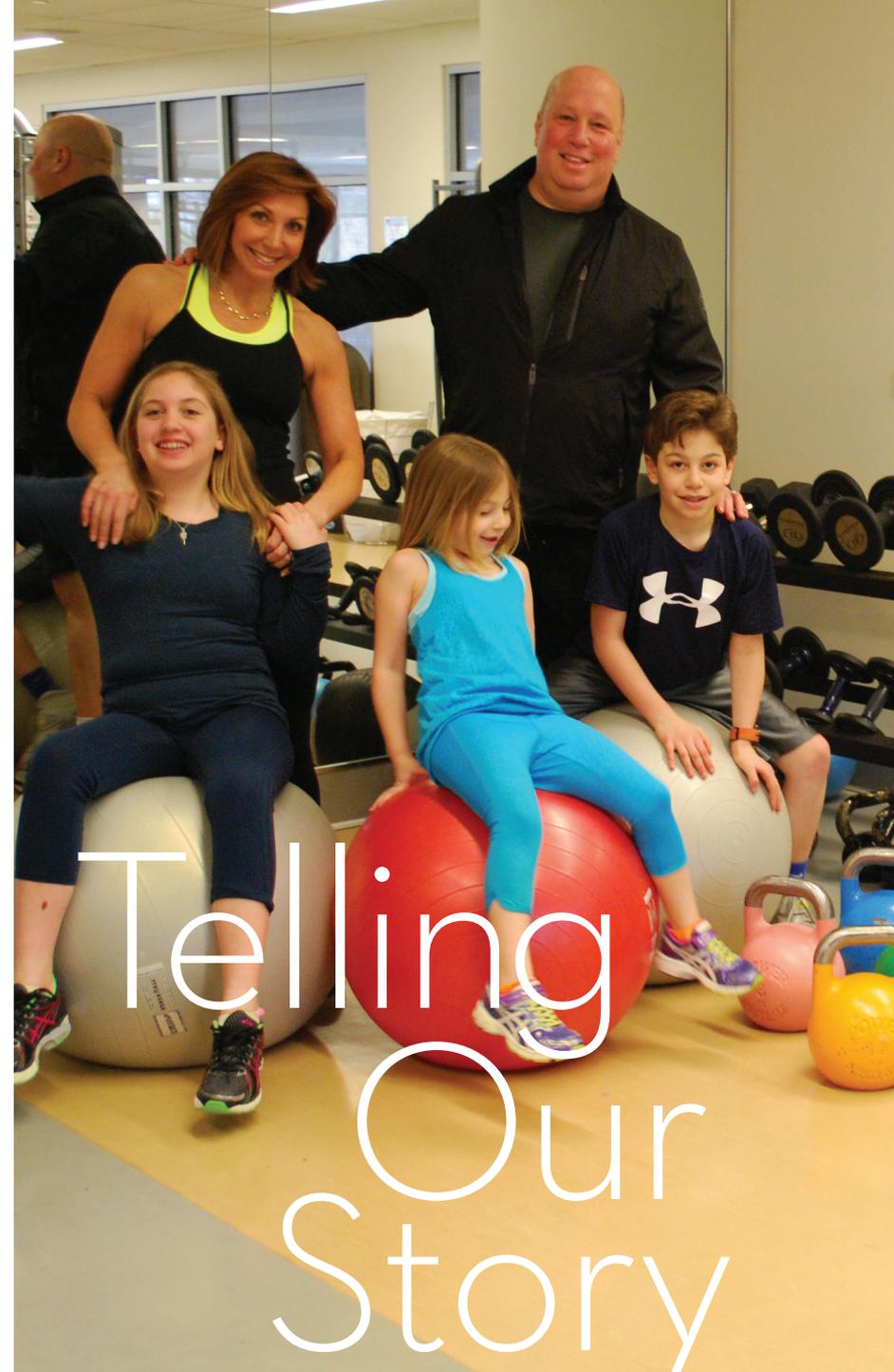


For most of us, staying fit and healthy is a very personal thing. We promise ourselves that we will eat better, join a gym, and set attainable goals that will allow us to realize our best fitness potential. Often, we have a hard time following through—perhaps because, the usual wellness options the fitness industry offers are very “solo” choices that are only suited for 1 or 2 individuals in a household and don’t allow for realities of our hectic family lifestyles.

