

The J Opens Sensory Studio At Staenberg Family Complex

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ST. LOUIS - The J is excited to introduce its new Multi-Sensory Environment, or Sensory Studio, at the Staenberg Family Complex in Creve Coeur. The space is designed to help those with developmental disabilities who may encounter sensory processing challenges when engaging with the world around them.

The J's Sensory Studio offers a fully immersive experience featuring an interactive wall and floor projections, tactile wall coverings, bubble tubes, specialized furniture, such as a swing, an egg-shaped chair that delivers calming music and sounds, a large reclining rocking chair, and adaptable lighting that can be changed to achieve different environments. The J worked with [Flaghouse](#), a leader in sensory space creation, to create and construct the space. The project is funded primarily by the [Productive Living Board](#). Additional program support has been provided by [The Tilles Foundation](#) and the Miracle Makers Foundation.

“This is an incredible resource for our programs and community. It's a dedicated space designed to be used when needed, but we will also use this sensory integration tool proactively, to help our participants develop self-regulating skills and learn coping skills that will improve their overall quality of life,” said Ashley Stockman, Director of Life Enrichment and Adult Day Services.

A sensory space is designed to engage all of the senses separately or simultaneously to help individuals learn to regulate their brain's undesired reactions to external stimuli. Sensory rooms are used to elicit positive effects across multiple treatment areas, including Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder, Chronic Pain, Dementia, ADHD, and more. Whether used independently or with a trained professional, sensory rooms are used to calm and relax, stimulate exploration, learning, and development, and help individuals learn to process the world around them.

Loud noises, bright light, rough patterns, foods with unwelcome textures, large crowds, and strong smells are just some of the things that can cause distress for individuals with Autism, Down Syndrome, and sensory processing challenges. Highly stimulative environments increase the potential for dysregulated emotions and behaviors experienced by individuals with sensory sensitivities, but anyone of any age can experience unbalanced nervous system responses.

The staff at the J estimates that the overwhelming majority of participants who use the space will experience improvements in their overall wellbeing, and reduce their need for de-escalation intervention, become more engaged in scheduled programming, and improve emotional self-regulation and independent coping skills. Additionally, the more times an individual can use the space, the less time will be required to achieve emotional regulation on subsequent visits.

The J serves many populations who can benefit from this space – Life Enrichment (formerly Inclusion Department) participants who struggle with sensory processing challenges, neurodiverse young adults from our IN program, seniors with dementia in our Adult Day Connections program, day campers, early childhood students and more.

The Sensory Studio provides those individuals with the resources necessary to learn how to regulate their behaviors, the positive impacts of which can be felt in the classroom, at home, and out in the community.

“Our son is autistic and with the extra staff support has been able to attend J Day Camps for the last three years, and he has loved every minute of it. He has always been sensitive to excess noise, but the Sensory Studio has given him an outlet when things get too loud for him and that has made a huge difference for him and us. We couldn’t be more grateful for this new addition at the J,” said one J parent.

When these situations occur at J Day Camps or in the gym, Early Childhood Center, locker room, or any space at the J, an intervention that is often effective is to take the individual to a quiet space so they can self-soothe, calm down, and regulate their emotions. To ensure that participants had a dedicated and always available space, the Life Enrichment & Adult Day Services Department at the J spearheaded the design and construction of the Sensory Studio.

“There are many situations that can be eased by allowing someone a break from stimulation and tools to help them regain a sense of equanimity,” said Lexie Millman, IN Program Coordinator at the J. “We are happy to have a dedicated space for the J community to utilize. We believe we’re the first community center in the St. Louis region to prioritize the need for this resource.”

For more information about Life Enrichment or Adult Day services, contact Kristen Conard, Assistant Director of Life Enrichment & Adult Day Services at kconard@jccstl.org or 314.442.3261.

ABOUT THE J

The J is an interactive, multi-generational gathering place that offers a variety of programs and services to both the St. Louis Jewish community and the community at large. In order to promote the physical and spiritual growth of our community, the Jewish Community Center provides educational, cultural, social, Jewish identity-building, and recreational programming, as well as two, state-of-the-art fitness facilities. Everyone is welcome at the J.