

## Good Harmony

by Susie Garber

“...Sing to Him, make music to Him, speak of all His wonders.”  
(Chronicles 16)

Music is a universal language that speaks to the heart. The Harmony Concert, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, provides a unique musical opportunity for *frum* girls and women to perform and enjoy music. Harmony is performed every two years. It was started by Batya Travis for women and girls from all different schools and neighborhoods. The concert takes place in the Five Towns and it includes a girls' choir and girls' dance groups, as well as an adult choir and adult dance groups.

Rehearsals begin in October. There are three performances this year at Lawrence High School: February 15, 16, and 22. There are close to 300 participants. Karen Daitchman, the director of the children's and adult choirs, notes that this production provides a wonderful outlet for *frum* girls. It's also an oppor-

tunity to meet women and girls from all over. It is truly an amazing experience; the performance is polished and professional, and tickets go quickly. Kayli Josef is the musical arranger of the all-female orchestra, complete with a cellist.

This year's concert is raising funds for the vital organization TOVA (Torah Viable Alternatives). TOVA has been based in the Five Towns for 17 years and it came to Queens about five years ago. Yehuda Klinkowitz, LMSW, is the program director of the Far Rockaway-Five Towns program.

TOVA is all about bringing harmony to the lives of our children. It's about preventing problems before they surface. It's a proactive approach that works. Mr. Richard Altabe, founder of TOVA, explained how the organization was born. As English Principal of Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, he helped found the Cahal program. He had monthly meetings with other principals, and they all spoke of similar issues. He decided to chair a subcommittee working on problems. He did

research and discovered that the best programs were the mentor-based programs, such as Big Brother/Big Sister. He connected with Dr. Norman Blumenthal, a well-known psychologist, and founder of Cahal. They decided to create a *frum* big brother/big sister program. The goal is to take a child who might develop problems either socially, academically, or family-related problems or relationship issues, and to provide this child with a mentor who is a role model, someone the child admires and feels comfortable confiding in.

Rabbi Deutscher, Queens Director of TOVA, matches the mentor to the student and what he/she needs. TOVA mentors are matched according to *hashkafah* and other factors. The mentors in Queens come from Shevach High School, post-seminary girls, Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, Lander College, etc. They undergo an extensive interview process and screening and they receive ongoing training. They are taught to be supportive and nonjudgmental. They are trained when to refer a problem to a higher authority. The Queens mentors are supervised by Rabbi Yosef Deutscher. This service is a completely free, community-funded program. In

its over 15 years of existence, the Five Towns TOVA Program has helped thousands of students in the Five Towns.

Rabbi Deutscher imparted that one of the best benefits of working for TOVA is when parents inform him that their child is happier now that he/she is in the TOVA Program. He wishes that every child could have a mentor. Rabbi Binyomin Kessler, Menahel of Yeshiva Ketana of Queens, stated that TOVA is saving lives.

Mr. Ari Elbogen, coordinator of the Queens program, is looking to expand and include more students and more mentors. Right now, the following schools are involved: Bais Yaakov Academy of Queens, Shevach High School, Yeshiva of Central Queens, and Mesivta Chofetz Chaim.

Harmony is truly the right organization to perform on behalf of TOVA, as both of these organizations bring out the beautiful melody inside every person in perfect harmony.

To get involved, to submit your child for consideration for the program, to donate, or to volunteer for TOVA, contact any of the following: [Tovamentoring.org](http://Tovamentoring.org), [Projecttovaqueens@gmail.com](mailto:Projecttovaqueens@gmail.com), [Yehuda@tovamentoring.com](mailto:Yehuda@tovamentoring.com).

## Chazaq “Filterthon” Event In Forest Hills Informs Community On Dangers Of Technology



On Sunday, January 19, Chazaq hosted a “Filterthon” event that took place at the Beth Gavriel Center in Forest Hills. Five technicians installed filters and answered technology questions to the community at no charge.

Photo credits: Yaakov Katz Studios



## Cancer Camp Counselors Inspired to Run to Rebuild Bunk Lost to Fire

Calling themselves “Team Power,” 14 counselors and two children fighting cancer who attended Camp Simcha, the renowned international camp for kids with cancer and other serious illnesses, are training to hit the ground running on February 2. The girls and women have joined Team Lifeline, the endurance-training program that raises funds for Camp Simcha, and will run in the ING Miami Marathon and Half Marathon in hopes of raising enough money to rebuild a bunk lost to fire last summer.

Embodying the division's theme last summer, “the power of positivity,” Team Power is passionate, emotional and deeply committed. “These kids have already endured so much, and the fire really drew our division together,” said Penina Wolff, camp division head. “Our amazing campers coped better than their counselors and they inspired us on this mission; we have high hopes that we can help rebuild what has been lost, and we're giving it all we have.”

The fire, which began in the early morning hours of an otherwise unremarkable day, reduced the bunk to ashes and cinder in less than an hour. The six children and their counselors lost everything, from stuffed animals and blankets that had been their chemotherapy companions to passports, clothing, and books.

