

# The CIRCLE

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## With the Demo Completed, LifeTown Construction Enters a New Phase

It's a particularly exciting time on Microlab Road in Livingston as visitors, participants and staffers can finally see a hint of the amazing future that is to come once LifeTown is finished.

The demolition of the old LifeTown building was completed in early November and the rebuilding phase has begun. With a conscientious hand, the crews from Hollister Construction took down walls, ceilings, doors and windows, and have laid the groundwork for the future. Materials that could be recycled or repurposed were sorted and processed. This added step ensured that others will benefit not just from the new LifeTown, but from the remains of the old building as well.

Already one can begin to see the structure as envisioned by the architectural firm Rotwein+Blake take shape, under the direction of Avison-Young, which is managing the overall project. Even from the road, passers-by can imagine how airy and sunlit the indoor playground will feel thanks to an open wall, which will soon house expansive windows.

"We are so excited for the community, which has been so incredible supportive, and so glad to have reached this milestone," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum,

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### UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

#### JEWISH HERITAGE NIGHT

**December 27, 2016, 6:30 PM**

Celebrate Chanukah and show your Jewish pride with the New Jersey Devils for their annual Jewish Heritage Night. Thousands of fans will join for a communal menorah lighting and kosher food will be available. Fifty percent of monies raised as part of the evening's "Split the Pot" fundraiser will be allocated for Friendship Circle.

#### 1.11.17 COCKTAIL NIGHT

**January 11, 2017, 7:00 PM**

Join us as we present our first-ever Young Leadership Award to three couples who have shown their dedication to Friendship Circle. Enjoy a cocktail event, "Goods and Services" auction to benefit FC and more. Learn more at [FCNJ.com/CocktailNight](http://FCNJ.com/CocktailNight) or call **973-251-0200**.

#### MIAMI MARATHON

**January 28-29, 2107, Miami, FL**

It's not too late to sign up and run for "Team Friendship." Choose from either the 13.1 Half-Marathon or the full 26.2-mile Marathon. Team Friendship members from around the country will gather together for special pre-marathon Shabbat celebrations. Learn more at [www.FCNJ.com/Miami](http://www.FCNJ.com/Miami).

#### FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE BANQUET

**March 1, 2017, 6:00 PM**

Our annual tribute and salute to Friendship Circle friends, family and honorees. Join us for an amazing, not-to-be missed night with an elegant buffet, open bar and much more. Learn more at [www.fcnj.com/Banquet](http://www.fcnj.com/Banquet) or call **973-251-0200**.



## FCWalk Shows There's 'Power in Unity'

Participants in the FCwalk got a glimpse of the future as this year's route went right by the chain-link fence and open walls at the under construction LifeTown building. As one woman exclaimed as she went by: "If this is what it's like before the building is finished, just imagine what it will be like once LifeTown is built!"

More than 2,200 people attended the walk to help raise money for Friendship Circle and to show their support for children and teens with special needs and

their families.

"It's inspiring to see so many people from different areas of our community come together and support each other," said Stacy Merkel, who attended the walk with her family. "Everybody has their own spark, and just because someone is different," their spark still shines brightly.

The day's festivities began long before the official start time as families and teams gathered early to enjoy a late October, 80-degree day. As kids made tzedakah boxes, colored their team signs and had

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their faces painted, parents mingled and snacked on fruit and energy bars as they fueled up for the 1-mile loop.

For many in attendance, the walk was truly a family affair. Parents, children and grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins all joined in for a common cause.

"We've been coming to the walk for years," said 17-year-old Eden Mendelsohn, who came with her mother and several of her younger siblings. "Seeing it grow and grow shows that more people care."

Added her brother Matthew, 12: "It shows there's power in unity."

Addressing the crowd right before the official kickoff, Joanne Trenk explained how important Friendship Circle is to her family. Friendship Circle, she said, means that "our son has a safe place to go and enjoy himself."

A place, she continued, "where there is no judgement... where arms and hearts are open when we need it most."

Jared Kirschenbaum, who turned 13 recently, made raising money for Friendship Circle a key part of his Bar Mitzvah celebration. His FCwalk team, Team Perseverance, raised more than \$20,000 for the event.

