



HINDA
INSTITUTE

ב"ה

Chanukah 5784

Winter 2023

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CHANUKAH LUMINARIES

"You shall command the children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for the luminary, to kindle the lamps ... "

(Exodus 27:20).

To extract oil for the menorah, the olives used had to be completely crushed. Kabbalistically, the "luminary" in the quote represents the very depths of the soul; our essential source of light. When we are pressed, challenged and crushed, the soul's essence comes to the fore, and we gain extraordinary power which lights up the world.

Our families and clients have been crushed and have experienced tremendous trauma and suffering, but we see their tremendous strengths and the light that comes from this pain. They are people who have survived challenges with miraculous strength and hope. So too, it has been historically for the Jewish people in the time of the Maccabees and for millennia. We have thrived and not just existed under persecution. We will surely overcome and vanquish our challenges in Israel today and we will reveal our true power; the luminary of the Jewish soul.

This year, we should all pray with extra passion, light Chanukah and Shabbos candles for Israel and for all those who are hostages and most importantly hope for a time of peace and unity when suffering is no more. In the spirit of the Chanukah lights, may we illuminate the path towards a more compassionate and inclusive world. Just as the menorah dispels darkness, let us work towards dispelling the shadows of suffering, both within physical confinement and the spiritual realms. This Chanukah, let us embrace the mission of 100% acceptance and 0% recidivism, embodying the essence of tikkun olam—repairing the world and creating positive transformation.

As we kindle the Chanukah candles, may their warmth inspire us to reconnect with our missions, and actively contribute to making the world a better place for all.

WISHING
YOU A
VERY
HAPPY AND
HEALTHY
SWEET
CHANUKAH



CHANUKAH ACTIVITIES

- ★ The chaplains brought cookies, deli sandwiches, menorahs and other goodies to Jews isolated in Cook County Jail (CCJ) and provided Chanukah supplies to IDOC state prisons for the 8 days of Chanukah.
- ★ Thanks to a collaboration between the Decalogue Society of Lawyers, an anonymous Camp Gan Israel donor and Maot Chitim, Chanukah presents, menorahs, cookies, and chocolate gelt were purchased for our awesome children and delivered to our Hinda families. We even baked our own cookies thanks to Lisa in honor of her mother Arlene, of blessed memory! Thank you to Sandy, Fran, Harold, Vickie, Barbara, Jenny, Albert, Baila, and Ilya.
- ★ You can see photos of our yearly all-inclusive Chanukah Party at www.hindahelps.com

In the News

- ★ We want to thank **MILTS Barbeque** for the Perplexed for their kindness in making us their Charity of the Month. It was their donation that helped us to finally reach our campaign goal!
- ★ **Prison Advocacy News**
 - There is now a new monthly virtual meeting of all **IDOC state chaplains** and directors. This has enabled better communication and implementation of our holiday programs and Jewish advocacy within prisons.
 - **Aleph Institute** and Hinda are currently collaborating to advocate for the improvement of the kosher diet within prisons.
 - **Agudah Israel** has crafted a new Illinois Bill - Bill 167 requiring Kosher food in state institutions. The Hinda Institute was honored to be part of the consultation process.
- ★ **Restore Justice** led a really inspiring two-session class for our families and clients on how to advocate for change.
- ★ Upcoming Course in December: **Problem Solving and Strategies to Thrive**. Have you struggled to overcome mental challenges and addictions? This course gives you a new perspective and a way forward.

THE HOUSING CRISIS IN ILLINOIS AND ITS EFFECT ON DETAINED CITIZENS

Many of us know and have seen firsthand that there is a huge humanitarian housing crisis in Illinois. Many don't realize however how this crisis dramatically affects returning citizens and their families. D's story is one of our Hinda dramas and part of this crisis.

D has had mental health issues for over 10 years. He often lived homeless in train stations and was involved in petty crimes. This last time D was picked up and spent nearly a year in Cook County Jail (CCJ). Rabbi Chaim visited with him weekly. He put on tefillin and listened to the many daily crises in CCJ. CCJ and Mental Health Court were actually willing to release D, but his release date kept getting delayed because he had no location to be released to.

His mother S called us in desperation. S is a retired schoolteacher. Her daughter had a severe car accident and is now disabled in a wheelchair.

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM - GRADUATION

Our first cohort of Reentry Peer Support Specialists have graduated after over a year of intensive training. Congratulations to Steven, Debi, Denise, Abby, Beth, Jay, Mark Aron, David, and Rabbi Sholom. A peer specialist offers supportive peer counseling through sharing lived experiences and expertise throughout the reentry process. They provide mentoring and act as a participant in the individual's wellness goals, along with other trained care providers. Peer specialists can also offer advice to people looking for stronger relationships, setting life goals, and developing basic social skills. We have already hired three peer support specialists. Our clients report that they love having a friendly ear available when they are struggling. Thanks to Lauren for leading this initiative.



