

Helping Hands

Enhancing lives through uniquely personal,
yet anonymous giving



DECEMBER, 2006

M'YAD L'YAD NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8

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Numbers That Have a Heart

We are all defined by numbers. The government identifies us by our social security number, we have phone numbers and numerous account numbers, all of which are an impersonal description of who we are. The ultimate numerical depersonalization was the tattooing of numbers on the arms of Holocaust victims.

M'Yad L'Yad uses numbers as a means of identification of our sponsors and recipients. However our numbers signify a very personal, unique meaning. A number for us creates a sense of dignity and privacy. Within this protective



framework we foster caring, giving, communication, responsibility and ultimately a connection between people who ostensibly know each other only by a numeral.

Numbers also measure the financial support that you continue to provide M'Yad L'Yad. Although dollars are impersonal, in our hands they become the conduit

for continuing our work.

Again we thank you for your ongoing interest and generosity in helping us redefine the potential of a number.

Ellen and Stephen Greenberg, co-chairs

The Uninvitation: When Fundraising Is Not Fundraising

Always looking for new ways to fund our organization, the Board of Directors of M'Yad L'Yad recently undertook a fundraising project of a different type, with our Uninvitation. The basic concept was that we would invite people *not* to come to another fundraising dinner. A committee of board members considered the specific wording of the Uninvitation.

Ultimately, the committee focused on the core mission of M'Yad L'Yad, that of enhancing the lives of those in need in our local communities. With that goal in mind as well as an eye on the calendar, the committee settled on wording that focused on the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, a time when families come together to celebrate and give thanks for the good things in their lives. We established levels of giving (eg, \$36 to provide food for a senior citizen, \$500 to provide food for five families) and sent out the Uninvitation appeal.

At this point, our fundraiser stopped

being a fundraiser. While we and our supporters clearly understand the need to fund the operational aspects of M'Yad L'Yad's program, we realized that by contrasting the Thanksgiving celebration of donors with that of recipients, our Uninvitation would be most successful as an appeal to enhance the holiday celebration of those whom we serve.

And you, our supporters, responded in an amazing way. More than ten percent of our mailing list responded, and we raised thousands of dollars that were distributed in the form of supermarket gift cards to our recipient families. Every M'Yad L'Yad recipient, without exception, received a gift card because of the overwhelming generosity of our supporters and friends. As a result, while this fundraiser turned out not to be a fundraiser, not an event which contributed to the overhead of our organization, everyone agreed that together, we have succeeded in our mission of enhancing the lives of the needy during this holiday season.

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

Jackie Robinson

Back to Basics — M'Yad L'Yad Sponsors

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read about our donors, about special projects such as the UJA Supplies for Success project, about our Uninvitation, and about our guiding value of anonymous giving. In this article, we'd like to focus on our basic component—what it means to be a M'Yad L'Yad sponsor, for it is sponsors who are the heart of our organization.

Any consideration of the M'Yad L'Yad program has to start with our mission statement, and in our mission statement are the key words that define what we do, and by extension, what we ask of our sponsors. These key words are “enhancing the lives of the needy” and “anonymous pairing.” M'Yad L'Yad cannot proclaim exclusivity with its goal of enhancing the lives of the needy. We are but one of many organizations dedicated to this worthy cause. But the uniqueness of our approach comes through the second set of key words—anonymous pairing. In keeping with the high value within Judaism of anonymous giving, M'Yad L'Yad arranges for the anonymous pairing of givers, whom we call sponsors, with those in need, whom we refer to as recipients. Sponsors are matched with recipients on a one to one basis, establishing a direct personal relationship between the two. This allows our sponsors to know that their donations are going directly to a specific individual family, and the sponsor is able to provide items that are personally suited to the needs and interests of the recipient.

Now for the tachlis, the nuts and bolts of how we accomplish this pairing, maintaining both anonymity and direct personal giving. Our recipients are interviewed by our social worker, Lillyan Frankel Mintz, and each recipient is assigned a code number. Lillyan obtains a wide variety of information about the individual or family, including clothing sizes, hobbies, health issues, pets, and housing type. She asks



where they shop, and if they have any specific needs. The recipient is then matched with a sponsor, who has also been assigned a unique code number. Recipients and sponsors are given each other's first names and code numbers. The sponsor is then provided with the details of the recipient's situation and needs. With this information, we ask the sponsor to provide a package for their recipient, preferably four times a year, to enhance their lives. (We suggest that packages be sent before holidays, a particularly meaningful time). Packages can include new or gently used items, store gift cards, non-perishable food, small appliances, or anything else that the sponsor is able to provide. The decision when to ship and what to ship remains with the sponsor, so that each sponsor can participate in a way that is most comfortable.

