

Westmount Shul's MONTHLY UPDATE

FOR FEBRUARY 2010

From the desk of the
Executive Director
Yehudis Adams

THIS MONTH:

- Rav Avinoam Horowitz visits from Chevron
- First Annual Starr Family Memorial Shabbaton featuring Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb
- Westmount Men visit Boro Park
- Purim at Westmount
- Bear Bag Mishloach Manot a Huge Success
- Westmount Wednesday Night Wonder

Rav Avinoam Horowitz Returns to Westmount

On Shabbos, February 6th, Westmounters enjoyed our annual visit from Rav Avinoam Horowitz.

Rav Avinoam lives in the Holy City of Chevron and is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ohr Menachem in Kiryat Arba. Our connection with Rav Avinoam goes back to the Solidarity Mission to Israel in November 2001, when we spent our first Shabbos in Chevron hosted by Rav Avinoam.

After a delightful Friday night dinner in shul, Rav Avinoam spoke at an Oneg Shabbos on Friday night to a full crowd.

On Shabbos morning, as Rav Avinoam rose to speak to the congregation, he had a dazed expression as he described him-

self as being "in shock". He explained that he had not been prepared for the Holiness he felt during the prayers. He realized that this was because the congregation was on such a high spiritual level - a level that he had always thought could only be achieved in the Land of Israel. He praised the dignity, quiet and deep concentration that he felt in



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our midst. The only way that he could "console" himself, was by saying that Westmount people are so connected to the Land of Israel, even from afar, this deep connection is reflected in their prayers.

On Saturday night, Rav Avinoam was a guest of Rav Yakov and the younger crowd at a beautiful Melavel Malka where he shared stories of self-sacrifice and miracles that led to the modern Jewish presence in Chevron.

As always, Rav Avinoam extended an invitation for anyone who visits Eretz Yisrael to come to him for Shabbos in Chevron. This is an experience that I highly recommend!

Starr Family Memorial Shabbaton

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb's first visit

On Friday Feb. 12/13, the Starr family brought Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb, a world-renowned lecturer and author from Israel to Westmount for a highly successful Starr Family Memorial Shabbaton. What resulted was meaningful, elevating and beautiful. The neshamas of the family members the Starr's were honouring were certainly elevated to incredible heights. Each lecture was packed, with few (if any) spare chairs available.

Rabbi Gottlieb's lectures ranged

from the importance of small steps in our Jewish development to the meaning of "**Na'aseh v'Nishmah: We will do and we will hear**". Each presentation was entertaining, deep and inspirational.

Our Shalosh Seudas was the perfect highlight for the Shabbaton. Rabbi Gottlieb gave commentary for each song we sang, bringing new depth and meaning

for songs we've sung hundreds of times in the past. And the Westmount singers (and drummers) responded in full force

And as has become common with all speakers, Rabbi Gottlieb was amazed at how beautiful the davening and singing was throughout Shabbos. As he said, we have a truly unique kehilla - one that should be treasured and appreciated.

Boro Park Men & Boys Shabbaton

On the weekend of Parshas Teruma (February 19), a group of men and boys were seen walking around Boro Park with awe in their eyes and smiles on their faces. They didn't look like residents of Boro Park.

That was our men and boys who came on a Shabbaton organized by **Raphael Adams** in conjunction with some wonderful Chassidim from Boro Park.

The people who came on this trip had different reasons for coming – some out of curiosity and some for *chizuk*.—spiritual encouragement. Some wanted their boys to see life in a totally Jewish environment.

The weekend met everyone's expectations – and much, much more.

They came to see sights like a Shmura Matza bakery or the Living Torah Museum or a tish at Bobov or lots of shtreimels and strollers on 13th Avenue. And all these sights were special. There was also much excitement about the opportunity to get a special *brocho* from the Rachmastrivke Rebbe.

But for every one, the single most unforgettable thing about

this weekend was the beautiful, friendly people of Belz, especially the hosts.

Every one raved about their hosts: how beautiful the Shabbos table was, how sweet the children were, how they were made to feel comfortable and relaxed. The biggest argument has been who had the best host family.

Everyone in the Belz community made our community feel so welcome. "After Maariv on Friday night, we weren't able to leave the shul because almost everyone came up to each of us and wished us *Shalom Aleichem* and *Good Shabbos*", says organizer Raphael Adams. The uniqueness of this community manifested itself in so many little ways:

It was the person who went out of his way to find Hebrew-English siddurim from another shul so that those who weren't strong in Hebrew wouldn't be lost during the davening.

It was saying Good Shabbos to a complete stranger on the street and having them answer Good Shabbos back with a smile.

It was the people who came out Friday night for an Oneg

Shabbos or who came to Ari Engel's lavish Melave Malka especially for our group at his home.



And time and time again, it was hearing them say that they admired our self-sacrifice in changing our lifestyles for Torah, giving our kehilla such *chizuk* and pride.

Some people have said that there was a tremendous feeling of *achdus* (Jewish unity) throughout the weekend. But there is a better word – *mishpacha* – family! There is a closeness that only a family can have.



Our boys did us proud!

Our boys have had the good fortune to see behind the shtreimel and kapote and see wonderful people. They will never forget this. Nor will anyone on that trip.



