



Lakewood News

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FEATURE

Attracting the Masses: Lakewood's Parnassah Expo Surprises Everyone

BY SHLOIMY BLAU

For all the midday traffic jams that proliferate throughout Lakewood, our residents are at least spared the delays on Sunday. Yeshivah is on regular schedule, girls' schools and most businesses are closed, and motorists get their much-needed reprieve.

Last Sunday, February 26, was a major exception to that respite. Throughout the afternoon hours, the James Street area on the South Side of the Lake was totally clogged. Everyone was headed to Bais Yaakov High School's hall, to the Lakewood Parnassah Expo.

Explosive Interest

The Parnassah Expo, the first such event to be held in Lakewood, was the brainchild of Rabbi Duvi Honig, a local businessman and *askan*.

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Hundreds of boys attend annual Shnayim Mikrah v'Echod Targum event held by Pirchei Agudas Yisrael of Lakewood.

INTERVIEW

Spreading Simchah

An Interview With Mrs. Sima Silberstein, Misameach Girls' Division

BY C. BAUMWOLSPINER

Intent on presenting a pre-Purim interview with a simchah theme, I spoke with Mrs. Sima Silberstein, Director of Misameach's Girls' Division, who was happy to share with readers what it's like to be in the simchah business all year round.

Can you tell us how Misameach got started?

About four years ago, a group of five friends heard about a very sick child and decided to cheer him up. One was good at juggling, the next knew how to clown, a third played the keyboard, and the others were talented singers. The child was thrilled with their visits, and there was a marked improvement in his mood and mien as a result. Subsequently, the group decided to widen their efforts and visit more *cholim*. Others heard about this and asked to join.

Today, there are more than 200 men and women who volunteer their time and talents to Misameach. In addition to visiting homes, they visit hospitals in Philadelphia (CHOP), New Jersey (Robert Wood Johnson) and Boston, and sometimes patients and hospitals that are even further afield.

Is this how you got on board?

I'm a relative newcomer, since I've only been with Misameach for a year and a half, and I've never been an entertainer. Actually, my husband heard some people in yeshivah talking about the great work that Misameach does, and when they mentioned that they were in need of someone to lead their girls' division, he volunteered me. Since I wasn't working at the time, and I'm a good organizer, I was eager to agree, and I've never looked back. Although of course my first priority is my own family, *baruch Hashem*, I'm busy with Misameach 24/6, even though I now share my workload with a wonderful Lakewood woman, Mrs. Uhr. I consider it a big *zechus*.

What sort of work does this involve?

We receive requests almost daily to entertain sick people at home or in hospitals, and it's my task to find volunteers to fill this role, either in pairs or in groups. But before I do this, I have to find out what sort of entertainment is required. We don't send a singer to someone who'd rather have a clown, a puppet-show or a comedy skit. A person who needs visiting over a longer period of time may get to see a variety of acts.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Rabbi Pinchos: 'Baruch She'asah Li Nes Bamakom Hazeh'

Hundreds of Lakewood residents were on hand Sunday night for an emotional event, marking almost a year since Rabbi Pinchos Huminer was critically injured in a car accident on Purim night in Lakewood. *Baruch Hashem*, today Rabbi Pinchos is walking and doing much better, but he still has a long way to go for a full recovery.

The crowd on hand heard from Rabbi Sender Yossi Kasziner, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Eatontown Yeshivah, about the current condition of Rabbi Pinchos and how intensive therapy can return him to his original *chashuve* bearing as a *rebbe*, father and upstanding member of the Yerushalayim *kehillah*. The crowd also heard from Harav Malkiel Kotler, *Rosh Yeshivah* of BMG, about what a great *nes* it is that Rabbi Pinchos is standing here today.

Committeeman Meir Lichtenstein, one of the first responders at the scene on the night of the accident in his role as a Hatzolah member, gave the crowd a first-hand account, at the request of Rabbi Pinchos's family, about the tense moments at the scene, in the ambulance and then again at the trauma unit of Jersey Shore Medical Center, when the prognosis for Rabbi Pinchos's future was grim.

Hearing the story firsthand gave the crowd an appreciation for hearing Rabbi
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In 2010, Rabbi Honig founded the "Learn and Network" Kollel Zichron Mordechai Yosef in Lakewood. The kollel aims to provide *yungeleit* seeking to begin or grow their *parnassah* endeavors with a kollel where they can learn during afternoon *sefer* and a program to expand their opportunities as well.

The kollel offers a steady dose of networking sessions where members exchange ideas and business contacts to help get careers and ventures off the ground. There are weekly *chizuk* talks from Rabbanim, and lectures from experts in different business fields.

