

# A Kick-Off to A Good Cause

By Dave Gordon

TORONTO—Seriously Jewish children and their families will soon be able to benefit from the services of a Canadian version of Chai Lifeline, a non-profit international organization offering myriad support programs. Chai Lifeline offers optional support groups, drives, a Big Brother/Big Sister program, counseling services, and runs Camp Simcha — a summer camp for seriously ill children. Speaking at the kick-off dinner of the Toronto Chai Lifeline recently, were Rabbi Simcha Scholar, president and executive vice-president of Chai Lifeline, and Toronto Argonauts owner Sherwood Schwartz, a member of the organization's board of directors.

Schwartz, who was the guest of honor in 1986, said of his visit to Camp Simcha, "Although campers were ill, they were having a good time mingling with others who were also sick, and that was touching to see." Until two years ago, there had not been a camp

designed to meet the medical and social needs of children with serious, chronic or lifelong illnesses. The camp accommodates some 300 campers, many Canadian.

"Chai Lifeline is non-political, non-denominational, and non-judgmental," said Scholar. "It is irrelevant what type of illness; our services are open to anyone. When an illness happens in the family, the family suffers too, and we help them. 3,000 families are being helped right now, every day, around the world."

When local committees approached Scholar to help bring Chai Lifeline to Canada, he didn't hesitate to respond. "Toronto needs this year-round service, to help families deal with crises. Two years in the making, meeting with leadership, we know that Canada needs this."

The concept was first introduced to the leaders of the Jewish community and later, the business community. It was Scholar who brought Schwartz into the project. "He sees things in the big picture," he says. "It was easy to bring in others who lent

their names and major support to the organization." Corporate backing came from the likes of AOL and Toys R Us. "Everyone has really stepped up to the plate for Chai Lifeline."

By day, Sherwood Schwartz, the life insurance salesman, makes a living helping people examine the unpredictability and fragility of life. "I'm really happy to help a cause that is close to my heart. I saw the great care Chai Lifeline gives, and really admire the work they do," he said.

"I told them this: I will assist you. What do you need?"

Showing that it is possible for pigskin and Jews to have something in common, guest Argonauts came to the dinner with Schwartz to show their support.

Eighteen-year-old Shimon, a former camper with leukemia, also spoke at the dinner. "I was diagnosed with cancer two years ago, and after ten months of treatment... I didn't feel like doing much," he said. "But two weeks at Camp Simcha gave me the hope and opti-



Jerry Faivish, event coordinator; Rabbi Simcha Scholar, executive director; Sherwood Schwartz, owner/ceo Toronto Argos

mism I needed, after seeing other kids getting better."

Camp Simcha, also explained Scholar, is "the only place where ponytails and peyyot meet, where

yarmulkes and rings come together."

Yet, despite technological breakthroughs, pediatric illnesses are on the rise, according to Scholar.

Since its inception in

1986, he has been the driving force behind Chai Lifeline. How does he do it? His answer is simple. "Belief in G-d and miracles."

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