“There were amazing moments of compassion among the campers,” remarked Rabbi Simcha Scholar, executive vice president of Chai Lifeline. “Each girl had lost everything, but they worried about their friends, not themselves. I'm

not surprised that their devoted counselors decided to form this team in their honor.”

Penina Wolff went further. “These campers are our heroes. Their strength and positive attitude motivates us to do as much as we can.” Penina and her team, which includes counselors and two campers, are hoping to raise \$360,000, enough to replace the lost bunk with a state-of-the-art double cabin that will house 12 children and their counselors.

Ms. Wolff described the August days after the fire as “three of the worst days, and also three of the best.” The division head was wakened at 4:00 a.m. to the sight of a bunk wall in flames and a fellow counselor running with a wheelchair-bound camper in her arms. Everyone escaped, kids helped by counselors and other staff, but the day really tested the campers' and counselors' emotional strength.

“It was really traumatic, and everyone in this bunk lost everything. But we could never have anticipated the reaction and behaviors of our campers,” she said.

“Sometimes you forget that these children have gone through horrible things in their battles to get well. They are heroes every moment they stand up and take a step forward. Because they felt they had already lived through cancer, the worst thing they could imagine, they showed us how to be brave – and what's truly important in life.

“Other campers reached out to them in the most selfless ways, offering to share their bunks, giving them clothing and gifting their own stuffed animals. It was a true reflection of what Chai Lifeline is all about.”

## News From The Hills

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The event began with words of introduction from Yaniv Meirov, the operations manager of Chazaq, and was followed by Rabbi Zohar's lecture. The rabbi spoke about his life and then encouraged the crowd to participate in a questions-and-answers session. There were also two videos shown at the event about the vital work that the Lev L'Achim organization does in Israel.



**Chazaq Filterthon.** On Sunday, January 19, a Queens "Filterthon" event took place at the Beth Gavriel Center in Forest Hills. Five technicians installed Internet filters and answered technology questions at no charge.

## Upcoming Events

**Chazaq Presents Renowned Lecturer And Author R' Yehoshua Kurland Live!** "Dating and Marriage," Sunday, **January 26.** Refreshments will be served at 8:00 p.m. Lecture scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Men and women are welcome. Admission is free! The lecture will take place at Beth Gavriel Community Center, 66-35 108th St., in Forest Hills. For more information about this and other upcoming events, call or text 917-617-3636, e-mail [Info@Chazaq.org](mailto:Info@Chazaq.org), or visit [www.CHAZAQ.org](http://www.CHAZAQ.org).

**Cinema Utopia: Look Into My Eyes.** Filmmaker Naftali Gliksberg sets out to investigate what anti-Semitism looks like today, crossing two continents to see how people react to direct questions about their attitudes towards

Jews, Israel, and the notion that there is such a thing as anti-Semitism. It is a startling personal journey of painful discoveries as he explores representations and impressions of Jews and Israelis around the world.

Anti-Semitic stereotypes vary in the forms they take: they are often subtle, but the filmmaker also comes face-to-face with cold hatred packaged in eloquent rhetoric. As he visits individuals in Poland, France, the United States, and Germany, Gliksberg discovers that people's responses to his pointed questions are often a mixture of their own culture, some version of history and a certain collective psychology. *Look Into My Eyes* shows us that anti-Semitism's existence is disguised at times, but it is still often alarmingly present.

Gliksberg's interviews with a former neo-Nazi couple in Germany, a French comedian, and an American white supremacist unearth some shockingly candid opinions. Without resorting to cliché and hyperbole, the director has made a remarkably intelligent, controversial, and chilling film.

*Look Into My Eyes* was featured at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festivals in New York and London. A viewing will take place Saturday, **January 25**, at 8:30 p.m., at the Utopia Jewish Center, 64-41 Utopia Parkway in Flushing. For reservations, call 718-461-8347.

**Singles for Singles Event.** "The Hot Cocoa Café: Winter Getaway Edition." Sunday night, **January 26** in Kew Gardens Hills. 6:30-9:00 p.m. (approx.) The cost is \$17, space permitting (\$5 off for

first-time registrants until January 23). Advance payment is required. Exact address to be provided to registered participants the Wednesday before the event.

Other qualifications besides good *middos* and other "givens": Gentlemen (29-40) who are *koveii ittim laTorah* and *daven* three times a day (preferably with a *minyan*) and college educated women (27-40) who wear skirts and dresses only and plan to cover their hair after marriage. Light refreshments will be provided.

Registration requires an e-mail to [Singles4Singles@gmail.com](mailto:Singles4Singles@gmail.com), with the date of the event you are registering for in the subject line, and your name, age, brief *hashkafic* description, where you are from, your favorite travel destination, who referred you, and a phone number to reach you in the body of the e-mail. For more information, call 347-674-3833 or visit [Singles4singles.net](http://Singles4singles.net). ❖

Chanita Teitz is a real-estate broker at Astor Brokerage in Kew Gardens Hills, serving the entire Queens vicinity. For all your real-estate needs, call her at 718-263-4500 or e-mail [chanita@astorbrokerage.com](mailto:chanita@astorbrokerage.com).

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