Packages are sent through shipping centers across Long Island. Sponsors provide

their recipient's code number at the shipping center so that the package can be sent anonymously. To enable us to keep track of shipments and assure that our sponsors and recipients are participating on an ongoing basis, we provide two pre-printed postcards to our sponsors. The first is a notification of shipping, which our sponsors send to us when they have made a shipment (alternately we are happy to receive e-mail notification). The second postcard is sent along with the recipient's package. Recipients then return this card to us acknowledging receipt of the package and informing us of any additional needs.

There is one other aspect to the sponsor/recipient relationship. We encourage our sponsors and recipients to correspond with each other. This can be as simple as a holiday card, or perhaps a longer letter sharing stories about their lives or other subjects of interest. This correspondence, even while withholding any identifying information, can provide social support to our recipients, who are often living isolated

lives as a result of their financial, health or other circumstances. For many of our sponsors and recipients, the relationship they have established through such correspondence provides added meaning to both, well beyond the important act of providing needed goods.

As the number of poor and near-poor continues to increase, we are always in need of additional sponsors. If you would like to sponsor a M'Yad L'Yad recipient, or if you have any questions about sponsoring, please call Mark Zimmerman, director, at (631) 742-7194 or e-mail hands@myadlyad.org. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with your organizations, such as Men's Clubs, Hadassah chapters, Sisterhoods, B'nai B'rith groups, or others, to discuss how your organization and your members can become sponsors and participate in this unique system of anonymous, dignified giving.

Our Benefactor's Circle

Anonymous

Meryl & Stewart Ain
Victoria & Hunter Allen
Miriam & Harvey Finkelstein
Terry & Irwin Fishberg
Ellen & Stephen Greenberg
Ilene & Jerry Herz
Rabbi Ian Jacknis
Gail & Jerry Jospa
Susan & Leonard Lustig
Rabbi Susie Moskowitz
Hinda & Jerry Ritigstein
Gloria & Murray Safran

Michele & Stephen Scheck
Terry Schimek & Wayne Barnstone
Jane & Rabbi Barton Shallat
Fran & George Stern
Diane & Gerald Thurer
Elizabeth & Stephen Thurer
Myra & Harry Wagner
Robyn & Michael Weiner
The Weisberg/Epstein Family
Judy Weiss & Jack Zucker
The David Kimmel Foundation
The Herman Goldman Foundation
Lustig & Hermer LLP
David Rosenberg – Rosenberg & Fortuna, LLP

Refuah Shleima

The Board of Directors of M'Yad L'Yad offers a *refuah shleima*, wishes for a speedy recovery, to our co-chair, Dr. Stephen Greenberg. Steve recently underwent bypass and heart surgery, and is recovering at home. Steve is the co-chair of M'Yad L'Yad, along with his wife, Ellen. We are pleased that his surgery was successful and that his convalescence is proceeding smoothly. We know that the thoughts, prayers, and support of so many friends of M'Yad L'Yad and the Greenbergs will aid Steve in his healing.

M'Yad L'Yad Mission Statement

M'Yad L'Yad—Helping Hands, is dedicated to enhancing the lives of the needy in our community. The anonymous pairing of volunteer sponsors with recipients encourages ongoing relationships and provides friendship and dignity, as well as material support.



Cards anyone?

Tribute cards are available from M'Yad L'Yad, which can be used to commemorate holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays, or to honor or remember someone special. The cards include the M'Yad L'Yad logo on the front and a description of our program on the back. We can send a card to whomever you designate, noting your donation, or if you prefer, we can mail blank cards to you that you can use when an occasion arises. Cards can be purchased or sent by us for a \$5.00 donation, or you can buy a set of four cards for \$18.00. By using M'Yad L'Yad tribute cards, you not only financially support our program, but you help us to spread the word about our work to others. To purchase cards, please send in the Donation Form found below.



Teaming Up For Kids

M'Yad L'Yad partnered with UJA-Federation last August during their Supplies for Success project. This annual UJA undertaking, chaired by Mindy Richenstein, involves the collection of a wide variety of school supplies that are placed in backpacks and distributed to children across Long Island. UJA arranges distribution of the backpacks through many organizations, and M'Yad L'Yad was able to provide backpacks to eleven of our recipient children. We look forward to working together with UJA on this and other projects in the future.

