

YOF's First Annual Community Service and Hesed Fair

Faith Edeson



Rabbi Moses Haber and Mrs. Sara Ovadia,

Hesed was in the air when the Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School held its First Annual Community Service and Hesed Fair. The fair was the idea of YOF parent Mrs. Gladys Haddad, and was organized by Freshman

Supervisor Mrs. Sara Ovadia and Sophomore/Junior Supervisor Rabbi Moses Haber. Its aim was to excite the students about volunteering and to show them that volunteering is not only beneficial to the community, but enjoyable as well. YOF's Hesed and Community Service program

ensures that students are sensitive to the needs of the community.

With organizations whose activities range from distributing food at soup kitchens, to encouraging random acts of kindness, there was something at the fair to pique every

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Jamie Baum, Emma Mael, and Lanny Prus

student's interest. Colorful banners, posters, and balloons were set up on tables throughout the gym, by 15 organizations, which included the Sephardic Community Center, Sephardic Bikur Holim, YOF Ladies Auxiliary, the Mitzvah Man, Imagine, Masbia, Yachad, Reach for the Stars, Life Vest Inside, the Morris I. Franco Cancer Center, the Sephardic Community Federation, Otsar, Parents and Kids Reading for Enjoyment (PKRE), Maimonides

Medical Center, and Chai Lifeline. They brought with them representatives and pamphlets to help educate the students about their goals and philosophies. All the representatives were eager to answer questions.

The Hesed Fair coincided with the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe), a time when we reflect on our actions and look into ways that we can better ourselves. In addition to the fair, each grade had a *teshuvah* assembly which was about working

on inner changes and how to better relationships with friends and family.

Head of School Rabbi Dr. Raymond Harari spoke to the students about *derech erez* (the way of the land) and how to show concern for the individual. He stressed that they should show respect to everyone, no matter who they are.

Assistant Principal Rabbi Joseph Beyda also addressed the students, emphasizing the impor-

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Students at the fair asking questions about Otsar

228 ♦ NOVEMBER 2012 ♦ IMAGE

tance of Yom Kippur, because it gives us a deadline for *teshuvah*. It's a time when we must look at ourselves and really think about our actions. It's a time to change for the better. In order to do this we must look at our interactions with others. He quoted Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

who said, "Saying you're sorry on its own doesn't right a wrong. Nor does it mean forgetting, because we should never forget the past if we want to avoid repeating our mistake in the future."

The leaders of YOF's student government organization (SGO)

introduced an initiative to address this issue directly. Realizing how difficult it is to ask for forgiveness, they created "I'm sorry" cards. Each student was given a card to hand-write a personal message to a friend, apologizing for something he or she

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Students learning about Maimonides Medical Center



Students wearing their new Mitzvah Man hats

had done. The sealed card was then delivered by the SGO.

After hearing the words of inspiration from the principals the students proceeded to the fair. They were so eager to start their new year

right that they quickly lined up at the tables to find out how they could help. The students' enthusiasm was a reflection of YOF's values,

Mrs. Ovadia said, "It was wonderful to see the kids excited and

eager to help. That's what Flatbush is all about. The students grow up and continue to participate in these activities throughout their lives. It fills us with pride." □

Faith Edeson is the public relations assistant for YOF.