

## JEVS Human Services Turns Lives Around

By Bonnie Eisenfeld



Graduates from JEVS E3 Power Center City celebrate graduation and GED completion.

Substance abusers, people with disabilities, job seekers, high-school dropouts, immigrants and refugees, prison inmates—19,000 individuals in the Delaware Valley needing help last year received support through JEVS Human Services, a private, not-for-profit organization headquartered on Rittenhouse Square. Focusing on counseling, training, and assistance to individuals with physical, developmental, and emotional challenges or adverse socio-economic circumstances, the organization employs 900 staffers in multiple locations, and runs more than 30 programs providing skill development, job readiness, career services, vocational training, recovery services, residential services, and in-home personal assistance.

Jay Spector has been President and CEO of JEVS Human Services for 19 years, and a more devoted CEO cannot be found. He is dedicated to maintaining the organization's standard of excellence even in the face of funding challenges.

"JEVS is there for our community," Spector says. "Whether you are looking for a job, managing a disability, need new skills, need help with an addiction—the list goes on—we are there at countless pivotal points in the lives of the people we serve. We offer hope and support independence."

In the area of training for careers, JEVS helps unemployed workers, seniors, military veterans, high-school students and dropouts, former offenders, refugees, and welfare recipients by providing them with skills assessment, training, counseling, job search and placement. Each client gets an individualized plan. One division, the Orleans Technical College, provides training for the building trades, telecommunications, and court reporting.

Based on the Jewish principles of social justice and repairing the world, the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service (JEVS) was founded in 1941 by 25 concerned Jewish citizens to help displaced

European Jewish refugees adjust to life in Philadelphia and become self-sufficient. Over the years, the organization expanded its scope to help people of all needs and ethnicities. It continues to offer several programs for Jewish people, and partners with the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

Funding comes from federal, state, and local governments, and private, foundation, and corporate contributions. JEVS Human Services is a United Way agency and is on the list of Donor Choices. Staffers' expertise encompasses education and training, health care, information technology, social services, skilled labor, and accounting. Some speak foreign languages. The annual budget is nearly \$92 million.

Over the years, JEVS Human Services has helped me find home-healthcare workers for my parents and career-switching interns for my department. I learned that when you hire through JEVS, you get motivated employees with a good work ethic. But don't just take my word for it. Go to [jevshumanservices.org/](http://jevshumanservices.org/) and watch the video, with testimony from staffers and clients, to get the real story of what JEVS Human Services means to the community.

## Living History

### Historic Philadelphia Church Celebrates 110th Anniversary

By Marsha Hurst

May 3 marked the 110th Anniversary of the New Central Baptist Church at 2139 Lombard Street in Center City. This historic milestone was celebrated with a three-day revival, two Sunday services, and a banquet. Between services, the culinary ministry provided dinner to more than 150 members and guests in the fellowship hall.

Services were conducted by two distinguished guest preachers: Bishop George Jackson of the Citadel of Faith Fellowship Church, Thomasville, NC, for the morning service; and The Reverend Robert Paul, pastor of the Piney Grove Baptist Church, at the afternoon service.

Like most African American Baptist churches, the New Central Baptist Church had humble beginnings. In February 1904, Charles A. Blackwell set about founding a church, with seven people at the first meeting in the home of Sister Mariah Trent.

Soon their numbers grew; larger quarters were needed. The prayer group had grown substantially, but with only seven cents, the treasury had not. On March 30, 1904, Brother Blackwell used \$30 of his own funds to rent a storefront at 21st and Market Streets. There the church became officially organized, on May 5, 1905.

The present site at Lombard and Van Felt Streets was purchased in 1922. During construction, services were held in the garage of the pastor's home at 2300 Lombard Street. The church was nicknamed "The Sawdust Pile" for the sawdust covering the cement floor of the garage. In 1925, the church began holding services in the basement of its present structure. The optimistic congregation anticipated an early completion of the sanctuary. However, the Great Depression made that impossible, so the church became known as "The Subway Church."

Continued p. 27