Stuff'n the box!

Here are some simple, useful items to include in your packages:

- Kitchen equipment: Pot holders, oven mitts, cutting board, vegetable peeler, etc.
- Hangers, shoe polish, shoe laces
- Tissues, hair brush, comb
- Batteries, flashlights, candles
- Movie passes
- Gift certificates for fast food or chain restaurants
- Supermarket coupons (which can be downloaded from the internet)
- Office supplies: Pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, envelopes, calendar, calculator, stapler, rubber bands, paper clips, etc.
- Small tools, like screwdrivers, pliers, a tape measure, etc.
- Sewing materials, like top threading sewing needles, safety pins, thread
- Battery operated radio/clock

Thank you to all of those who made contributions. Please help us continue to carry out our mission!

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ e-mail: _____

I would like: (please check)

- Additional information about M'Yad L'Yad
- To volunteer to sponsor a M'Yad L'Yad family
- To join M'Yad L'Yad as a benefactor (min. donation of \$500)
- To make a donation to M'Yad L'Yad of \$ _____
- To buy Tribute cards _____ \$5 each _____ 4 for \$18
- M'Yad L'Yad to send a Tribute card (\$5 each) to:

*Make your tax-deductible contribution to M'Yad L'Yad,
74 Hauppauge Road, Commack, NY, 11725*

Please make my donation or Tribute Card ...

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

Acknowledgment to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Message: _____

A Message From Our Director

Mark D. Zimmerman, M'Yad L'Yad director,
reports on "anonymous giving"

If the mission of M'Yad L'Yad were summed up in two words, those words would probably be "anonymous giving." When the founders of M'Yad L'Yad began our organization, they were motivated by a recognition that there were, contrary to popular knowledge, poor Jews on Long Island – needy Jewish individuals and families living amongst the general population who needed assistance to make ends meet. In devising a system of support that would define M'Yad L'Yad, these visionary founders took their inspiration from Jewish tradition, from the teachings of Maimonides, the preeminent rabbinic scholar and philosopher of the 12th century. Maimonides delineated eight levels of charitable giving. The highest level is that of providing the needy with the means to support themselves, e.g. by giving them jobs or the means to become self-sufficient. Just below this is anonymous giving, wherein neither the giver nor the receiver knows who the other is. For the giver, this is considered mitzvah for the sake of mitzvah – because the donation is secret, the giver receives no benefit other than the self-knowledge of the charitable act. At the same time the recipient maintains his or her dignity, having no public shame or sense of obligation to the giver. This high value of Judaism motivated the founders of M'Yad L'Yad and guides us to this day.

Given that anonymity is our guiding principal, one may ask why we have included in this newsletter a long list of those who have supported M'Yad L'Yad. Why are we violating our core value by so prominently displaying a list of well over three hundred individuals, families, and organizations? Have we undermined our mission statement, thereby losing our ethical standing?

The answer, I believe, is no. There is an important distinction that can be gleaned by considering the events detailed in Parshat Naso. The parsha describes the presentation of gifts by the twelve tribes of Israel at the dedication of the holy Altar. Not only are these gifts not given anonymously or quietly, but in fact each is presented in a very public manner. And while each tribe's gifts (silver, gold, bullocks, goats, and more) were identical, each was announced publicly in exact detail, word for word the same. It would have sufficed to simply provide the list once, stating that each tribe gave the same items. The explanation grows from a distinction between giving to support the community-at-large (in Naso, support of the Tabernacle; in our case support of a charitable organization) and giving support directly to needy individuals and families. Support to individuals is best provided with anonymity; support to the community and its institutions is best served by public acknowledgment, to enlighten others of the need in hope of spurring greater support from the community.

Noting this distinction, we can understand why our synagogues are filled with dedication plaques, our Kol Nidre services often include an appeal for financial support, and the M'Yad L'Yad newsletter includes a listing of our many supporters. We hope that this listing serves both as our way of saying thank you to all who have supported us in the past, as well as a call to others to join us in our vital mission of helping those in need – a mission which we carry out with professionalism, with anonymity, and with dignity.

[Note: Special thanks to, Rabbi Neil Kurshan of the Huntington Jewish Center and Rabbi Jack Reimer of Florida, for providing some of the ideas utilized in this article.]



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