

# About Our Children

*Useful Information for the Next Generation of Jewish Families*

Teaneck resident Eitan Hiller, a Mitzvah Clown, invited his friends to get trained as Mitzvah Clowns as part of his bar mitzvah party. They then visited residents at the Jewish Home at Rockleigh.

## Doing Good Local Chesed Camp Launches in August

HEIDI MAE BRATT

**I**t may be just five days, but its impact could last a lifetime.

At least that's what organizers of Five Days/Five Ways, a new camp being launched by local chesed organization, Areyvut, are hoping: That is, that the exposure to a variety of nonprofit, charity organizations on chesed-themed days, which are filled with lessons, activities, and fun, will make a positive imprint on the hearts and minds of their middle-grade campers.

"We live in a community where there are lots of different options during the summer," said Areyvut founder and director Daniel Rothner.

With many camps, including sleep-away camps, folding in chesed activities as part of its overall curriculum, Mr. Rothner said that Areyvut wanted to create a camp exclusively dedicated to chesed every day.

Especially important, Mr. Rothner added, was to target middle-grade students because many of the available chesed opportunities are geared to older students, those who are already in high school and beyond.

The camp will be based at the Friends of Lubavitch of Bergen County in Teaneck, and meet the week of Aug. 8 through Aug. 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Each day there will be games, craft projects, and activities as participants learn about a different Jewish value and how to use that value to make the world a better place. They will go on a field trip and have the opportunity to put their new skills to work visiting seniors, cleaning trails, packaging food, and reading to children.

"Chesed is integral to Judaism and the world at large, and there are a multiplicity of ways to do chesed," said Alisa Danon Kaplan, co-director of the camp.



Children from the Montclair Jewish Workshop participated in a tikkun olam tour facilitated by Areyvut. They created bags to be donated to Leket, a food rescue organization in Israel.

"At Areyvut, we want participants to imbue chesed into their lives while having fun in a psychologically safe and supportive environment. The camp will show the participants the ways that they can do kindness for themselves, for those around them and for the greater community at large."

The camp will inculcate core Jewish values, and help participants to develop skills in consensus building and inclusion. They will be challenged and pushed outside their comfort zone as they deal with new situations and meet new people. Participants in the program will make friends, learn new chesed skills, maximize their talents, and gain new insights on community service and

Jewish tradition.

"We want the kids' actions to make a difference," said Ms. Danon Kaplan. "It's not about the façade of doing good, but to actually do something like improving a trail or providing blankets to bone marrow donors."

Each day will feature a theme, and will be put the theme within a context. The day will include a guest speaker and hands-on volunteering. The themes include: The Environment; Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh B'zeh (All of Israel is Responsible for One Another)/Israel Day; Caring for the Sick & Elderly; Hunger and Poverty; and Intergenerational Understanding.

Included in the weeklong curricu-

lum will be training to become a Mitzvah Clown, one of the most popular programs put forth by Areyvut; weather permitting, weeding and trail maintenance at the Teaneck Creek Conservancy; a visit to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, and more, organizers said.

"The exposure to these agencies may prompt the students to become future volunteers for the agencies and to bring back their experiences to their families," said Ms. Danon Kaplan. "We also hope that the kids have a lot of fun during the week, and make new friends. After all, they are still kids."

*Heidi Mae Bratt is the editor of About Our Children.*