The kollel has formed alliances with employment and social-services organizations from Lakewood and beyond, and has opened branches in other communities in the U.S. and Israel.

"We gathered so many tools that the *klal* can use," says Rabbi Honig, "and felt obligated to let everyone utilize them."

It's clear that the Lakewood community feels that the tools offered at the Expo are useful. The hall was packed during the initial women's hours and the subsequent men's hours. The Lakewood Police Department estimated that at least 5,000 cars were at the event, pegging the estimated number of attendees at 7,000 or more. "We originally printed 1,500 brochures," Rabbi Honig relates, "and they were gone within the first hour."

Though the majority of attendees were from Lakewood, there were plenty of out-of-towners there. Visitors came from Brooklyn and Monsey, and from as far away as Baltimore and Florida.

The attendees reflected a diverse population. Some were kollel *yungeleit* and *mechanchim*, some were looking for jobs in the general market, and others were established businessmen and professionals.

Inside the Hall

As visitors entered the lobby, they were greeted by a table of Expo employees and volunteers. Each visitor filled out a registration form with basic personal information and career goals, to which they attached their résumé. Visitors were then given a name tag, a welcome letter, a brochure about Learn and Network and a pamphlet guide of the Expo. "People felt very good and confident by the time they left the lobby and began to walk through the ballroom," one receptionist observed.

In the ballroom itself there was a constant, frenetic buzz of activity. Workshops and offers were announced over the public address system throughout the

event.

Visitors walked straight ahead into the first section of the Expo, the "Job Fair." There, a host of companies from Lakewood and elsewhere that were looking to hire had set up their booths. Companies' representatives were on hand with brochures and other information. Job seekers discussed their backgrounds and job descriptions with representatives and left their résumés if a job was of interest.

The roster of companies and organizations at the fair was large and familiar. It included names such as Astor Chocolate, B&H Photo, Catapult Learning, Johnson & Johnson, Oorah and *The Voice of Lakewood*. A representative from the Zera Avrohom *kehillah* of Denver, along with the new Rav, Rav Tzvi Steinberg (formerly of Lakewood) was present, seeking *yungeleit* to fill positions in the *kehillah*.

The next area consisted of organizations that offer services to job seekers and others. The Lakewood Resource and Referral Center (LRR), the OU Job Board/Emergency Parnassah Initiative (EPI), Mesila of Lakewood (which assists in family-budgeting matters), Agudath Israel's Professional Career Services (PCS) and others were available.

Next was the "Classes and Courses" section. A number of institutions were on hand that are of benefit to young breadwinners. They included such well-known names as PCS; the Ocean County Vocational Institute; Cope Institute; The Institute for Special Education of Sara Schenirer Seminary; The New Seminary, led by Rebbetzin Bulka and Rabbi Levy; and Touro College, along with courses in computer skills and e-commerce.

There were programs that enable yeshivah graduates to utilize their credits to earn a Bachelor's or Master's Degree through quick, suitable courses and exams.

The fourth section, which was actually located near the entrance of the Expo, was for "Business Enhancement Services," showcasing tools that can benefit local business owners and career seekers. The section included several marketing, business startup and career-counseling resources. The Business Halacha Institute, which helps those in the business world to comply with *halachah*, was also there.

Throughout the event, there were announcements about workshops being held in different classrooms — as many as four thirty-minute classes were held simultaneously. Topics ranged from preparing résumés, transitioning from one job to another, purchasing a franchise,

obtaining business loans and homeowner relief, to deciding whether becoming a teacher or *kashrus* expert is the right fit.

And *minyanim* for *Minchah* and food from Bagel Nosh were available throughout the duration of Expo.

Taking Stock

After the whirlwind Expo ended, organizers, vendors and attendees took a breather and reflected on the experience.

Mrs. Rivky Savitsky, Executive Director of Operations for Brooklyn-based Dynamic Data Concepts, which provides customized computer software for schools, called the Expo "a bit overwhelming," saying that she could hardly keep track of all the qualified people with whom she interacted throughout the day.

She explains that Lakewood is a particularly attractive venue in which to seek employees. "A big portion of our employees work outside of Lakewood," she says, "and we find them to be very dedicated, hardworking, talented and smart."

Reb Avrohom Weiss, CEO of Sterling Insurance Concepts, said that he came to the Expo with several positions to fill and did not walk away disappointed. "You'll often have *yungeleit* who may be interested in a job but are too shy to approach the employer," he observes. "But this sort of open forum gives you access to so many of them." He says that he was "*nispa'el*" (enamored) by the turnout and the supply of qualified job prospects.