A lively Melaveh Malka is enjoyed at the home of the Engel's



Moishe learns how medicine was administered in Torah times

To enjoy more pictures from this amazing trip please visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/westmount-boro-park-feb-2010>

PURIM @ WESTMOUNT SHUL

Family Megillah Reading & Carnival

While a quiet Megillah reading was taking place on Disera Drive for adults and older kids, Westmount Collegiate was hopping with a full, kosher Family Megillah reading followed by a Purim Carnival Extravaganza completely run by our very own teens and supervised by Rav Yakov.

Over 250 people enjoyed a fun Megillah reading. After that, **Vito Gottschalk** opened his famous Pizzeria in the Atrium while the teens got the Carnival rolling! Booths included **“Soak Haman” “Microphone Bash” “Bowling” and “Pepsi-Coke Challenge”**

As usual, thanks to **Spinmaster Toys**, kids left with phenomenal prizes that they won including Bakugan Battle Brawlers and Air Hogs Remote Control toys.

Thanks to all those (too numerous to mention) involved in preparations and running of the event.



“yo ho ho and a bottle of rum!”



Purim at McDonalds????

As every mother knows, one of Purim's biggest problems is NUTRITION. Between hearing Megillah reading, delivering Mishloach Manos, getting the families costumes on and finally the Purim Seudah - sugar tends to be the main food group of the day.

Jackie and Larry Garber decided to do something about this serious issue so, after Megillah reading on

Sunday morning, they set up their “kitchenette” in the Rabbi's study as Westmounters lined up patiently to be served a hearty breakfast of Kosher Egg McMuffins, made with Cholov Yisroel!

“Purim is a McHappy Day,” explained Jackie and Larry, “especially when you start it out with a Bacon Egg McMuffin made fresh in the Rabbi's office.”



Mordechai Michalowicz and Eitan Adams confirm that even Yeshiva boys deserve a break today!

“I never thought I would be beginning my Purim Festivities with an Egg McMuffin!”

Purim Seudah @ Westmount Shul

250 people came to a beautiful and delicious Purim Seudah served by **Sharon and Ian Durbach** at Westmount Collegiate.

Oprah Winfrey was present, as were Caesar and Cleopatra. It appeared that a Belzer Chassid was so impressed with the community that he, too, came to the Festive Meal. Sonny and Cher had a special reunion as Sonny sang his new hit “Eishes Chayil”. There were so many celebrities that Larry King showed up to find out how West-

mount does it.

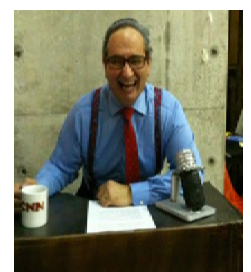
And no wonder! Besides the delicious, catered meal, the famous DJ Phil Kravetsky got things going and the famous Westmount Ruach took over. There was singing and dancing on both sides of the mechitzah. A shipload of pirates came in to dance with Mickey & Minnie Mouse's beautiful daughter, Leeat and her Chosson, Adam Mishan.

And, of course, the children had their own special show as a tal-

ented ventriloquist, Kerwin Massey, kept them entertained.



Caesar drinks a l'Chaim with Mickey in honour of his daughter's engagement!



Even Larry King came to find out how Westmount does it!

Purim Bear Bags

SOLD OUT

Once again, the phenomenal team of **Miriam Deverett, Paula Silverstein, Yossi Sherman and Judy Greenfield** combined for our annual fundraiser of Purim Bear Mishloach Manot.

We don't know how they do it, but each year these bags get more packed with goodies and, at the low price of \$10/ bag are the best deal in the city. Very few people know the work

that goes into making this project such a financial success. From contacting potential donors, to bargaining with companies to calling...and calling...and calling until all the bags are sold - these volunteers deserve a special "Yasher Koach" from each and every one of us.

As the call went out, many volunteers came to Disera Drive to help pack 1,000 bags. From 4 year old Meira Edell through retiree

Stan Corbett - everyone pitched in.

Special thanks to Josey Frieberg for the beautiful cards and inserts. We also thank the donors: **Dionne Liebenthal, Louis Pillemer, Howard Starr, Darren Chlewitz** Tropicubes, Ganz Bears. Thanks to SmartCentres for allowing us to use extra space for this project. This wonderful fundraiser brought in over \$10,000.



Our 3 Superwomen with 1,000 bears

Wednesday Night Wonder

As I left the Rabbi's class last Wednesday night, I looked around and it struck me that Wednesday Night really personifies what Westmount Shul and Learning Centre is all about.

At 7:30 pm, Rabbi Yossi Michalowicz gives a class based on the new book "Da Es Atzmecha" - which he entitles "Know Your Self" in the Fireside Lounge. This powerful book written by the author of the "Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh" series, helps us understand that we are, in truth, a pure soul and helps us tap into that reality.

At about 7:55, we start to hear the happy voices of High School age girls

as NCSY's Learn 'n Earn participants and their mentors fill up the Bais Medrash.

As the "Da Es Atzmecha" class winds down, men are already seated in the Rabbi's study awaiting for the Rav to guide them through the "Arvey Pesachim" Gemorrah class and, in anticipation, are discussing and reviewing their lessons in the laws of the Pesach Seder.

Rav Yakov Wohlgerenter sits with his young student learning for an upcoming Bar Mitzvah.

As I look around, I realize that this is what Westmount Shul and Learning

Centre is all about. Girls wearing jeans in one room and men with black hats in another - and everything in between.



"This is what Westmount is all about...girls wearing jeans in one room and men in black hats in another - all learning Torah."