

Jewish Disability Awareness Shabbat to Be Held on February 18

With great pleasure, the Kulanu Committee will be welcoming Aaron Kaufman as our Jewish Disability Awareness Shabbat speaker on February 18. His topic, “Recovering Stolen Lives: A Journey of Self-Advocacy,” will explore how people with disabilities themselves have become leaders in ensuring that they are full participants in our society. With the help of advocates like our speaker, people have moved out of institutions into the community, where, with support, they live in their own homes, have jobs, and become involved in activities—most importantly, in synagogue life. Over the years, they have gained more and more control over their lives.

Mr. Kaufman, who has cerebral palsy and learning disabilities, is a recent graduate of the University of Maryland, where he excelled academically. Though still in his twenties, he is an accomplished speaker who has much experience in working on disability policy on the county, state, and national levels. Locally, he has served on the County Commission for People with Disabilities and the Board of the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes.

On the state level he has interned for Delegate Heather Mizeur and served on the Board of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, a federally-funded advocacy organization. He has also interned nationally for Senator Evan Bayh and Representative Chris Van Hollen. In addition, he worked as an intern with the senior lobbyist for the National Easter Seal Society.

Mr. Kaufman has a long list of awards and other honors, including The ARC of Maryland’s award for “Outstanding Volunteer Service in Governmental Affairs,” the National Young Leaders Conference’s “Youth Leadership Award,” the Yes I Can! Foundation for Exceptional Children’s “Self Advocacy Award,” and the “President’s Award for Educational Excellence.”

The Shabbat *Kiddush*, sponsored by the Kulanu Committee, will feature baked goods from Sunflower Bakery, where people with disabilities learn transferable job skills. Other activities for Jewish Disability Awareness Month include our yearly lobby display and special Shabbat prayer each week. The ECEC, Religious School, and Youth Department are also planning events.