



Rabbi Shneur Silberberg demonstrates making oil in an olive press for Hillel students Zoe Zaltz and Sammy Schlüssel, both 7, both of Huntington Woods, and Lily Sherman, 7, of Birmingham.



Above: Seth Brasch, 6, Michael Stryk, 10, Daniel Stryk, 6, David Silverman, 6, Alex Stryk, 9, and Jonathon Brasch, 11, all of Farmington Hills, jump high in the dreidel-shaped moon bounce.



Left: Jeremy Rosenberg, 12, of West Bloomfield, lights the Lego menorah.

Chanukah Wonderland

Embracing the holiday through hands-on learning and fun.

Shelli Liebman Dorfman
Senior Writer

A first-time Chanukah event offered enough activities to fill each day of the eight-day holiday — and it nearly did. Beginning Dec. 1, the Chanukah Wonderland encompassed four days of activities and fun and culminated in a Dec. 7 giant menorah lighting.

The public extravaganza was the creation of a partnership between the Sara and Morris Tugman Bais Chabad Torah Center in West Bloomfield and the Bloomfield Township-based Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Guests of the program, which was held at the Beaumont Hospital Medical Center in West Bloomfield, could partake in most every type of Chanukah celebration and treat.

“Jewish boys and girls, from infants to teens, came to the comprehensive, educational and fun Chanukah program,” said Zeesy Silberberg, director of Bais Chabad’s Jewish Women’s Circle and youth programs. “Over 500 children passed through the Wonderland, including groups from Akiva Hebrew Day School [of Southfield] and Hillel Day School [in Farmington Hills].”

The Chanukah Wonderland — whose major sponsors were Alex Kocovos of GLP Insurance Services in Farmington Hills, Glenn and Kim Liebowitz of Farmington Hills and Reuvein and Shaina Kagan of West Bloomfield — was filled with kiosks of food, arts and crafts projects and learning experiences.

Rabbi Shneur Silberberg, Bais Chabad’s outreach director, captivated visitors with an hourly holiday exhibition. Extracting

oil from California olives, he crushed them in an olive press, commemorating the Chanukah miracle in the Holy Temple when a tiny flask of oil kept the menorah burning for eight days and nights. He poured oil acquired during each demonstration into a menorah that he then lit. The rabbi was on hand to answer visitors’ Chanukah questions.

The Wonderland’s fun foods ranged from a “fill your own doughnut” station, representing the traditional Chanukah dessert, to edible menorahs created by guests.

Kids laughed at a clown, were in awe of a magician and jumped on a moon bounce, billed as one of only 10 dreidel-shaped inflatables in the universe.

All A Kid Could Want

A section of the Wonderland was devoted to a Chanukah Lego Land, highlighted by a menorah, created with actual pieces of the plastic, building blocks. Another area displayed vividly painted, penciled and colored *Jewish News* Chanukah Art Contest entries.

Guests of the event designed and decorated holiday-themed felt art, magnets, Play-Doh shapes and pictures frames. Kids, dressed in pajamas, watched a live Chanukah play and heard Chanukah books read at a PJ Library Hour program.

“Even Judah Maccabee was on hand, giving the kids a chance to meet and talk — and have their picture taken — with the brave Jewish hero,” Zeesy Silberberg said.

The Chanukah Wonderland was inspired by Rabbi Levi Deitsch, 34, director of the Chabad at Tyson Corner, Va., who died Nov. 13.

“He was a beloved man who enthusiastically devoted his every day to bringing the light of Judaism to this world,” Zeesy Silberberg said.

“He leaves behind a wife, four children and more family, friends and congregants who miss him dearly.

“The Chanukah Wonderland that Shneur and I and Andy and Andi Feuereisen [of West Bloomfield] planned was Rabbi Deitsch’s brainchild. He encouraged us to do it on a greater scale. Free admission, he insisted, so that every Jewish family can feel the spirit and joy of Chanukah. May this be a merit to his soul.”

The Wonderland concluded with guests gathering for latkes, enjoying the sounds of a children’s choir, donning flashing menorah necklaces and viewing the lighting of a 13-foot-tall menorah.

Dr. Eduardo Phillips and his 13-year-old grandson, Adam Phillips, both of West Bloomfield, climbed inside the boom lift of a DTE Energy truck, and were raised to light the menorah in an event sponsored by 21st Century Oncology in West Bloomfield.

“One 10-year-old boy said on his way out, ‘I used to admire Harry Potter the most, but now I admire Judah Maccabee,’” Zeesy Silberberg said. “He stood up to the Greek armies practically singlehandedly!” □