

It wasn't difficult to take notes when we spoke with the young volunteers of Tomche Shabbos – nearly every one of them used the exact same word: Fun! Where's all this fun happening and what's it all about? *Jr.* got the inside story....

BY Sara Miriam Gross



THE VOLUNTEER SINCE PRE-1A

"I don't have a set job," explains 11-year-old Moshe Magid who has been volunteering since Pre-1A! "Sometimes I take boxes, flatten them out, and bring them to the dumpster. Other times I put apples into bags, tie them, and put them into a big box on a cart, for the people packing the boxes for the families." On Erev Yom Tov, when there's much more food to pack, Moshe is even given a walkie-talkie to help coordinate the different trolleys.

What makes volunteering at Tomche Shabbos fun for Moshe? "I like the people here," he explains. "And I get to ride on the cart sometimes when my father drives it. Three other kids from my school also help here. It's mostly adults but there's a nice amount of kids."

How did Moshe get



involved at the young age of six? "One day we were driving and I saw a sign for Tomche Shabbos. I asked my father what it was and when I found out, I told him that I wanted to do this *chesed*."

The next step in Moshe's *chesed* adventure was a meeting with Tomche Shabbos president, Mr. Alan Rosenstock, who came to Moshe's house in a business suit and immediately sat down to discuss the project and ask Moshe to be his partner in *chesed*.

A partnership with a six-year-old? "I'm always looking for kids who are creative and have solutions," Mr. Rosenstock explains. "It's not that difficult to find them – there are lots of them. I tell them 'Klal Yisrael needs your talent and I want to get you involved and hear your ideas.'"

Once a young person gets started, they work their way up in the organization: "Their responsibilities grow and we put them in charge of things," he details. "That's what happened with Moshe."

35,934
CHALLOS

Mishpacha

A MEANINGFUL MISSION

Tomche Shabbos of Rockland County has spent over 25 years making sure that every family in the Monsey and New Square community has food for Shabbos and Yom Tov. And every week, children and teens just like you help make it happen.

Each Wednesday, women and girls head to the Tomche Shabbos warehouse to set up the stands and assemble the boxes for the Shabbos food packages that the men and boys will pack on Thursday. Over 450 families receive these packages filled with everything needed to make an abundant Shabbos: challos, grape juice, chicken, gefilte fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and canned goods.



12,378
POUNDS OF
MATZAH



FUN TODAY AND FOOD TOMORROW

FAMILIES AND THE FUTURE OF CHESED

Another way Mr. Rosenstock recruits new volunteers is by going to schools to speak to kids. "I reach out to kids as often as possible. I'll go to any school that will have me. I'd even go to Zimbabwe if they'd ask me to speak to the children — wherever I go, I encourage kids to help out in their own community. I also tell them they can call me — and they do. I visit schools because I know I'm touching the future. This is a way to continue our *mesorah* of *chesed* and *mesirus nefesh*."

Since boys under 16 need to come with their fathers, helping Tomche Shabbos is something many families do together. When Moshe goes to help, his father and his nine-year-old brother, Akiva,

are right there with him. "I like to go every week, but if my father is away or there's a big snowstorm, then sometimes I have to skip that week."

For 14-year-old Shimi Ruskin, helping Tomche Shabbos is also a family outing — he goes with his father and his nine-year-old brother, Meir. The Ruskin family's job is quite established by now: "We usually do the chickens," explains Shimi. "First you bring a trolley into the freezer, stack up boxes of chicken on it, and then distribute the chickens in the boxes for the families."

Since the chickens are frozen, the Ruskins wear gloves as they work. "We have one of the harder jobs," says Meir, "because the chickens are heavy, cold, and slimy, but it's fun to put things in the boxes and it's a big mitzvah."



NEW FRIENDS

"The warehouse is not a quiet place. When you see someone there, even if you don't know each other, you say 'Hi. How are you?'" Shimi relates. "There are lots of different kinds of people there and everyone is friendly."

"It's really nice," agrees 13-year-old Ashira Magid who goes each Wednesday.

"I've gotten to meet a lot of new people there. I've also mentioned it to my friends and a few have started going to help. High School girls have *chesed* hours, so some are there for that."

The work the girls and mothers do usually takes about an hour, although there are exceptions: "One time only five people were there, and there's usually 20," recalls Ashira. "We had to make 500

boxes. That week we were there really late. And once in a while a lot of people come and the work goes even faster."

Naturally, the packing on Thursdays takes longer: "We go at 7:30 p.m.," says Meir, "and leave at about 9 or 9:30." After the packing is completed, the boxes are loaded into the cars of volunteer drivers who deliver the food to all the families.

MAZEL TOV!

As they work, occasionally there's a cheer of "Mazel tov!" when a bottle of grape juice or carton of eggs hits the floor. "Sometimes you have to watch out for flying boxes," says Moshe. "They're empty but they could hit you in the head." Beyond the humor of raw "scrambled eggs" on the floor, there's also often music playing; when there isn't, some of the volunteers perform instead. "Sometimes a few funny people sing funny songs as we work."

"This is a room dedicated to *achdus*," Mr. Rosenstock says proudly. "There's no politics, just

warmth and friendship." After all their hard work packing, there's also a chance to sit and enjoy each other's company — and enjoy the kugel and cholent that a local restaurant sends over each week.

"I've been doing this for many years and it's a very rewarding way to donate your time," comments Mr. Ruskin. "It shows kids the importance of *chesed* and the importance of loving and helping another Jew."

Tomche Shabbos's enthusiastic young volunteers are giving to Klal Yisrael — and by building their *chesed*

muscles they're actually receiving more than they give. As Mr. Rosenstock puts it, "Sometimes I think that the kids who come to the warehouse benefit the most."

Thinking about joining your own local Tomche Shabbos? These young volunteers hope you will: "You should do it," urges Akiva. "I really enjoy it and I feel good afterward. You probably will too."



169,250 POUNDS OF POTATOES

222,600 POUNDS OF CHICKEN

