

AROUND THE J-COM

with Carly Douglas

CHARIDY FUNDRAISER

Bringing back smiles

SMILE on Seniors (SOS) is a community initiative offering a range of intergenerational programs to provide care and companionship to Jewish seniors in non-Jewish aged care homes.

Founded by Shnei Ohr Chabad's Rabbi Menachem and Esther Stern, SOS reaches more than 200 residents across seven facilities with programs including visits on chagim, art-to-heart sessions, Shabbat Hug packages and Zoom sessions.

"The seniors have gone through so much in the past year," said Rabbi Stern. "We really want to offer them the greatest support possible through the community's combined efforts, both with volunteering as well as financial support."

To support the program, SOS is holding a one-day fundraiser with every dollar raised from 11am on May 30, for 26 hours, doubled.

To make a donation, visit charidy.com/smiles. To get involved in Smile on Seniors, visit smileonseniors.org.au/volunteering



TOM MELBOURNE

Israeli-inspired makeathon makes a difference

CARLY DOUGLAS

AROUND one billion people or 15 per cent of the world live with some form of disability, including millions of individuals and families who face barriers to life-changing products.

Tikkun Olam Makers (TOM) Global, founded in Israel in 2014, stepped in to fill this gap, creating solutions not yet developed by government or market initiative.

TOM was designed to connect people with a disability who have a specific need ("Need-Knowers") to a diverse group of professionals, including engineers, industrial designers, health professionals and tradespeople ("Makers") through annual "Makeathons".

TOM's Makeathons consist of multiple teams of engineers who work together with an individual with special needs to create a potentially life-changing product tailored to their everyday needs. TOM aims to change 250 million lives globally by delivering the products created through the program to elderly individuals or those who are living with disabilities. The global organisation is comprised of 70 communities and has so far delivered 134, 857 products.



Christopher Ly, Perry Kagan Gescheit and Dave Jennings working on Kaspar's wheelchair mount.

This year, the TOM: Melbourne team decided to hold the makeathon over a month, rather than a weekend, with a combination of face-to-face and online sessions to ensure safety and wellbeing for those involved.

Jewish mechanical engineer Perry Kagan Gescheit put his hand up to be a maker, working with Team Nepean to address an issue faced by 15-year-old Kaspar who has cerebral palsy.

Kaspar uses a PODD (pragmatic organisation dynamic dis-

play) book to communicate and share his ideas. The team designed and built a PODD book holder that connects to Kaspar's wheelchair to provide him with access to his communication device at all times.

"Being an engineer, it felt like the right thing to do. To put my skills into practice ... I absolutely loved it," Perry told *The AJN*.

"It was my first time dealing with someone who had cerebral palsy so just having that interaction, and understanding what

they might go through in their day to day lives, I think in itself is really powerful," added Perry.

Perry is currently still working to manufacture and distribute more of these stands for children living with disabilities at Kaspar's school, the Nepean School, Seaford, which supports the learning of children aged between five and 18 with special needs.

"I'm incredibly grateful that I got to experience it because it really opens your eyes to people who have special needs that have other requirements," he continued.

TOM director Debbie Dadon said, "The importance of TOM:Melbourne is that it closes the gap for people to access affordable assistive technology so people living with disability can find work, study, socialise and have equitable opportunities in community life."

TOM will be holding a regional, and another metropolitan, makeathon later this year and are calling on more "need-knowers", "makers", sponsors and donors to get involved.

For more information, visit tommelbourne.org/makeathon2021

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