One vendor in the courses section, Allen Luxenberg of the New York School of e-Commerce, which guides people on how to start and run an online business, discussed the journey from his home community in Marine Park, Brooklyn, to the Lakewood Expo. "I saw an ad about the Expo in a Brooklyn circular and my wife said, 'This is what you need!'" he explains.

Mr. Luxenberg was surprised at how many serious potential e-commerce business owners he met. "If you could read and write English and know how to purchase online, you can be an online merchant," he says. "Even if you don't know, you can always learn!"

Fulfilling the Vision

Finally, the crowd began to thin and the cleanup crew began its demanding task. Rabbi Honig said that even he could not have imagined that the Expo would engender such a response. He related several success stories that he was informed of immediately, including one prominent institution that is planning to start a new educational program, after discussions with Expo atten-

Announcements

Baby Boy

Rabbi Yitzchok M. and Mrs. Chaya F. Bernstein
Mazel tov to the grandparents Rabbi Velvel and Mrs. Syril Salel

Rabbi Yisroel and Mrs. Esti Rosenberg
Rabbi Shmuel and Mrs. Malky Bender
Shulem and Devoiry Sonnenblick – twins
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Ephraim and Mrs. Miri Schwinder

Rabbi Mordechai and Mrs. Devorah Leba Grosz
Rabbi Avrohom and Mrs. Nechama Grubner
Dr. Moshe and Mrs. Leora Todres
Rabbi Yisroel and Mrs. Shani Leibowitz
Rabbi Yoel and Mrs. Elisheva Whitehouse
Rabbi Moshe and Mrs. Gitty Wasyng
Rabbi Dovid and Mrs. Pnina Willman
Rabbi Mochy and Mrs. Rochel Nathan
Rabbi Yehoshua and Mrs. Lieba Berger

Baby Girl

Rabbi Yisroel and Mrs. Malky Grossman
Rabbi Efraim and Mrs. Rochel Ginsberg
Rabbi Eliezer Chaim and Mrs. Mamela Kleinberg

Bar Mitzvah

Yehudah Leib Salel
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Velvel and Mrs. Syril Salel
Levi Miller
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Yerachmiel A. and Mrs. Sarah Miller. Mazel tov to the grandparents Rabbi Yehoshua and Mrs. Batsheva Krupenia. Special mazel tov to the great-grandmother Rebbetzin Rishel Kotler
Noson Meir Berger
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Heschi and Mrs. Shainy Berger
Mazel tov to Rabbi Binyomin and Mrs. Simi Deutsch on the bar mitzvah of their son
Mazel tov to Rabbi Ezra and Mrs. Miriam Berger on the bar mitzvah of their son
Mazel tov to Rabbi Meir and Mrs. Sara Epstein on the bar mitzvah of their son

Engagements

CJ Danziger to Gitty Gottlieb
Yitzy Gluck to Baila Goldman (Passaic)
Meir Deutsch to Rochele Stefansky (Monsey)
Leiby Landau (Monsey) to Bassi Rabinowitz
Binyamin Nussbaum (Toronto) to Shaindi Adest
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Arye and Mrs. Dini Adest
Mordechai Schwartz (Seagate) to Chavi Brandwein
Yaakov Friedler (Brooklyn) to Chanie Zions
Avromie Fruchthandler to Esty Friedman
Shloimy Abrams (Detroit) to Brochi Leff
Mazel tov to the parents Rabbi Yaakov and Mrs. Tova Leff

dees. He mentioned a Lakewood *askan* who has been trying — unsuccessfully — for years to enable *bachurim* who need jobs to get an expedited college degree and found that suitable service at the Expo. "This is what has been accomplished here for the public," says Rabbi Honig. "I can only imagine how many individuals were helped."

Indeed, a local accountant who was walking the aisles commented, "Several of my clients came here and already filled several positions." The wheels were set in motion to fill many other positions and successful businesses, *b'ezras Hashem*. Prominent local attorney Abe Penzer, Esq., who is on the board of Learn and Network and

who was instrumental in arranging the Expo, told of one anecdote where the owner of an online business showed up unexpectedly to sell it. "We made an announcement about the offer, and the business was sold within five minutes," he says.

"When Yidden from all walks of life come together with *achdus*," says Mr. Penzer, "nothing can stop us from solving even our biggest problems."

Rabbi Honig related, "People said that they've never felt such a *kiddush Hashem* as was in the air." Already now, he has plans to hold another Expo in New York in June and hopes to host many subsequent ones as well, *b'ezras Hashem*.