

The Smiles Are Worth the Effort

Rabbi Mordechai Rothman, Director of Chai Lifeline, describes the organization's activities as "giving sick children and their families hope"



**SHIMON ZER AVIV,
TRANSLATION ELAD BENARI**

I make my way to the room of the director of Chai Lifeline and I en-

counter many obstacles. Six people are engaged in activities in a narrow basement, located in an old building in the Bathurst and Wilson area. When one understands the will, the strength and the persistence which is hidden within these people and the organization's volunteers, the obstacles in front of you become smaller and you easily skip over them.

Every corner of Chai Lifeline's office is filled with piles of bags, games and toys. When I ask how it

is possible to work under such conditions, Rabbi Mordechai Rothman smiles and answers: "Three years ago when we started our Toronto activities, I worked in a tiny room with one

secretary. Now that we have grown and developed, we humbly focus on our activities and are concerned with assisting sick children and their families. We try to ignore the messy offices. Hopefully soon, with God's help, we will move to a bigger space."

The young man sitting in front of me, 28 years old, received rabbinic ordination two years ago when he finished his studies at Yeshiva University in New York. He speaks enthusiastically of Chai Lifeline's activities in Canada, which include summer camps, fun days at Disney World, trips (including Israel), assistance with purchasing of medical equipment, matching appropriate educational frameworks to the sick children, and financial assistance as required.

"We are there, at their service, 24 hours a day, not just the employees but many volunteers who do anything possible in order to make it easier for both the children and their parents, their brothers and their sisters who have naturally found themselves in a difficult and unfamiliar position, which requires them to completely change their lifestyle. Suddenly a

new bitter reality appears in which not just the child is sick but also the entire family," explains Rabbi Rothman who emphasizes that it was Jerry Faivish, a local lawyer, who initiated Chai Lifeline, and also wishes to thank the many patrons who have contributed to making life easier for the sick children.

Chai Lifeline is a non-profit organization which operates on a low budget and is assisted by UJA Federation and business owners. "Not long ago we arranged for one of the kids to visit Israel and celebrate his Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel. Unfortunately after he came back to Canada he succumbed to the disease and passed away, not before he said that he had fulfilled a dream in his life," says Rabbi Rothman.

On February 22, Chai Lifeline will be holding its annual fundraising performance featuring world renowned singer Dudu Fisher. All revenue from the evening will be donated to Chai Lifeline, and the rabbi expects that many of the community's members will attend the performance, during which a documentary film will be shown. In addition, Chai Lifeline expect that many new volunteers will



Rabbi Mordechai Rothman
Left: Maya and her mother

join in order to help those children and their families.

"We are with them during their difficult struggles and the medicine is to give them warmth and love," says Rabbi Rothman and points to a picture on the wall which shows the smiling faces of many children. "One smile of theirs is worth every effort," concludes the rabbi, who makes every effort to bring smiles to the faces of those who are fighting for their lives.

Those wishing to volunteer and assist Chai Lifeline can call 647.430.5933.