

 **Baltimore News**

Jew-Hab : Helping Jews, “Rehabing” Houses in Baltimore



As a change of pace from the usual nightly BBQ-and-Swim party, Thursday nights feature a cholent kumzitz.

It is a common problem. A *bachur* is having trouble finding ‘his place’ and wanders from one yeshivah to the next – at best. He finally goes to Eretz Yisrael and finds a yeshivah where he is able to *shtejig*; he begins to settle down and learn a little bit. Then – it is time for summer vacation. He returns home to America, and for ten long weeks, he does not have much to do, certainly not much in the right environment. In Baltimore, this problem is being addressed very successfully by Rabbi Aryeh Zigdon and his innovative program – Jew-Hab Construction.

Rabbi Aryeh Zigdon (aka Rabbi, Ziggy, or just plain Aryeh), a member of the Baltimore Community Kollel, has opened his home, especially on Shabbos afternoons, for many to visit and get a cold drink, a warm heart, and a listening ear (not to mention his wife’s delicious cholent!).

Over the years, Rabbi Zigdon has sent many of ‘his guys’ to various yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael. However, summer vacations always posed a problem. Many of these boys gained tremendously during their time in yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael, but then experienced a downturn during the summer months.

“About four years ago, some guys came back from Eretz Yisrael and I asked them what their plans were for the summer. They wanted to make some money so they could go back to Eretz Yisrael, but they had plans to work in a camp that was not the greatest environment. I knew there were all sorts of ‘after-hours parties’ in that camp, and I said, ‘You are not doing that.’”

Needing to present some sort of alternative, Rabbi Zigdon promptly put together a program for four post-high school aged boys where they could learn for two hours in the morning, then work on various construction projects for six hours in the afternoon. He promised to pay the boys for their work.

Rabbi Zigdon had already made a previous commitment for that summer, but he hired a *rebbi* and a foreman to supervise the

construction work, and set the boys to work renovating the *beit medrash* of the Baltimore Community Kollel.

The results were fantastic. The boys really enjoyed the program and commented, “This is the first summer where not only did I not have a ‘yeridah,’ but I actually had an ‘aliyah.’”

The following summer, the program continued – this time with twelve boys. However, Rabbi Zigdon realized that the boys still

had too much free time on their hands, and were ‘getting into trouble’ in the evenings. Always looking for solutions, Rabbi Zigdon expanded the program to include nightly barbecue and swim parties, to which the boys responded with great enthusiasm.

“We keep them busy every minute of the day – beginning with *Shacharis* in the morning, then learning, work, and followed by the barbecues,” explains Rabbi Zigdon. “We realized that it is best for them to be occupied for as much time as possible, in order to remain productive and prevent boredom, which leads to trouble.”

The third summer, there were thirty boys in the program, and now, beginning the fourth season, Rabbi Zigdon is anticipating the participation of forty boys. As one of the boys explained, “You build us and we rehab houses,” and thus the program received its name, Jew-Hab Construction.

What exactly do the boys do? They will do any small construction job, such as building decks and sheds, painting, and demolition. Customers pay discounted prices for the work, and the remainder of the funds for the



The boys heading out to their first day on a new construction site

program come from community members who realize the benefit of this program. A construction foreman is present on every work site.

This year, they are also busy helping Bnos Yisroel of Baltimore, a girls’ elementary school in the community, move into their new facility, and are doing minor renovations on the new property.

There are many devoted community members who are making

the program possible, thereby giving these young men a structured summer full of spiritual and personal growth. The program is a project of the Chananya Backer Memorial Fund, in memory of Chananya Backer, *z”l*, a teenage boy who was killed in a car accident about three years ago, right before Tishah B’Av. The Star-K Vaad Hakashrus of Baltimore is a generous sponsor of the program. Many community members open their homes in the evenings to host the barbecue and swim parties.

Mrs. Bonnie Pollack is the director of operations, scheduling all jobs and making sure that everyone has what he needs to get the job done. “Mrs. Pollack makes sure that everything happens and that it happens efficiently,” says Rabbi Zigdon. Mr. Binny Margolese is the head foreman.

How do the boys like the program? “They love it!” exclaims Rabbi Zigdon. “They don’t mind being busy. It is all very low pressure. The learning is very relaxed and they feel accomplished with the construction work. The great thing about construction work is that, at the end of the day, you have something to show for yourself; it is very fulfilling. And not only that, we are teaching them a tangible trade that perhaps they will be able to use to support themselves one day.”

At the end of the summer, the boys are treated to a special excursion to Deep Creek Lake in western Maryland, where they spend a week hiking, boating, and, of course, barbecuing.

The *Roshei Yeshivah* in Eretz Yisrael are thrilled with the program, because they see that the boys come back the next year wholesome, inspired and ready to keep learning. I have received requests to accept boys from other cities, as the *Roshei Yeshivah* see such a huge difference between how our boys come back, as compared to boys from other cities. Our boys don’t lose over the summer.”

For more information on this program or to take advantage of their services, please e-mail jew-hab@gmail.com.



Recent Shuvu luncheon delegation to Congress: (R-L) Mr. Yitzchok Neger of Shuvu Baltimore delegation, Mr. Belsky, presentation to Maryland Congressman Ruppersburger, ranking member on House Intelligence Committee; Mr. Hoch; Mr. Biederman, co-chairmen

Zichron Sarah Lecture

The Baltimore Shadchan Fund, Inc. and Zichron Sarah Post-Seminary Group invite single girls to a first-time joint lecture by Rabbi Yaakov Hopfer and Rabbi Meyer Brull, *shadchan*, on “*Hadrachah* for Those in *Shidduchim*.” This event will be held at 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 10 at the Etz Chaim Center. For more information, please contact 443-253-7028, or e-mail zichronsarah@gmail.com.

The Rebbetzin Frieda K. Hirmes Women’s Institute of Torah’s (WIT) Summer Spotlight

The Rebbetzin Frieda K. Hirmes Women’s Institute of Torah’s (WIT) Summer Spotlight on *Tefillah* begins at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 6, with lectures by Rabbi Dovid Katz and Rabbi Moshe Hauer. Babysitting will be provided! For more information, please call WIT at 410-358-2545 or email witbaltimore@verizon.net.

N’Shei of Kehilath B’nai Torah in Ranchleigh Welcomes Rebbetzin Schwab

The N’Shei of Kehilath B’nai Torah in Ranchleigh will welcome Rebbetzin Bruria Schwab, Judaica Studies Principal of Bais Yaakov of Denver, on *Shabbos Parashas Balak*, July 9.

Rebbetzin Schwab will address the women on the topic of “Yearning For Redemption,” at 4 p.m. on Shabbos afternoon, in the Kehilath B’nai Torah Social Hall.