

Encore Performance by Master Keyboardist Meir Adler

Some of the tunes had a Purim ring. Others had a Sukkos flavor. And yet others invoked Lag B'Omer, and Chanukah to boot.

What they all had in common, though, was the uplifting experience enjoyed by the boys of Hamaspik of Rockland County's After-school Respite (ASR) program this past November—as popular keyboardist Meir Adler, all the way from Bnei Brak, delivered another rollicking special performance especially for his friends with special needs. They were also joined by that agency's men's Day Hab program.

It was last year that Mr. Adler, visiting Monsey to play at a wedding, was asked by Hamaspik to take some time from his already-packed schedule and spend an hour or two with “the boys.”

Suffice it to say that when it was over, not only did Hamaspik thank him, but Mr. Adler found himself thanking Hamaspik for the opportunity to give, too—and taking a rain check for an encore performance the following year.

Fast-forward to an ordinary Sunday at Hamaspik, and the program was gearing up for its routine studies for its several groups, along with therapeutic activities and so on.

However, a single phone call ultimately enhanced that daily routine.

The phone rang at the desk of Day Hab Manager Pinchos Knopfler. On the other end was none other than Meir Adler himself. Mr. Adler was set to board a plane back to the Holy Land that very day—but, as he told Knopfler, he just couldn't go back home “before visiting Hamaspik.”

Meir Adler was coming back to Hamaspik, it quickly emerged.

The Hamaspik Terrace was shortly booked, and the gentlemen of the Day Hab found themselves assembled that afternoon in its elegant confines for a warm-up opening performance by resident performers Chezy Levy, DSP on vocals, Moshé Fried, DSP on trumpet and Mordechai Dov Neuhauser, DSP on keyboard. Staff even managed to play a new CD, “Yiddishe Nachas,” whose boys-choir arrangements generated enthused reactions from the gentlemen that were pure Yiddishe nachas.

Joining them was the entire After-school Respite program, the boys excitedly soaking up the live music.

When Mr. Adler arrived a little

while later, the stage and equipment were already set up, and the experienced musician got right to it. Fingers working the ivories, the room was soon filled with song and dance, with even the walls shaking to the beats of one popular tune after another.

The keyboardist took his audience on a musical journey through the Jewish year, playing melodies from Sukkos, Simchas Torah, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, Lag B'Omer and Shavuot... and then back to the beginning of the year with Sukkos songs again, and right back up to Chanukah for the second time.

Given that, the crowd was in the Chanukah spirit a good few weeks in advance.

The exhilarating moments continued for close to two hours, with the entire crowd, staff and all, flying high in every way but literally. But between the notes, one could discern the loving leadership of Mr. Knopfler and his entire devoted DSP team that makes Hamaspik what it is.

People are different enough from each other, with music that moves one hardly touching another, and music that would bore those two



SOUND BONDING With each individual marching to the beat in his own way, “Day Habbers” react to Meir Adler’s music

exciting a third. The same also holds for people with special needs, though—and with live guidance from Knopfler and staff, Adler played what each individual responded to most, with the cheering, clapping and dancing the best indicator of intimately attuned caregivers.

Accentuating all that was the staff knowing exactly which individual enjoyed getting on the dance floor, and for how long, and know-

ing precisely which of their charges enjoy volunteering on the vocals, and for which tunes.

The micromanaged, discreet direction of the live proceedings, such that each individual was able to enjoy the music and dancing to his personal liking, pulled together to form an orchestra of its own—a symphony of seamless choreography that gives Hamaspik a “sound” all its own. ■

Free yet Invaluable, Professional Disability Advocacy Course Now Recruiting Students

Free Training Sessions Launching in February; Graduates Expected to Become Leaders

Do you have a child or family member with special needs, but don't quite know how to best advocate for them? Want to learn how to make a real difference? Then the Partners in Policymaking program is for you.

Initially launched in Minnesota but offered in New York State since

the 1990s, Partners in Policymaking puts a diverse group of accepted applicants through eight training sessions over a four-month period—not just teaching them how to best advocate for their loved ones, and for associated legislative change, but transforming them into leaders, too.

Each year's class numbers around 70; the program boasts about 1,000 active graduates in New York today.

Run out of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations Disability Institute, the little-known but effective program is now taking applicants for its Spring 2015 session, which begins February 2. Applicants have until late January to apply.

To best reflect the diversity of the state's disability community, the program strives to recruit as geographically, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse a student body as possible, Project Director Nancy Hinkley says—with the program possibly going out to actively recruit in targeted communities if those demographics are underrepresented as the launch date looms, she adds.

While the online live classes and follow-up discussions are free of charge, graduates must parlay their

newly-acquired skills into actively working the political scene locally, regionally or even at the state or national level.

They are also expected to stay in regular contact with the program and regularly meet and network with fellow graduates, as well as allow the program full legal right to use photographs and/or footage of them for program publicity.

In that vein, the program's “final” required for graduation is the live delivery of a three-minute mock testimonial—a vital part of disability advocacy, Ms. Hinkley explains, since much of said consists of testimony before government bodies which follow a three-minute testimony rule.

The program also features an overview of national and state disability policy and treatment history. Says Hinkley: “It's important to know where we're coming from”—and, thanks to Partners in Policymaking, to know where we're headed, too. ■

For questions, e-mail nyspip@cornell.edu. To apply, go to www.nyspip.org and click on: *Individuals Interested in Becoming Partners.*

Picture of the Month



COMMUNITY SERVICE The full services spectrum marking a functioning community, including Hamaspik, was represented at the annual Borough Park Jewish Community Council (BPJCC) Legislative Breakfast, Friday, Dec. 12. (L to R) Hamaspik of Kings County Director of Development Naftali Tessler, BPJCC Executive Director Yeruchim Silber, Ezra Friedlander of The Friedlander Group and HamaspikCare Downstate Regional Director Mordechai Wolhendler