

## Chanukah Magic at Kef Winter Camp

KEF's annual winter residential camp this year took on an extra-special dimension as the first four days coincided with Chanukah. Lighting the *menorah* together with over 70 children and young adults with a range of disabilities and complex needs creates a tangible magic that is difficult to put into words. The sparkle of those moments permeated the entire atmosphere of camp and made it even more memorable for all the participants.

This year's theme of KEF ON ICE created a wintery atmosphere from the get-go, with different daily themes that framed the activities of that day. The camp was KEF's largest ever, and was split into several divisions, with a boys only division in a separate area of the site, and activities and outings were carefully designed to be appropriate for the various abilities of the participants. On-site entertainers, daily outings and a concert with Eli Tamir and Leib Roberts kept the camp buzzing, with on-site swimming, sensory room, activities and inflatables to ensure that there was something for everyone.

KEF is so grateful to its fantastic medical team including Dr M.D. Spitzer, Sari Ritvo and Yael Wiesnefeld, to Gitele Ostreicher for her fantastic catering, to Yossi and Chana Gordon (site manager) and Shlomi and Sharonie Melavsky (catering managers). KEF is indebted to over 160 volunteers who generously dedicated their winter break to the children and young adults of KEF. The volunteers were led by an outstand-

ing experienced team of heads and division heads. With much appreciation to Ezra Umarpeh for lending extensive medical equipment.

Feedback from parents highlighted both the immense benefits of the respite, as well as the positive impact that KEF has on their child's behaviours and development. One parent commented, "We feel she came home a different child; she has been more calm and so happy. The KEF environment is a place where she flourishes and thrives and we literally see it!" Another parent reflected, "He came back feeling all good with himself, totally clear to see all the love you have given him and the warm, caring and totally positive vibes that permeate KEF."

A message received from a volunteer's parent offers a slightly different angle which reflects the recurring feedback KEF receives from their staff after each residential scheme and is truly an inspiration: "Once again I have no words to thank you for KEF, giving our children the incredible *zechus* to be part of something so unique and special. This past week my son had the opportunity to become a kinder and more understanding person ... he chose not to come on our family holiday to Israel ... but he wanted to be at KEF. Everyone talks about what KEF does for the families who entrust their special children to the KEF family, but no one talks about what you do for the staff members of KEF – you are changing so many people's lives for the better. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."



Lighting the menorah during KEF winter camp.

## Golders Green MP Meets With Paperweight

Last Friday, Paperweight was honoured to welcome Mike Freer, MP for Finchley and Golders Green, to their offices to meet Benjamin Conway, chair; Bayla Perrin, CEO and Andrea Silverman, National Services coordinator.

Paperweight is the Jewish community's Advice and Resource Centre, offering free, immediate, practical help across a range of legal, financial, welfare and administrative matters. Our active crisis management team aims to help those who've arrived at a vulnerable point, giving time, expertise, and personal attention, enabling them to regain control of their lives and continue with confidence.

Mr Freer was invited to view the brand-new walk-in offices in Bell Lane, offering a warm, welcoming, confidential space for clients to personally meet volunteer assessors who will take details and refer them to a caseworker for immediate action.

Mr Freer was given a brief history of Paperweight which, over 11 years, has grown into the dynamic national organisation it is today. Mrs

Perrin explained the current struggles affecting the community, saying, "We're seeing the Cost-of-Living crisis deeply affecting people and we're now taking about five or six new enquiries a day – a staggering 100 a month. We offer our clients compassion at their lowest ebb, but our *raison d'être* is finding practical solutions."

Mr Freer was impressed with the sheer numbers of people Paperweight is helping, commenting, "It was a pleasure to visit Paperweight to learn about their free services which are available across the whole Jewish community. They undertake fantastic work providing free guidance and support on a wide range of issues, including financial, legal and welfare matters. I congratulate all those involved in this project and look forward to working with them in the future."

It was an excellent meeting of minds with Mr Freer happy to be an advocate, signpost his constituents to Paperweight and look to future collaboration.



Paperweight chair Benjamin Conway, Mike Freer MP and Harvey Silver, Team Leader outside Paperweight's new Hendon office.

## Wizz Air Luggage Chaos

A group of young women recently flew back to the United Kingdom from Eretz Yisrael on a Wizz Air flight. They arrived late at night at Luton Airport, to discover that their luggage had not accompanied them. Despite waiting for more than two hours in the baggage collection area, until the conveyor belts stopped running at 4:30 a.m., they did not receive their suitcases. Many other people on the flight were in the same situation, including families with young children whose buggies did not arrive either. There was no one available from Wizz to assist the passengers, even though the flight was on time and is on the daily schedule.

One enterprising young woman realized at this stage that the check-in desk in the departure section of the airport would be open by this time, so she went over to investigate. She found a customer service agent there, who explained that she would love to be able to help, but unfortunately lost luggage is outside her remit. She suggested that the travellers contact Wizz Air by email, and fill in a lost luggage form.

When the young woman eventually returned home, she emailed Wizz Air. As yet she has received no response, other than an

automated notice to say it might take up to 30 days to receive a reply. In addition, Wizz Air, unlike many other airlines, including other budget airlines, do not allow passengers whose luggage is lost to purchase essentials within a fixed budget after a brief time period such as 24 or 48 hours, but rather not until 30 days have passed.

This flight was not the only one to experience this issue. In fact, some passengers whose luggage did not arrive saw suitcases belonging to people they knew who had flown in the previous couple of days, and kindly brought this luggage home for them. (Note: This is not recommended as technically one should not leave the airport with someone else's luggage!)

*Hamodia* contacted Wizz Air's press department to enquire about the persistent problem of missing luggage, including buggies; lack of staff for late night flights; slow response time to complaints; and the refusal to allow passengers to buy essentials.

Unsurprisingly, despite having emailed over a week ago, as yet there has been no response, other than an auto-response to confirm that we really did want to contact the press office and not another department.