

Communities Continue to Rally Behind "Our Place"

Hundreds of community activists, lay leaders, politicians and Rabbanim gathered at the home of noted *askan* Reb Avi Fishof in a tremendous display of overwhelming support for "Our Place." After *divrei brachah* from Harav Avrohom Schorr, *shlita*, Avi introduced Rabbi Nosson Scherman, General Editor of ArtScroll/Mesorah, who spoke passionately about helping out this organization. Avi then surprised the audience when he summoned "Yisrael" (not his real name) to the podium with the following words: "Come on up, Yisrael, and tell us all what Our Place did for you."

Yisrael, a *yeshivishe*-looking gentleman in his early twenties, related his story, beginning with his unhappiness with his yeshivah, his family, his friends, and more, and his subsequent use of drugs.

He sank to the lowest levels in this way, but *baruch Hashem*, one evening Yisrael was introduced to Our Place.

Our Place was, and continues to be, involved front and center in letting Jewish teens know that there are some people out there who do care. Whatever the level of alienation they feel, or anti-social behavior they engage in, these troubled teens are showered with all the love and expert care of Our Place's wonderfully warm, caring and professional staff.

This extraordinary organization was founded in 1998 by Mr. Moishe Binik, and is privileged to have as its Program Director the dedicated Reb Chaim Glancz, who deeply understands these teens and their needs.

Our Place provides a range of services, from giving teens a place to hang out and eat dinner – sometimes, their first warm



Attendees at the parlor meeting included Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Lenny Wassner, Shloime Werdiger, Yossi Brachfeld, Zvi Schmidt and Yossi Yurowitz.



Avi Fishof pleading Our Place's plight to the crowd at the parlor meeting.

meal of the day – to rehabilitation from drug or alcohol addiction that can literally save their lives.

It has been demonstrated that numerous tragedies related to substance abuse were, and can continue to be, averted through a teen's affiliation with Our Place.

Unfortunately, the government grants and funding for Our Place were recently cut by more than one million dollars. Our Place has been compelled to close down two of its locations this past year. In the words of the *Gedolei Yisrael*: "Our Place cannot shut down, thus shut-

ting down the lives of these *Yiddishe neshamos*. They are our children – our *achrayus!*"

Our Place, therefore, is now doing all that it can to reach out to concerned members of all communities to avoid closing down, *chalilah*. To this end they are making appeals in shuls and hosting parlor meetings to help raise the necessary funds to keep Our Place operational.

Besides the emergency Brooklyn Parlor Meeting held in the Fishof home last week, a few dedicated individuals from Kew Gardens, Queens, also responded to the call. They hosted a beautiful parlor meeting in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Ari Walfish, coordinated by Mr. Moishe Engel. Despite the inclement weather, a huge crowd turned out. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, *shlita*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, *Yeshivah Torah Vodaas*, introduced by Avi Fishof, spoke movingly about the lost souls in *Klal Yisrael* – these teens, these "*nichshalim*," who are picked up and literally saved by Our Place. He implored the crowd to do their utmost to keep Our Place functioning.

We are now asking all shuls and communities to join us in making appeals and events for this very important cause. Help us bring these precious *neshamos* back from the brink of disaster so that they can become functional and respected members of the Jewish community.

As *Chazal* say, "He who saves one Jewish life is as if he has saved the world." Donations can be sent to: Our Place-NY, 44 Wall Street, 2nd floor, New York, New York 10005.

Finding Funding



Special Education Affairs Division of Agudath Israel of America staff brainstorms with educators on the best approaches to improving the process of funding for children with special education needs. The meeting was held at Yeshivat Ateret Torah on March 23.

L-R: Rabbi Moshe Twerski, Rabbi Chaim Aaron Weinberg, Rabbi Naftulie Weiss, Shimmie Ehrenreich. Not shown: Richard Altabe, Mrs. Leah Steinberg, Mrs. Gloria Pearl, Mrs. Tali Abramzon, Mrs. Esther Helfgot.

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