

TRIB LIVE

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Jewish Community Center celebrates 20 years in Scott

By Charlotte Smith



Last month, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) celebrated its 20th “birthday” in the South Hills with a free open house for the community offering cupcakes and snacks, an open fitness center, family and kid crafts and open gymnasium and swim sessions.

The first JCC was opened in Squirrel Hill. Starting in the early 1990s, South Hills programs of the JCC were held in the former Ward School in Mt. Lebanon. In

1993 it opened an Early Childhood Development Center in rented space on Moffett Street, across from Jefferson School in Mt. Lebanon. The South Hills Advisory Committee began discussions of building a permanent home for the rapidly expanding JCC South Hills membership. By 1997, ground was broken for the Henry Kaufmann Building, located at 345 Kane Blvd. in Scott on a portion of Kane Hospital’s land. The building was dedicated in 1999.

Architect Daniel Rothschild of Rothschild Doyno Collaborative designed the building with symbolic forms and details that would relate to people on many levels. “The front wall of the building is symbolic of an unrolled Torah scroll,” he wrote at the time. The symbolic forms are further reflected in the two wings that project forward, resembling the two arched stone tablet forms of the Ten Commandments. Inside, the circular lobby is formed by

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12 exposed steel columns that lean slightly inward at the top, referencing a tent, which is a strong image that occurs throughout Judaism. The 12 columns are reinforced by X-shaped bracing; each crossing is inlaid with a medallion of colored stained glass, representing the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

The JCC provides connections and community through its many dance, wellness, aquatics, sports and recreation programs, child care and preschool, fitness center and summer camps and offers programs for all ages, from

preschool through senior citizens, including special needs services. The most recent expansion occurred in September with the introduction of a partnership with McConnell Basketball Academy.

Membership in the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh provides access to both the South Hills and Squirrel Hill facilities. More than 19,960 members belong to the JCC, one of the largest social service, recreational and educational organizations in the region. Additionally, it offers arts and cultural activities, including a nationally accredited Jewish

museum, and community engagement through its Center for Loving Kindness and Civic Engagement. A whopping \$3.1 million is given in scholarship assistance every year, while 372 local and national nonprofit organizations collaborate with the JCC to advance its mission and vision. It serves 32,000 people yearly and welcomes individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, religious affiliations and financial circumstances to participate in its programs and services.