

Baltimore Chesed League Kicks-Off!

Suburban Orthodox's newest initiative, the Baltimore Chesed League (BCL), kicked off this past Sunday in grand fashion! Leveraging an exciting league format and natural team camaraderie, the BCL aims to provide Jewish boys in our community with opportunities to engage in meaningful "chesed-focused" activities, encourage the development of positive *middos*, and ultimately, help build caring, empathic, and "mentchlich" individuals. Sunday represented the Opening Week of the BCL's inaugural, beta-test season.

Starting at 1:00 PM, 30 community boys, ages 10-14, had a chance to participate in a number of amazing chesed opportunities that included visiting the residents of Weinberg Park, serving dinner to the residents of Sterling Hospitality, building a foosball table for the new Chai Lifeline recreation room, helping to clean and organize the Hatzalah garage, and singing and dancing for the residents of Tudor Heights.

Before heading out to these activities, the boys gathered at Suburban Orthodox to meet with their coaches, enjoy some delicious food from the Knish Shop, and hear some inspiring words from Rabbi Silber. With motivation in hand, the boys (divided between 6 teams) went to their respective activities and were successful in making a tremendous Kiddush Hashem. Each organization shared how helpful, mature, and caring the boys were and how much a difference they were able to make in just one visit.

Below is a more detailed narrative from team ARI Concrete's coach, Moishe Abramson, who beautifully described the experience of the boys who had a chance to visit the Tudor Heights Facility.

"After assembling a team, assigning coaches, and facing your first obstacle, how do you measure success when there is no playing field, no opposing team, and no semblance of a typical sporting event we are familiar with?

When we set out on our first Baltimore Chesed League assignment, there was a lot of excitement along with some ambivalence. The boys were enrolled in a league that set out to accomplish something so different than the typical Sunday organized sport. Our team assembled to visit Tudor Heights, a local Jewish convalescent home. With the help of their wonderful staff, the residents were gathered in the multipurpose room, awaiting visitors. Ours boys arrived in earnest and filed right in to the room, standing huddled together with the typical nervous tension of an adolescent. After some quick team adjustments, we decided to have all of the boys grab the microphone and introduce themselves to the attentive residents. Perhaps out of the comfort-zone of some, the boys did not hesitate to move along courteously, stating their name, age, shul affiliation, and school. Then, we gathered together to dance and sing along to the guitar melodies of Yitzy Kaplowitz who was kind enough to lend a hand in our effort. Once we were done singing, the boys played a little trivia game with the residents, taking turns inquiring about personal memories, historical facts, and general information.

The general character of a typical sports involves some form of struggle where the ultimate victor bests his/her opponent. The resolution of the struggle brings about a flurry of excitement and continues to draw in willing contestants and spectators. What our boys did today was something much more magnificent. If they possessed an insecurity of speaking in public, or were uncomfortable dancing and singing, or if they were simply frozen at the prospect of approaching an 80-something year old and asking how they were doing or how their day was; it didn't show. The boys approached the challenge

with poise and conviction, setting aside their own person to help and bring joy to another. The struggle was there, but the victory was all the more sweet. Instead of their success resulting from besting another challenger, their achievement resulted in the bolstering, building up, and bring joy to complete strangers.

It was truly the greatest win and I cannot be prouder.”