

Around the Community

Achiezer at 13: A Talk with Adina Rosenberg Part 6 of a Series

By Avi Shiff

In honor of Achiezer's 13th year, we are conducting a multi-part series celebrating the various facets of this remarkable organization. For Week #6, we spoke to Adina Rosenberg, coordinator of Achiezer's Edith Lowinger Volunteer Network.

What is your role at Achiezer?

I oversee our Volunteer Department, which, in a nutshell, involves taking calls from people who need volunteers for many different things. This can run the gamut from those who drive people to and from doctors and hospitals to delivering food to hospitals for Shabbos, to stocking local hospital Respite Rooms, to going to visit patients in the hospital or elderly people at their homes. We also receive requests for items which don't fall under a specific category. For example, we've received calls from family members of a dying patient asking that an attorney come to the hospital to have a Last Will and Testament



Achiezer volunteers participating in a meis mitzvah in the snow

drawn up and executed. Sometimes, we send volunteers to greet bereaved families at an airport. We also have volunteers delivering medical equipment when needed and tending to many other tasks.

Additionally, we have an entirely separate *meis mitzvah* WhatsApp group with volunteers who are available to complete a minyan at a *levaya* or a *kevurah*.

Basically, when any need arises,

Achiezer is available to provide volunteers.

How many volunteers do you oversee?

That's a hard question to answer because we have so many different volunteers for so many needs, but it's a few hundred!

Our main group of go-to volunteers consists of 250 people. Our *meis mitzvah* group has 65 volunteers. Then we have other volunteers who cook meals, stock our Respite Rooms weekly or are involved in *chessed shel emes*.

Your job is to send out these volunteers when and where they are needed?

Exactly. It's simply incredible to consider how many wonderful, selfless volunteers we have. My job at Achiezer is to coordinate these volunteers and dispatch them to where they are needed in a timely and efficient manner. That being said, without our volunteers, I wouldn't have a job! Achiezer runs on its volunteers.

So, to put it mildly, this is not a "9-5" responsibility.

Correct. We are basically on call all day and all night, as things come up, especially when an issue is time-sensitive.

How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact the Volunteer Department?

During Covid, our volunteers did a lot of shopping for people, especially the elderly and those who were immunocompromised. Stores were limiting their daily delivery quota, so those who were homebound had no way of getting food and basic necessities. Our volunteers were out there, day after day, helping more than 500 homes.

During Covid especially, I think that people witnessed that the only way that we can get through a crisis like that – and any crisis – is by helping each other and being there for one another. In fact, people who had never volunteered called us up and offered to help, recognizing that there were others who simply couldn't survive the trials and tribulations of Covid without some kind of assistance. People realized that there was a need and rose to the occasion. *Mi ke'amcha Yisroel!*

What, in your opinion, is the secret ingredient that makes Achiezer so unique?

What is amazing is that it's a community organization helping the community, and the only way we can help the community is by having the community help us. Volunteers who live here are the ones who make Achiezer what it is. There is so much give and take on all ends. It's an amazing dynamic to observe. The sheer volume of what is accomplished during the course of a week is inspiring.

How fortunate do you feel to be able to do what you do as your full-time job?

Everyone has hard days at work, but it makes it so much easier knowing that you were instrumental in helping so many people. It makes the "hard days" easier and leaves me feeling fulfilled every day.

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