

Schechter Students Hold Federation Fund-Raiser



Audrey Napchen, Women's Philanthropy director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County, during Magnificent Monday at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Raritan Valley. With Napchen, who is holding kosher meals-on-wheels' "Norman," are student leaders, from left, Jessica Reich, holding a poster showing support for Shabbat meals for Rutgers Hillel students; Eli Cehelyk; and Raphael Zonis.

Photo by Debra Rubin



First-graders Yair Harazi of East Brunswick, left, and Aiden Wechsler of North Brunswick hold projects signifying their grades' support for local day schools.



Solomon Schechter second-graders — from left, Jared Blatteis, Lyndsey Lipson, and Maya Steinberg, all of East Brunswick — hold the poster they made for Magnificent Monday.

by Debra Rubin
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Youngsters at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Raritan Valley did their part last month to help Jewish communities around the world.

On Dec. 15, the East Brunswick school celebrated Magnificent Monday, with students raising \$610 for the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County.

The program, started 18 years ago, is a takeoff on the federation's Super Sunday and is traditionally staged shortly after the annual fund-raising phonathon.

The students raise awareness and funds for specific federation beneficiaries, from hot meals for needy elderly Jews to Shabbat meals for Rutgers University students.

The eighth grade targeted the kosher meals-on-wheels program for senior citizens. To symbolize their support, they created "Norman," a wheelchair-bound mannequin holding a Styrofoam container filled with plastic food.

They presented Norman to Audrey Napchen, federation director of Women's Philanthropy, and Laura Safran, director of allocations.

Other beneficiary projects chosen by the youngsters included an Israeli dental clinic, care for at-risk children in a Jerusalem shelter, and a counseling program for at-risk teens in Jerusalem.

"We think it's important for kids to learn responsibility toward other human beings," said general studies principal Dr. Stephan Charton. "We think this is a good introduction, and we are very happy to do this with federation."

This year's contributions topped last year's total of \$448.

"I think it's important that we learn about this in school," said Elizabeth Binstein, an eighth-grader from Metuchen. "Federation gives this money to those in need."

'Our future'

Linda Benish, a social studies and language arts teacher and coordinator of the program since its inception, said each class talked about the various programs supported by federation before deciding on a project.

Napchen said she had a good feeling as soon as she and Safran entered the room.

"We walked in and heard this *davening* and said, 'This is our future, the future of the Jewish people.'"

She told the youngsters, "One of our jobs is to fix things. By what you are doing today you are part of that *tikun olam*, fixing the world. Every one of you deserves a round of applause."

Sasha Magnabusco, an East Brunswick first-grader, said while she wanted to help other students at local day schools like Schechter, she was happy the kindergartners chose to help the dental clinic because "people are sick and need to go to the dentist and stuff."

Eli Cehelyk, an eighth-grader from East Brunswick and student council president, said the annual event resounded throughout all grades.

"We feel like we should give back to federation and all of the people and institutions it helps because federation helps our school and all Jews should help other Jews," he added.

Jessica Reich, the student council's first vice president, said she learned the value of supporting federation from her parents.

"It's important to give this type of *tzedaka*," explained the East Brunswick eighth-grader. "My parents do a lot of work for federation. All Jews are responsible for each other."