

"BCL TURNED CHESSED INTO FUN!"
—YOSEF CHAIM WEIL, SIXTH GRADE.

You're probably familiar with baseball, soccer, and football leagues for Jewish boys — but have you ever heard of a chesed league before? The Baltimore Chesed League (BCL) was founded in 2017 to encourage boys to do chesed in a positive, fun way. Many boys in Baltimore already participate in community sports teams, and the Chesed League was modeled after sports leagues, complete with teams, uniforms, and coaches — all "competing."

Gavriel Horan

HOW DOES IT WORK?

This year, 78 participants from various Baltimore yeshivos, grades five through eight, were divided into 12 teams. Each week, teams can earn a total of 20 points by participating in "big" or "small" chesed projects. Sunday afternoons, teams are assigned a "big" chesed project such as helping package food for the needy, visiting the sick or elderly, or cleaning up at the Hatzolah station. The projects usually take between one and two hours to finish, and successful completion of a project is worth between 10 to 15 points. To earn additional points, team members can also fulfill individual "small" cheseds on their own such as helping to set up or clean up at a father/son learning session, or a kiddush; helping a neighbor shovel their walk; or visiting an elderly person on Shabbos afternoon. At the end of every two weeks, any teams that earned 40 points won a prize such as a pizza party, bowling, or dinner at Dougie's BBQ.

"THE BALTIMORE CHESSED LEAGUE SHOWED ME HOW JUST ONE HOUR OF TIME EACH SUNDAY CAN MAKE SUCH AN IMPACT ON A PERSON OR ORGANIZATION."
—MOSHE LANGER, EIGHTH GRADE

EVERYONE'S A WINNER!

THE BALTIMORE CHESSED LEAGUE TAKES CHESSED TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL



Team BCL Board visited the Hatzolah of Baltimore garage where they helped wash and clean the Hatzolah ambulances.



Team Early Steps Therapy visited Bnos Yisroel of Baltimore and helped them beautify their campus by spreading mulch and assisting with the landscaping.



Team Blue Ocean Realty made toy gift baskets for families with chronically ill members receiving support from the Jewish Caring Network of Baltimore.



Boys ran an afternoon of Bingo for residents of the Jewish Community Services – Baltimore Group Homes. Boys distributed snacks, called out the numbers, manned the prize station, and played with the residents.



Boys visited the King David Nursing and Rehabilitation Center where they sang and performed music, played games and schmoozed with residents for nearly an hour and a half filling their day with smiles.



Boys sorted through years of shaimos that had accumulated at Talmudical Academy of Baltimore. In the process they discovered an issue of Olameinu from 1977!

HOW DID THE BALTIMORE CHESSED LEAGUE START?

"A group of parents noticed that although multiple programs existed to involve and engage girls in chesed activities, far fewer opportunities existed for boys," says Dovv Ziffer, one of the Chesed League founders. "The BCL was created to address that need in a meaningful and creative way. We think it's important to find ways to engage our children in helping community organizations so that once they grow up, they will already be familiar with the organizations' missions and roles, and will be much more prepared to step in and help."

One of the team coaches, Gary Guttenberg, described what he feels is the main benefit of the league: "Besides the *zechus* of the mitzvos performed, it is inspiring to see boys devote time to perform chesed and grow in their *middos*. Some weeks the boys feel comfortable right away with the task at hand, while other weeks they have to step out of their comfort zone to fully perform what is needed. Their growth is the main thing!"

"FOR THE FIRST TIME I REALIZED THAT CHESSED CAN BE FUN ALSO. WE ALSO DID THINGS THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT WERE CHESSED BUT THEY ACTUALLY HELPED PEOPLE! IT FELT REALLY ACCOMPLISHING TO HELP THEM."
—NAFTALI FISCHLER, SIXTH GRADE.



Teams joined with boys from Baltimore Yachad to make mishloach manos for families in the hospital. ARI Concrete stayed up late Thursday night putting together Shabbos food packages for needy families through Baltimore's Ahavas Yisrael Charidy Fund.

Teams purchased and designed decorations for Chai Lifeline Mid-Atlantic to brighten the hospital rooms of children with serious illnesses.



In the last week, winning teams were able to enjoy a bowling outing to celebrate all their victories!



Team Columbia Group participated in a clothing drive to support CHANA Baltimore, helping families who have experienced violence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JUNIOR@MISHPACHA.COM