

Around the Community

YLX Summer Program

The YLX summer program has been phenomenal. Both locations, Lawrence and Far Rockaway, are flourishing with Torah learning during the week.

Thursday night was the first Thursday night out of the Three Weeks. YLXers enjoyed an incredible *kumzits* from Rabbi Shabbos. Of course, our legendary barbecue and bonfire along with intense basketball games tied it all together. It was a wonderful evening of *achdus*. The boys enjoyed themselves – it was great, clean summer fun, a great way to cap another strong week of YLX learning.



Achiezer at 13: A Talk with Aliza Wartelsky *Part 10 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 #10, we spoke to Aliza Wartelsky of Achiezer's Hospital Respite Rooms division.

Aliza, thanks for your time. Please tell us about the Hospital Respite Rooms division of Achiezer.

Aliza Wartelsky: Achiezer's Hospital Respite Rooms division ensures that community members who are hospitalized at local hospitals have access to a full range of kosher food in a comfortable and warm setting.

Achiezer currently runs and stocks respite rooms at Mercy Hospital, South Nassau Communities Hospital, Long Island Jewish Medical Center, and St. John's Episcopal. We are currently constructing our newest room at NYU Winthrop, which should be opening shortly.

How often do you stock these rooms?

Aliza: We stock them almost daily with delicious fresh food. For Shabbos, we do a major restocking, including hot food and a warmer to ensure that the patients and their family members have whatever they could need food-wise over Shabbos. The re-

spite rooms are kept beautifully, and they are made to look *Shabbosdik* each weekend, with flowers and whatever else we can think of to enhance the experience.

What feedback have you heard from patients and their families?

Aliza: Those who have benefited from this service are amazed by the range of foods provided, as well as by the way the respite rooms are designed and run. They tell us that there is such a warm, inviting feeling in these rooms, which are used quite heavily. We hope and pray that they be used only for those celebrating the birth of a new baby and should not have to be used by any others. Overall, the feedback is incredible.

Stocking the rooms must be a big job. How do you coordinate that?

Aliza: I have a separate WhatsApp chat for each Respite Room. There are about eight individuals on each chat who take on a specific day as a volunteer. Every time they go to their room, they post a picture of how they are leaving the room, along with pictures of the drawers and the fridge. The next time they go to Gourmet Glatt, they receive a master list and they see what items the room needs. We have found this to be the most effective way of keeping the room stocked. If we see



that the room needs to be cleaned, I reach out to housekeeping to take care of that.

We try our best to provide a variety of foods, so that everyone can find something that suits their palate. Even for those who are on a no-sugar diet, we make sure to have appropriate foods for them to enjoy.

What's the system for stocking the rooms for Shabbos?

Aliza: Each Friday, a group of wonderful young men, Eli Spirn, Moti Olshan, Shmuel Olshan and Avichai Jacobs, take care of stocking the rooms for Shabbos. They each bring about six boxes, unpack the food, and make sure everything in the room – such as the warmer and urn – is working properly.

These rooms are absolutely beautiful.

They really are, and credit for that goes to Sruly Lieber of Dynamic Cabinetry, our "kitchen guy." He's the one who designed all the kitchens in the respite rooms, giving of his time pro bono, and he also serves as a volun-

teer in LIJ. He maintains the kitchens as well, tending to whatever improvements might be needed over time. We are so grateful to him.

Running the respite rooms is a major operation!

Indeed, it is. Achiezer does so many things, but in a way, the Hospital Respite Rooms division is an organization within an organization. It's unbelievable. And it's thanks to the people who make it all happen, including our major sponsors, Mark and Barbara Silber and Gourmet Glatt.

The proof of how valuable this service is can be seen in the number of calls we receive each Friday, calling to ask about "the Hospital rooms." People spending time in the hospital are looking for it. The rooms provide the feeling that someone is there for you. The food we provide is like a "hug" – someone is thinking about me and caring about me while I am going through a difficult time or any time spent in a hospital. It truly is a special operation carried out by a team of special volunteers and staff members.