and assess their needs, suggesting ways to adjust their home to help them remain safe and retain their much-valued independence.

After the assessment visit, which is free, our occupational therapist sends a full report of recommendations for any aids or home adaptations they feel will help the client. The ILA team will then support the client to access these aids.

*'Many of the local authorities in London have occupational therapy waiting lists of over 18 months. Our Independent Living Advisory Service is another example of how we as a community are plugging the gaps to ensure people have the help they need to live safely in their own home. We are able to provide this service thanks to the generosity of people in our community, along with some synagogue congregations who kindly chose to support this project in their High Holy Days appeals.'*

Lisa Wimborne, our CEO

Email [toni@jbd.org](mailto:toni@jbd.org) for info



## MICHELE'S STORY

Michele, who is in her late 60s and lives in Gants Hill, is looking forward to major building works this spring, namely widening her kitchen doorway and converting her bathroom into a wet room. Her local council will be footing the bill for these works, thanks to the ILA's occupational therapist report.

Around seven months ago, Michele was suddenly unable to walk and had to use a wheelchair for the first time in her life. As well as facing a life-changing diagnosis, Michele also had to tackle the very real difficulties of using a wheelchair in a home not designed to accommodate one.

Not only could she no longer get into her kitchen, she was also finding it tricky to manoeuvre her wheelchair in the bathroom, with her chair bashing tiles off the wall each time she went in.

*'I felt fantastic when Shelly, the OT, told me the council had approved everything in her report! I was stunned they'd agreed to pay for everything, even converting my normal bathroom into a modern wet room. Both Shelly and the surveyor she sent round were marvellous.'*

*'When Shelly assessed my home she couldn't believe I was living without being able to use the kitchen. She said you can't live like this. And she was right.'*

*'Now, I'm so glad I heard about the ILA from someone at Jewish Care, because it means I don't have to leave my lovely flat – and I'm so excited I'm getting a kitchen I can actually enter and a bathroom I can use properly.'*

Michele



# Taking the lead

JBD tenants and the community



## WELCOME BACK RALPH

We couldn't resist sharing this sweet photo of Ralph and Miriam sharing a magic

moment. Miriam, who has no vision at all, lives at Frances & Dick James Court – and was clearly delighted to meet Ralph, the therapy dog. Ralph is owned by wonderful volunteer Samantha Rosenthal, and often pops into our developments, bringing a mental health boost and dose of fun to those tenants who love dogs. Before meeting Miriam in the lounge, Ralph had visited a tenant who was sadly too ill to leave her bedroom, and really brightened up her day.

## NEW SIGHT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP AT CECIL ROSEN COURT

Support groups provide a safe place for like-minded people to come together. So, we were delighted when Ronnie, a Cecil Rosen Court tenant, had the great idea of setting up a sight loss support group, in conjunction with the Macular Society. The group is a safe space where, once a month, members can meet new people, hear inspirational speakers and share experiences of living with central vision loss.

Their first gathering in November, welcomed Paul Ryb, the vice-chair of the Macular Society. Paul has spent the past 15 years learning to succeed with vision impairment and has a mission to help find a cure for eye disease. While this group is only open to Cecil Rosen Court tenants, we have plans to establish other support groups for people living with sight loss or physical disability. **If you are interested, please contact [Simone@jbd.org](mailto:Simone@jbd.org)**

## ONLY CONNECT - AT JBD

We're always keen to encourage tenants from different buildings to mix with one another and after the success of the Cecil Rosen Court / Frances and Dick James Court (FDJ) quiz, it was time for tenants from Cherry Tree Court to pit their wits against hosts and current champions, FDJ. Thanks as always to quiz master and volunteer Peter Silverman for making it happen and to tenants Sally and Phil Herman for serving the delicious home-made lemon drizzle cake during the tea break.

Tenants across all JBD developments love to test their knowledge and a special thank you to volunteers Helen Stoller, Jonny Leiwy and Martin Morgan, all of whom run regular quizzes at our developments.



