

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR

My son, the doctor. My son, the lawyer. My son, the rabbi. My son, the clown?

Yes, my son, Yehuda, is a clown.

Not the three-ring type. He's a mitzvah clown.

Yehuda is among the newly minted corps of mitzvah clowns, courtesy of Bergenfield-based Areyvut, a non-profit organization that trains volunteers and runs various chesed programs, including the Mitzvah Clown program. Mitzvah clowns, like care clowns, visit the infirm, the elderly, and youngsters with special needs in order to bring good cheer.

Building on the Torah mandate to care for your fellow, Yehuda and several other volunteers met early on a recent Sunday morning to learn what it takes to become a mitzvah clown. They got the basics on the ap-

propriate way to make a visit, chose their colorful clown costumes, replete with red sponge noses and sparkly purple wigs, and learned how to make up their faces in a rainbow of greasepaint.

One nice surprise. Among the volunteers at the training session was Yehuda's kindergarten teacher, Jamie Bunin. It was lovely to see this teacher, a young woman who taught him when he was 5 years old, and Yehuda, who is now a senior and the president of student government at his middle school, side by side sharing in this act of chesed together.

Among the very important skills they learned was making balloon animals. Much of the training was spent pumping and twisting and turning. Suddenly, a thin piece of colored latex transformed into a dog, an elephant, a flower or a heart.

After their three-hour training, the volunteers went on a site visit at the nursing home, the Jewish Home Lifecare on the Upper West Side. From floor to floor, they went chatting with the residents and twisting balloons into fun shapes.

On one of the floors, Yehuda approached a man who sat in a wheelchair. He offered him his green balloon dog. The man took it. Then



Yehuda offered to make a leash. The man accepted. Filling a balloon with air and fastening it onto the neck of the green puppy, Yehuda returned the air-pumped pet to the new owner.

The man broke into a smile, and

took the "leash." Using it much like a fishing pole, he playfully feigned bopping a nursing home worker with his new toy.

The scene was delightful.

That was one of the many stops they made.

"It was really fun," said Yehuda. "I really liked dressing up and bringing a smile to people."

And the effort was very appreciated.

"That was a great show you put on there," an employee at the Jewish Home Lifecare told Yehuda as he left the building.

"These people need company. So many of them don't have anybody, and you guys came in and really lit them up. Thank you."

Then he added: "You'll come back soon, I hope?"

So, my son, the clown?

Yes, indeed.

Cheers,



Mission Statement

About Our Children is designed to help Jewish families in our area live healthy, positive lives that make the most of the resources available to them. By providing useful, current, accurate information, the publication aims to guide parents to essential information on faith, education, the arts, events, and child-raising – in short, everything that today's Jewish family, babies to grandparents, needs to live life to the fullest in northern New Jersey and Rockland County.

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