

The sweet sounds of tzedakah

By Monique Gottlieb

Orli Silverberg is extremely passionate about two things: playing the violin, and making the world a better place. In honour of her bat mitzvah, she decided to combine the two by organizing a violin concert to raise money for children living in Sderot, Israel, with the help of the B'nai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy program at the Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto.

Before her bat mitzvah, Orli knew she wanted to raise money for a charitable cause. "I know I'm very lucky," explained Orli. "I live in a safe country, and I have everything I need. Other people aren't as fortunate as me, so I wanted to do what I could to help them."

Orli had always felt a strong connection to Israel. Her mother is Israeli, and her family visits the country at least once a year. When she was in Israel this past summer, her family visited Sderot. Seeing the city and its citizens for herself made a huge impact on Orli. "I think they are so brave to live there. I was really scared when I was there for just one day, and they live there every day of their lives."

After researching various causes, she decided to raise money



Toronto's Orli Silverberg organized a violin concert to raise money for children living in Sderot, Israel, with the help of the B'nai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy program at the Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto.

for the people of Sderot. "I felt like they needed the money the most, out of everything I looked at," explained Orli.

Sderot, located on the border of the Gaza Strip, has been the scene of kassam rocket attacks for over eight years. Its citizens live in constant fear, yet most of them choose to stay there to stand their ground on Israel's behalf.

A lot of people contributed, and she realized that she has so much potential to do good in the world, even at such a young age. "Getting involved and giving to charity is such a great thing. Before I actually did it, I had no idea how good it would make me feel. Instead of people buying gifts for me, I am helping people who are really less fortunate. It feels amazing."

Back in Toronto, the Silverbergs sent out invitations to their family and friends, inviting them to their home for the concert while asking for a donation to go towards the people of Sderot. With her decade of experience playing the violin, and the help of her little sister, Orli put on a phenomenal show. She and her family were blown away by the generosity of the 80 loved ones who came out to support the cause and collectively contributed \$5,000.

Through B'nai Tzedek, Orli is able to decide where her donations will go – in this case, helping Sderot's children.

Raising money for Sderot made Orli feel more connected to the people living there. Now that she has had a taste of how it feels to give, Orli is addicted.

500 Toronto Teens join 10,000 more in a day of tzedakah

By Dan Horowitz

More than 500 Toronto-area teens rolled up their sleeves and joined forces with 10,000 other Jewish teens from across North America, Europe and Israel on April 10th, as part of J-Serve, the Global Day of Jewish Youth Service.

2011 marks the second year in which Jewish teens from across the Greater Toronto Area had the chance to participate in this international initiative, thanks to funding by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the PANIM Institute of BBYO. J-Serve Toronto coincided with the kickoff of Volunteer Canada's National Volunteer Week, our country's largest celebration of volunteers, volunteerism, and civic participation.

J-Serve Toronto 2011 is presented by BBYO, in partnership with B'nai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy, an initiative of UJA Federation's Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto, B'nei Akiva, Canadian Young Judea, Chabad Youth Network, GROW, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, Jewish Student Union, NCSY, Tzofim and United Synagogue Youth.

For Toronto's Sam Strelshik, 17, the Co-Chair of The Jewish Foundation's B'nai Tzedek program, and a member of the J-Serve organizing committee, the day was everything it was meant to be.

"Whether it was cleaning for Passover at

the Anshei Minsk Synagogue, visiting patients at Baycrest, selling pins for the Canadian Cancer Society's annual daffodil

month, or spearheading a transformative cleanup of Earl Bales Park for the City of Toronto, J-Serve brought together

a diverse and committed group of Jewish teens for one common purpose, bettering our community," said Strelshik. "They've all heard about the concepts of Jewish values such as gemilut chasidim (acts of loving kindness), but on this day, they all learned firsthand the importance of tzedakah and tikkun olam, our responsibility to repair the world. No longer are they just words, they're a part of their lives."

"It was so incredibly fulfilling and satisfying to serve on the J-Serve organizing committee, with so many other dedicated, enthusiastic, young volunteers," said Orli Matlow, Co-Chair, along with Sam, of The Jewish Foundation's B'nai Tzedek program. "To see so many young people giving up their free time simply to help others is such a positive sign for our entire community. Many of these volunteers will, hopefully, continue to personify and practice the values of tzedakah and tikkun olam as adults, and that is so encouraging for the future of our Jewish community."

The Toronto initiative was just one of over 100 events internationally, where teens participated in a variety of different projects.



Pictured are some of the more than two dozen J-Serve Ambassadors who lead J-Serve recruitment efforts among their peers and within their schools and youth groups.

BECOME PART OF JEWISH TORONTO'S VIBRANT VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY!

- ◆ SHARE your expertise and talents ◆ OFFER your time to someone who needs you ◆ GAIN experience or develop new skills
- ◆ MAKE new friends and contacts ◆ EXPERIENCE the satisfaction that comes from helping others
- ◆ DEVELOP a stronger connection to your Jewish community

For more information, contact Jewish Information Service of Greater Toronto

Phone: 416.635.5600 email: jinfo@ujafed.org

Visit: jewishtoronto.com and follow the link to Doing Jewish