

Kyla Katz is the proud recipient of the Albany JCC Lenore Bellin Award, an honor that holds deep personal meaning for her. Lenore Bellin was Kyla's late great-great aunt on her father's side, making this recognition both a tribute to family legacy and a celebration of Kyla's own remarkable journey within the local Jewish community.

Kyla's connection to the Albany JCC began in infancy, when she entered the Early Childhood Center and has continued through years of participation in camps and youth programs, including the 2024 Maccabi games. These formative experiences inspired Kyla to give back, leading her to volunteer in various capacities at the JCC, carrying on the sense of community that shaped her childhood.

At Guilderland High School, Kyla has actively participated in Unified sports and Students for Inclusion Club for several years, forging meaningful relationships with other Unified athletes and partners and being a true testament to the beauty of inclusivity. She is also an active participant of the Capital Region BOCES Early Childhood Education program and holds a job with the Guilderland YMCA after-school program, both of which foster her passion for working with children.

Kyla's accomplishments are especially powerful in light of the challenges she has overcome. She lives with a rare genetic disorder that results in global developmental delays. Through determination, perseverance, and an unwavering spirit, Kyla has shown extraordinary strength and resilience, continually rising to meet challenges and embracing every opportunity to grow, lead, and contribute to her community. Her dedication has been recognized through multiple honors, including the Maccabi Youth Award and Counselor in Training of the Summer at Camp Shalom, being chosen as a Special Olympics Fitness Captain, and the Unified Cheer "Loud and Proud" award. These accomplishments highlight the true potential of individuals with intellectual disabilities and inspires all people who know her to be kinder and more inclusive.

Looking ahead, Kyla plans to continue working with children and is exploring the College Experience Program, a collaboration with Living Resources and Russel Sage College for young adults with disabilities.