The fitness experience at the JCC is the rare exception—we are not just a gym, but a family wellness center. The JCC understands that our best chance of raising healthy, active families that get off the couch and put down their iWhatever is by allowing parents to lead by example and by offering multiple fun options for children to participate in an active lifestyle. Instead of making fitness a “solo” aspect in life, the JCC makes it a familial and communal one.

The JCC’s unique approach is not lost on members like Suzette and Marvin Josif. The Josifs moved to Tenafly 4 years ago and joined the “J” when they enrolled Sydney, the youngest of their three children, in the JCC’s Leonard & Syril Rubin Nursery School. Their son Eli attended the Tenafly Public School and their oldest child Melanie, who has autism, attended the Alpine Learning Group. New to the area and commuting to and from Manhattan to work each day, Suzette knew that juggling three children in three separate schools was going to be a challenge.

“My kids all went to different schools with completely different schedules, making it difficult to keep our family in one place together.”



Telling Our Story

With all the chaos of everyone’s differing routines—taking time for her or Marvin to focus on fitness was difficult to achieve. A believer in the importance of an active lifestyle, a solution needed to be worked out, for her, Marvin, and their kids.

As Suzette and Marvin got acclimated to suburban life and got to know the JCC better, they were thrilled to realize it had so much to offer, providing their family with a central location for all of their wellness and recreation needs.

It began with Sydney participating in the JCC’s after school program which escorted her to Tae Kwon Do, basketball, and dance classes. Then,

“For our family, we found that exercise is a great equalizer. It is something that everyone in my family enjoys and we can all do it under one roof at the JCC.”



LEFT: The Josif Family working out together at the JCC. THIS PAGE: The Josifs at last year’s Rubin Run.

With the kids covered and safe, Suzette is able to get in a workout of her own. “Working out at the JCC gives me the one hour that I need for myself. It allows me to take a deep breath and do something for me before I transition from the office to being a mom.”

For the Josifs, the JCC is more than just a fitness solution. “My children are growing up here. These days, Melanie takes the bus to the JCC on Wednesdays, gets off by herself, goes to the café to buy a snack, does her homework, and then heads to the Benjamin Bergen Youth Fitness Center, where she does the workout that Keri leaves for her. When she’s done, she calls me to pick a place to meet after I finish my own workout. This level of independence is a huge accomplishment for her. I can’t think of another place that I could allow her to do this and know that she is safe.”

This past year, Sydney joined Melanie to train with Keri. “This experience has brought my girls closer together. They really support and encourage each other. It’s great to see Sydney look up to her big sister. For that one hour that they have together, their differences are not so profound.”

Suzette added, “Even our weekends are better at the J! On Sundays we all head over and there is something for everyone to do. I don’t have to worry about where my kids are or what they are up to because I know they are safe and having fun. The only challenge I face in my daily trips to the Center is to remember where I parked my car.”

“When I was a kid, we played outside all the time. Things are obviously different now. The biggest ‘enemy’ I see are the screens—TV, iPhones, laptops or computers—they keep kids occupied but inactive. So if my kids can’t run around outdoors and play for hours like I did, I see it as my responsibility to ensure that this activity is replaced. And since I can’t move the TV and computer out of the house, what I can do is move the kids out. And I’ve moved them to the JCC, where they are safe, happy, and all under the same roof.”

The Josifs, who now celebrate Mother’s Day by participating in the annual Rubin Run, are busy preparing for this year’s race on May 11. Suzette is proudly co-chairing the race this year and looks forward to running with the whole family...together!

the Josifs realized they could have Melanie dropped off at the JCC after school too. “Melanie is very busy at the J.” She takes spin class, Zumba and has tried yoga, but her favorite activity is training with Keri Thoren, the JCC Athletics Associate Director, who is particularly skilled at working with children and individuals with special needs.

The Josifs’ son, Eli, also spends several afternoons a week at the JCC playing basketball and participating in the Excel! fitness program which provides a fun way for kids to work out together and learn about nutrition.