



For Immediate Release

Sid Jacobson JCC's Empathy Walk Unites Asian American and Jewish Teens to Promote Solidarity

Program Created in Partnership with New York Assemblywoman Gina Sillitti

East Hills, NY, June 17, 2021 – Local teens put the words “hate has no home here” into action on June 13 at [Sid Jacobson JCC's Center for Community Engagement](#)'s first Empathy Walk, a social justice and leadership program. The walk brought together 30 teens from local high school Asian American Culture clubs and Jewish teens from [SJJCC's Teen Services](#) programs to create an action step against the recent increase in acts of bias, hate, and intolerance. Assemblywoman Gina Sillitti partnered with the JCC on the program and attended, walking in solidarity with the local teens.

“I’m so incredibly proud of the students that participated in our pilot Empathy Walk,” said Assemblywoman Gina Sillitti. “These young people took time to learn about each other’s cultures, biases, and experiences. We hope that through this program, we can learn that we are more alike than we are different, and start to put an end to the hate, bias, and violence in our nation.”

Participants were paired together on the walk and given a list of questions to ask their partner while embarking on a scavenger hunt to locate hidden shoe boxes along the route. Inside each shoebox was one shoe and several props for the groups to discuss. The goal was to try to uncover the story of the person. At the end of the discussion, leaders revealed the other shoe and the story. Each story touched on relevant issues including issues of anti-Semitism, Asian hate, race, gender and LGBTQ bias, and mental illness. At the end of the exercise, participants learned about unconscious bias and judgment and were more comfortable sharing their own stories and experiences.

“The goal of our Empathy Walk is to create a safe space for young leaders to listen and learn from one another,” said Susan Berman, Director of the Center for Community

Engagement, Sid Jacobson JCC. "We are asking them to take a moment to walk in someone else's shoes."

SJJCC's Center for Community Engagement plans to hold future Empathy Walks for various age groups and communities to help create awareness and understanding that will result in position actions amongst attendees.

To learn more about Sid Jacobson JCC's Center for Community Engagement, visit sjcc.org/communityengagement or contact Susan Berman, Director of the Center for Community Engagement at sberman@sjcc.org or 516.484.1545 ext. 202.

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About Sid Jacobson JCC

Sid Jacobson JCC (sjcc.org) in East Hills provides a full range of cutting-edge recreational, health, fitness, educational, cultural arts and social service programs. SJJCC promotes Jewish identity and provides a comprehensive program based on Jewish values, traditions, heritage, and culture, and is committed to enriching the lives of all individuals and families in its community. SJJCC embraces all individuals and families, and values diversity. See community differently, "Like" the JCC on Facebook (facebook.com/sidjacobsonjcc).

Sid Jacobson JCC is a beneficiary agency of the UJA Federation of New York.

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