

Chai Lifeline “Shidduch” Brings Virtual Yeshiva to West Coast Boy

Michael G.* suffers from a rare metabolic disorder that has left him severely disabled and to unable to attend a traditional day school or yeshiva. Thanks to Chai Lifeline, he is participating in a unique “virtual yeshiva” that brings Jewish learning to his computer screen.

Although he is unable to speak clearly and fatigues easily, his mom, Ellen, said that Michael is thrilled with the opportunity to study traditional Jewish texts with Rabbi Yitzchok Pollack, a Canadian educator who has developed special software that makes the interactive lessons possible. “The technology is amazing. Rabbi Yitzchok has a real-time, online classroom. He and Michael can view the text they are studying at the same time and talk to each other through the computer. It is like having a teacher in the same room,” said Ellen.

Chai Lifeline’s national tutoring program is providing the funding that enabled Michael to hook up with Rabbi Pollack, who lives in Canada. “There is no other way that we could have given Michael a good Jewish education. We’re grateful to Chai Lifeline for making this possible.”

*Name and identifying details have been changed to protect this child’s privacy.

Beauty Day Proves It’s More Than Skin Deep!

FOR THE THIRD YEAR in a row, Debby Bair opened Tipperary Children’s Hair Salon for our West Coast Beauty Day, sponsored by the Shoomer Family.

While Ms. Bair’s beauticians washed the girls’ hair and fashioned French braids, fishtails and fancy twists, manicurists helped the girls select the newest polish shades for their nails. Moms were treated to manicures and make-up applications as well as relaxing massages given by massage therapists Ilene Strajcher and Debbie Shofet. The day also served as a *shidduch* (connection) for two moms whose daughters are struggling with the same rare disease. They met for the first time, exchanging phone numbers and promising to stay in touch. The tasty lunch and pitchers of fruit smoothies for moms were donated by Catering By Brenda; OPI Cosmetics and Jordana Cosmetics graciously contributed the cosmetics that were given to everyone at the end of the day.



Debby Bair treating a young participant to a new hairstyle.

Chai Lifeline Holiday Parties Serve Many Purposes

WHILE THEY MAY SEEM like just parties, every Chai Lifeline West Coast social event is actually a carefully thought out process that fulfills many different goals.

Our two annual holiday parties, held during the Chanukah and Purim seasons, allow for interaction among parents, informal conversations with case managers and relationship building among children and their “Big Brothers” and “Big Sisters.”

Randi Grossman explained, “Every recreational event and outing is important to families. First, it gives them the opportunity to spend some quality time with each other away from the doctors, hospitals, treatments and stress. Many of our families have forgotten how to have fun with each other, or wouldn’t think to take the time to do these things if they weren’t suggested. In addition, when they get together in a party setting parents network with one another, trading information and strategies for ‘maintaining family sanity’ throughout a child’s illness.”



The most recent celebrations drew 300 Chai Lifeline families and volunteers to the Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy for a gala Chanukah party and to Kanner Hall for our annual Purim gathering. Kudos to all the volunteers who organized and attended the parties, to the wonderfully talented performers who gave of their time to make our children happy, to the Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy and Pat’s Catering, who contributed their facilities, and to Mira and David Zeffren, whose gracious donation made the Purim party possible.



Magician Bobby Borgia fascinates the crowd at a holiday party.