Speaking to the crowd, he explained why the day was so personal for him. "For four years, I have watched my parents fundraise for Friendship Circle, and I knew that this is what I wanted to do. Not only would this honor my coming of age in

the Jewish religion, it would also honor my sister, Ivy," Jared said. "Friendship Circle has become a very important part of our lives. I can't wait for LifeTown to be completed so I can go swimming with Ivy, one of her favorite activities.

"I am so proud to be a part of this," he continued.

For all the deep emotions behind the walk, the day was also a fun-filled one helping to build bridges between people of different backgrounds, abilities and communities. The youngest children rode on a train, enjoyed animals at the petting zoo and took a swing at a blow-up baseball game. Older kids played VR games (that had them lining up again and again), climbed a rock wall and more. There was even a stunt show for families to enjoy together.

An impressive 110 walking teams raised more than \$175,000, which will help underwrite FC programs like the Sunday-morning Torah Circle and midweek sports club. It also allows for the creation of new programs.

"This was the 10th anniversary of the FCwalk and the growth in that time has been incredible. It went from a small walk to a community-wide day of excitement and fun that people from all over are proud to be a part of," said Rabbi Yisroel Rosenblum, FCwalk director. "The fact that this year's walk took place right outside of LifeTown really made it extra special for everyone. I'm already excited for everyone to see what next year's FCwalk will bring." 🌟



## Their Future, Your Legacy



Give a gift that lasts forever.  
Remember Friendship Circle  
in your will.

Talk to us about planned giving or  
beneficiary designation options and how  
you can help the children and teens of  
Friendship Circle.

Please contact Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum  
at [zalman@fcnj.com](mailto:zalman@fcnj.com) or 973-251-0203  
to discuss the many options.

 FriendshipCircle





# B'nai Mitzvah Basketball Clinic Is a SLAM DUNK

It was an eclectic mix of acrobatic feats, barbecue fare and basketball fun that brought hundreds of people together in mid-October to celebrate the intermediate days of Sukkot at the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy in Livingston. Yet the giggles, laughs and cheers of those in attendance left no doubt that the joint Friendship Circle/JKHA event was a winner.

The Friendship Circle Sukkot Festival featured a performance by Acrobats of Cirque-Tacular that was open to FC families and students at the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy. Children of all ages oohed and aahed as performers dangled from the air, contorted their bodies to fit into giant balloons and rode unicycles while juggling across the stage floor. There were even some audible gasps of “How’d they do that?” as the performers delighted crowd.

After the show, Friendship Circle families and eighth-grade students at JKHA headed into the sukkah for an all-American dinner of hot dogs, fries and more, before the program’s main event—a basketball clinic for kids of all ages and abilities—got underway.

The Sukkot Festival/basketball clinic was sponsored by twins Benjamin and Max Orbach in honor of their B’nai Mitzvah, which was being held just two weeks after Sukkot.

“We have been volunteers for Friendship Circle for a few years, and we thought it would nice to share something with the FC kids and bring smiles to their faces during such a happy time in our lives,” said Benjamin Orbach.

Since both Max and Benjamin love playing basketball with friends, it made perfect sense to hold such an event for FC kids. And how they responded, said Max Orbach, made it all worthwhile. “Seeing their reactions to scoring a basket, playing with other kids in our school gym and receiving medals at the end of the program made us feel proud and happy.”

The boys weren’t alone in their happiness. No one who was there could hold back a smile when one young participant took her medal, ran to her mother and proudly exclaimed: “I won!” 🏆



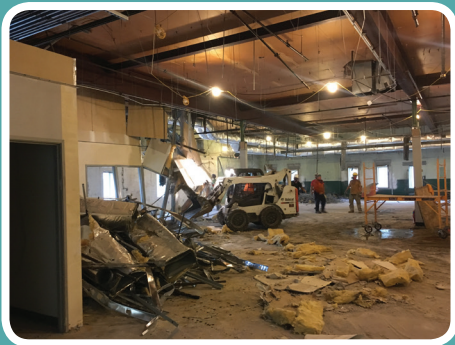
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CEO of Friendship Circle. “We look forward to the day, in the not too-distant future, where we will be able to walk up and down the halls of LifeTown as children play, shout and have an amazing time all around us.”

