

## District 9 Challenger League

By: Charlie Raitt

I chose as my Bar Mitzvah project the District 9 Challenger League of Little League Baseball. The Challenger League was founded to provide physically and mentally disabled children the opportunity to play recreational baseball. Since I love baseball and have been playing in the baseball leagues for seven years. I thought that this would be a meaningful project for me.

I learned about the Challenger League from an article in the newspaper. A disabled child is partnered with a buddy; as they do in the Special Olympics. No one ever strikes out or is thrown out at the bases. Every disabled child is made to feel special and just like everyone else.

By choosing the Challenger League as my mitzvah project, I believe that I will make a difference in a child's life. As a bar mitzvah, "man of the commandments," and being considered an "adult" in the Jewish religion, I know that I now have an obligation to follow mitzvot. I recognize that I am blessed with a loving family and good health, so I have an obligation to help the less fortunate. I know the thrill that comes from being at home plate waiting for the perfect pitch, hitting the ball, running the bases and scoring a run. Through the Challenger League, disabled children will experience that same thrill and feeling of personal success.

I put an article in my synagogue bulletin telling about the Challenger League, why I chose it as my mitzvah project and asked for donations to this worthy project instead of receiving a gift. I gave these donations, along with the decorations from my bar mitzvah party which includes gloves and balls, to the Challenger League. I also made a donation from the money that I had received as gifts to the league. This money will enable the league to buy the specialized equipment the children will need. I hope to have my baseball league donate their time to the Challenger League as buddies.

I'm glad that my synagogue encourages each Bar Mitzvah to choose a mitzvah project. Our community also encourages tzedakah, chesed, and tikkun olam through the B'nai Tzedek program, which I joined. Even though you are the "main attraction" at your Bar Mitzvah, you experience meaning through a mitzvah project.