## MITZVAH DAY 2023

We love supporting Mitzvah Day, the UK's largest faith-based day of social action, where people are encouraged to give their time instead of money to make a difference to the community.

We asked tenants to donate items for Camp Simcha's annual toy drive, an initiative designed to bring a boost to children having to spend the festive season in hospital. Many tenants from each of our buildings raised money, shopped for toys and then wrapped and took them to hospitals across London, Herts and Essex. As ever, we were blown away by our tenants' generosity; a huge thanks to all who took part.



# It's arty time



*'I love art club and always look forward to it. I love spending time with Marian as she's such a nice teacher. At school I wasn't very good at art, but here you know the artwork doesn't have to be perfect, you can just do your own interpretation of what the teacher asks. I find it relaxing; after each art session I feel very chilled out.'*

**Ros (right),  
an Aztec House tenant**



**Sometimes producing something creative with our hands is a tremendous antidote to the stresses of daily life, providing the head space to focus on something a world away from our cares.**

Many of our tenants enjoy taking part in art clubs, with some truly dedicated volunteers such as Gloria Price and Marian Myers providing weekly classes for anyone who likes to draw, paint or craft.

*'My first art club session at Aztec House was really enjoyable. The tenants were so warm and enthusiastic. I put on some klezmer music in the background while they painted. I prepare the canvasses in advance and bring all the art materials, so it's relaxing and fun for everyone. For Rosh Hashanah, we painted beautiful, vibrant pomegranates together.'*

**Marian Myers (top left),  
art club volunteer**



Meanwhile, Gloria runs the art club at Frances & Dick James Court. A former jewellery designer and all-round creative person, she's been running the club for two years. She enjoys helping tenants improve their artistic skills and often prepares plenty of canvasses in advance, so that people can work together on producing one large artwork - most recently a beautiful 6-panel copy of Seurat's 'Déjeuner sur l'herbe' and a stunning 'tree of life' canvas which was hung in their sukkah.

*'I always thought to be good at art you have to be able to draw, but I've discovered that's not true. I'm very creative and I love working with Gloria as she guides me through and is great at giving me inspiration.'*

**Odeliah, a member of Gloria's art club**

*'I suffer with anxiety, so I enjoy being able to focus my mind on colouring in intricate mandala patterns. It allows me to concentrate on the here and now, instead of worrying about things.'*

**Ruth (right), who lives at  
Frances & Dick James Court**



# Fundraising round-up



## CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES - COME ON!

If you're celebrating a significant birthday, anniversary or bar/bat mitzvah, please consider asking your guests to make a donation to JBD in lieu of a gift. When you let us know about your simcha we'll send you a certificate with the total amount raised by your friends and family, and a list of donor names. Last year, thanks to the kindness of our simcha-celebrating supporters, we were able to raise over £16,000.

*Mazel Tov to our tenants The Langers, who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary.*



## GOLF FORTH AND PROSPER

Our JBD Golf Day tees off once more on 18 July at Hartsbourne Country Club. If you love to play a round in beautiful surroundings, have a great day out with friends and enjoy a beautiful breakfast AND a delectable lunch (with nosh in between, just in case) please contact us. Last year, the teams raised an incredible £36,000 for JBD. It costs £150 per person or £600 for a team of four to join us. Sign up at [jbd.org/events](http://jbd.org/events). We're very grateful to Lloyd Botchin and his fundraising committee for organising yet another hugely successful day – and of course to everyone who played.



## COMMUNITY FUN RUN 2024

Put Sunday 23 June in your diaries - the Maccabi Community Fun Run is back on track at StoneX Stadium NW4. We'd love to hear from you if you'd like to take part in this year's event – whether that's running, rolling, walking or strolling – all abilities and ages are welcome! Now in its 18th year, the fun run is a fabulously accessible fixture in the community calendar – we're so happy to be a part of it.



To find more information about any of the above, please email [rachel@jbd.org](mailto:rachel@jbd.org)



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