Grossbaum added that Friendship Circle staff is currently working with consultants and partner agencies to create the extensive programming that will begin once LifeTown opens.

Based on the current construction schedules and barring any changes, the anticipated completion of the new LifeTown of Livingston will be in the early summer of 2017.

For more information about LifeTown or to participate in the campaign, please visit [www.LifeTown.com](http://www.LifeTown.com). 🌐





# A DAY OF FRIENDSHIP, FUN AND UNITY



From her perch on a carousel horse, a girl called out, “Hi, everyone, hi!” as she waved to no one in particular and to everyone all at once. As her voice carried and her waves were answered, it was clear that she was in her element—among friends, among a community—during the first-ever Friendship Circle International “Day of Friendship.”

Held in August at the Bowcraft Amusement Park in Scotch Plains, N.J., the day brought together kids with special needs from across the tristate region. More than 450 children, adults, teens, volunteers, families and more attended.

The idea of having a day where Friendship Circles could come together seemed a perfect way to celebrate the Hakhel year. The Hakhel year refers to a biblical commandment of assembling Jewish people to hear the reading of the Torah by the king of Israel once every seven years, following the sabbatical year known as shemittah.

“We came up with this idea of having some Friendship Circles doing something together over the summer. Friendship Circles with camps came with their staff and volunteers, and those that don’t have camps were able to send families together to enjoy a nice day in the park,” said Libby Groner, the event’s coordinator.

Bowcraft was a good location because it is wheelchair-friendly and its smaller footprint allowed the children—many of whom were accompanied by teen volunteers—to find the rides that best suited them and their interests.

“I loved this, and I thought it was such a great experience seeing everyone together,” said Kayla Grunstein, 15, who spent the day with her friends for the day Rosie and Aderet. “I really hope they enjoyed the experience. It was a lot of fun!”

If the smiles and squeals—not to mention the pleas of “Can we do this again?” were any indication, then Kayla was on to something.

Volunteer Alyssa Schnipper, 15, and her friend for the day Tirtza (both of whom were taking part in Allie’s Camp) were all smiles as they made their way from one ride to the next. “It was amazing!” said Alyssa. “We just wanted to have fun. That was our goal for today.”

For Martyne Schroder, a behavioral analyst who was working with the FC Bergen County group, the day proved impressive.

“What I loved most was the community and the volunteers who came. The kids had a great time, but it was the volunteers who made sure the kids did what they wanted to do and did it safely,” she says. “There was this sense of helpfulness even between the different [Friendship Circle] groups.”

For the young volunteers and participants, though, the day was all about having fun.

“I know a lot of kids with special needs, and I think it’s nice that they get to come to the park,” said 12-year-old Kira Jacobs. This way, “they get a chance to have fun and enjoy the rides, and not think, ‘I can’t do this and I can’t do that.’ ”



## One Amazing Camp Week

It was an amazing week of fun and friendship as more than 80 kids and teens participated in Allie’s Summer Camp. They were joined by dozens of teen and adult volunteers who made sure the kids were able to enjoy all kinds of activities.

Campers started each day at the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest building in Whippany where busses were waiting to take them on their daily adventure. On Monday, the campers joined with seven other Friendship Circles for a special “Day of Friendship” program at a local amusement park. A visit to the zoo, complete with a chance to feed the animals and take a ride on the train, was part of Tuesday’s amazing activities. Throughout the remainder of the week, the campers enjoyed some miniature golf, tumbled at a gymnastics school and played arcade games while winning prizes at an indoor amusement center.

“It’s just such an important thing to make sure the kids can attend programs and parents can have time to themselves knowing the kids are being cared for especially in the week between the end of summer programs and the start of school,” says Teri Neidich, one of the adult volunteers who helped at Allie’s Camp this year.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

1.11.17

COCKTAIL NIGHT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2017

7:00 PM

CRYSTAL PLAZA

YOUNG LEADERSHIP CIRCLE OF FRIENDS RECIPIENTS

Mara and  
Brendan Berger

Carrie and  
Scott Leshin

Jamie and  
Aaron Twersky

www.FCNJ.com/CocktailNight