ISRAEL AND ANTISEMITISM

The Hinda Institute distributed special booklets on standing with Israel (written by JLI) to Jews who are currently detained. We wanted to include them in community prayers and support for our brethren in Israel. The chaplains are also watching for any increases in antisemitic episodes within correctional facilities. Our clients are powerless and easily victimized within the system. The increase in antisemitism is especially felt within correctional institutions.

S and her husband are retired and now work full-time caring for her 2 grandchildren and daughter. They live far out in the country and are not near any Jewish or other community services. They do not have many financial resources. S couldn't take D because he had to stay in Cook County. The halfway houses which have been our fallback solution were filled with new migrants as with all transitional housing.

CCJ is meant to be a temporary holding cell before trial. There is poor mental health treatment, and the conditions are often inhumane. In the mental health unit, there are 12 people in a room. Our clients are scared to sleep at night. The room is dirty, and the food is deplorable. Lauren our caseworker supervisor spent 6 months desperately and relentlessly looking for housing for D. The week before Chanukah was the last day Lauren had to find him housing. Miraculously, Lauren found housing with mental health support 3 days before his court date, and he was released. Lauren texted us from the courtroom: "D is released on Friday. WE DID IT TEAM! I want to emphasize that if we had not found housing TODAY, this individual would not have been accepted into the plea agreement and would have had to face another two years of incarceration. This is life-changing for this person."

Serendipitously, on the same day, the family received Hinda Chanukah gifts for the children, a menorah and goodies in order to celebrate. This is what we call "wrap-around" services!! Truly a Chanukah miracle.



Chanukah gifts from Hinda



In the last few months, the Hinda Institute has recognized, with growing trepidation, the full impact of the housing crisis on our families. We quickly pivoted, prioritized and devised an emergency plan of action to improve our housing capacity. We all joined and trained on multiple subsidized housing databases. We have formed more and better alliances. We improved our Hinda resource housing databases. We strengthened partnerships with counselors within correctional institutions. One of our caseworkers Jay became our expert in finding housing for clients, with strict and often impossible conditions of release. Rabbi Scheiman has vouched for rental units for clients and is managing our own Hinda "Safe" apartments. Hinda is fighting to alleviate this new humanitarian crisis affecting our families.

Unfortunately, there are still thousands of detained human beings who are still incarcerated well beyond their release dates, because they have nowhere to be released. Some are lucky and find spots in overfilled halfway houses or are even luckier because they have family. Others are simply released without money with only an exit strategy to the **street!** Most are struggling to find rental units and despite new laws, many landlords do not want to rent to returning citizens especially when there is a housing shortage. Housing affordability stands as a prominent barrier. The high cost of living often exceeds the limited resources available to these individuals. Capacity constraints in affordable housing programs exacerbate the issue, leading to long waitlists and inadequate housing options upon release. These challenges intersect with the overarching issue of poverty, as individuals re-entering society often encounter systemic barriers that perpetuate economic instability. As a result, the cycle of incarceration can persist due to the lack of adequate housing and support systems.

In 2022, President Biden asserted "the importance of helping people who were formerly incarcerated reenter society". He aligned efforts to address housing discrimination with efforts to remove barriers to safe and affordable housing for returning citizens.

Overcoming the challenges to housing is critical for returning citizens, their families, and their communities. Housing is a key predictor of successful community reentry (Burrowes, 2019). Housing is also an important tool for increasing public safety and connecting individuals to services associated with successful reentry (e.g., employment, health and wellness, and other social services). Finding housing is a primary need. Without housing, accessing much-needed social services and health services is extremely challenging.

As a community, we need to recognize that housing is a critical factor in reducing recidivism, ensuring public safety, and saving lives. Our Hinda families are often struggling desperately to find housing, and our Hinda caseworkers are fighting to help them during the crisis.

HELP HINDA HELP

CAMPAIGN

Our Help Hinda Help Campaign

2023 was a resounding success!!

We made our goal of \$300,000

dollars. We have had a 50%

increase in casework requests

this year and this money will go a

long way to ensuring the

continuation of our services.

Thanks to our tenacious volunteer

team leads; Barbara, Lisa, Les &

Sara, Aaron, Gary, Vickie, Beth,

Michael, Rachmiel, Nick, David,

Paul, Steven, Jay, Lauren,

Karlene, Avery, Jackie, Gary,

Baila, Rachel and Howard and of

course our staff Baila, Dovid,

Abby and Rabbi Scheiman. A

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Pearl Caslow Foundation, the

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Warso, Segalite and Nudel

Families. Most importantly we

thank you our compassionate

donors who make Hinda miracles

happen.





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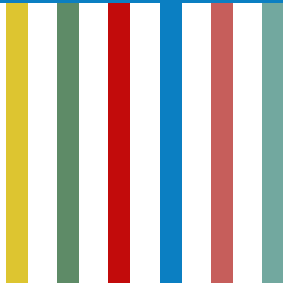
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