

Around the Community 

Inspiring and Improving

In the days leading up to the *yamim noraim*, the Shulamith High School students stepped out of their regular routine to inspire and bring meaning to their *tefillot* and *teshuva* process.

Yom Iyun – *Tefillot* Tishrei: Our girls analyzed the meaning of *tefillot*, heard about challenges that others had overcome, and experienced the atmosphere of the *yamim noraim* with every one of their senses.

“It was so inspiring to take a deeper look into so many different *tefillot*,” said 10th grader Hadassah Allman. “By writing down our

own thoughts on a *tefillah*, it made it applicable to our lives. This had a major impact on my Rosh Hashana *davening* in shul because I understood the meaning of the *tefillot* and how they connected to me.”

Tefillah at Sunrise: A full bus of excited girls set out at 6AM for the opportunity to *daven* at sunrise on Atlantic Beach. After moving words of inspiration and some warm hot cocoa, the girls took the time to think about Aseret Yimei Teshuvah and focus on their *tefillah*.

“I was amazed by how many girls voluntarily came



to school so early for the chance to learn, grow, and enhance their *tefillah*,” said our Special Events Coordinator Ms. Emma Mael. “The sunrise was beautiful and the inspirational environment only made it better!”



Second Annual TEAM Shabbos Movement to Unite Hundreds of Shuls and Communities Nationwide

On Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, January 14, 2017, more than 300 shuls and communities in 136 cities nationwide will join the second annual Traditional End-of-life Awareness Movement (TEAM), a project of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha (NASCK). Following last year’s resounding success under the leadership of Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, this initiative will continue to help raise awareness throughout our community about the Torah’s perspective on end-of-life matters.

Beginning the preceding week and throughout the Shabbos, shuls around the country will be participating in the Team Shabbos movement in various ways. Rabbis will dedicate

their sermons, lectures and shul programs to generate the discussion. Many shuls will be utilizing their weekly program and shul material (i.e. newsletters, e-blasts) to focus on relevant topics, while some will collaborate with NASCK to coordinate a special event in their community to boost awareness. Some of the topics that will be addressed include the inherent sanctity of life, the importance of making proper medical decisions, choosing and helping others to choose traditional Jewish burial practices and writing wills in accordance with *halacha*.

The Torah perspective on end-of-life is not easy to talk about. As such, many of these very important obligations and far-reaching matters are infrequently mentioned.

“Due to a lack of awareness about the inherent sanctity of every moment of life,” says Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, “many people make end-of-life medical decisions that are contrary to Torah values. The goal of TEAM Shabbos is to open the discussion about ‘Respecting Life – Here and Hereafter’ in a unified national movement to facilitate the necessary awareness about these issues.”

2015’s TEAM Shabbos movement was a national success with over-

whelming positive feedback. “Many of the *rabbanim* that presented *shurim* on end-of-life were surprised at the positive and accepting attitude that their communities responded with,” Rabbi Zohn explained. “The ‘It’s about time’ sentiment was an oft-repeated phrase this Shabbos.”

“The *tzibbur* welcomed the opportunity to learn about the importance of end-of-life directives and *halachic* wills, as well as hear an overview of the *halachos* of end-of-life situations and issues related to a *bais hakvaros*,” explained Rabbi Dovid Heber, Rav of K’hal Ahavas Yisroel Tzemach Tzedek in Baltimore, Maryland. “Thanks to the efforts of NASCK, these sensitive topics were addressed *‘maaseh uv’rov am’* in our shul, together with many other *kehillos* in our community and nationwide.”

Many Torah-observant people do not fully understand the modern-day practical applications of end-of-life concepts such as *pikuach nefesh* and *mes mitzvah*. These important concepts require us to make proper medical decisions and assist our less-observant friends, relatives, acquaintances and co-workers in choosing traditional Jewish burial practices.

In fact, a rabbi from Maryland

noted, “Given the level of knowledge of the people in my shul, I was very surprised how unfamiliar they were with the many important *hashkafos* and *halachos* that pertain to end-of-life. I’m so grateful to TEAM Shabbos and NASCK for giving me the push and the opportunity to speak about it.”

So, what’s the next step for NASCK and TEAM Shabbos?

“We will continue to keep the discussion open and to generate awareness surrounding the importance of the inherent sanctity of life and choosing traditional afterlife choices. We look forward to expanding the TEAM *b’ezras Hashem* next Parshas Vayechi,” says Rabbi Zohn. “We encourage communities to join NASCK’s many ongoing programs dedicated to support, inform, educate and inspire all those seeking information about traditional Jewish burial, including programs promoting halachic living wills and EMES (Emergency Medical Education and Sign-up) cards.”

To have your community join or for more information about the National Association of the Chevra Kadisha (NASCK) and the TEAM Shabbos, please visit www.nasck.org or call 718-847-6280.

The Darkest Sukkah in Jerusalem

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