

# CHABAD OF CHULA VISTA

2022 SPRING APPRECIATION NEWSLETTER

*Itay is enjoying the community BBQ, thanks to you*

## Inside this issue

- Thank You For Your Vision
- Thanks to You, Linda Reconnected With the Jewish Community
- You Gave Bob a Sense of Peace in His Final Days
- We Call Ourselves the Three Musketeers
- You Touched Sierra's Life With Your Kindness



**CHABAD**

OF CHULA VISTA

# Thank You For Your Vision

Dear friends,

Your generous support brings Jews of all ages and backgrounds together to learn, live Jewishly and grow a warm and dynamic community.

It's hard to believe we've accomplished so much together in 5 short years.

It's due to your vision and support that Jewish life is booming in Chula Vista! This newsletter highlights just a few of the special souls you have helped nourish in a variety of ways.



It's because of you that Sierra can attend the adult education programs, children like Vivi can join Chula Vista's growing Hebrew School, and people like Eliot attend weekly Shabbat services.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and see the impact you are having on Jewish life in Chula Vista every day.

Thank you for making Am Yisrael Chai a reality in Chula Vista!

Wishing you and your family a Happy Purim!

*Rabbi Mendy and Mussie Begun*

# Thanks to You, Linda Reconnected With the Jewish Community

*And now her daughter Vivi is getting a Jewish education!*

Linda Colarusso and her family have lived in East Chula Vista for over 20 years. They weren't affiliated with any synagogues and didn't feel part of any Jewish communities. Their older sons were bar mitzvahed but didn't enjoy the experience. "I felt alone and unsupported," says Linda.

Then Linda received an email from Chabad asking for volunteers, and she decided to help deliver holiday packages. Rabbi Mendy asked if she would want to send her daughter Vivi to Hebrew School. "I was hesitant at first because my husband is not Jewish," says Linda. "I didn't know how the Chabad worked and I wasn't sure that would be OK. I thought we wouldn't be accepted. But Rabbi Mendy was always so welcoming so we decided to go for it."

Vivi joined Hebrew School, and the family became more involved with Chabad. "It was so nice to be a part of a community that I haven't been a part of since I was bat mitzvahed, like 35 years ago," Linda says. "We really feel happy being there, we feel comfortable and accepted. We're more connected

to our Judaism now. It's just that feeling of belonging. It's like getting a virtual hug the moment you walk in, because you're just embraced in this positive, warm, loving community feeling.

"It's filling a hole that was there for many, many years."

Now Vivi is learning about her traditions and receiving a joyful Jewish education. "Honestly, before Hebrew School, I was pretty clueless," says Vivi. "Now I'm in awe of all the things I know.

"It is thanks to you that kids like me have a chance to learn about their religion."



*"It is thanks to you that kids like me have a chance to learn about their religion," says Vivi*

# You Gave Bob a Sense of Peace in His Final Days

Bob and Kathy Sasson were surprised to receive a knock on their door one day. It was Rabbi Mendy Begun, delivering a package of homemade Challah. Although Bob was initially unsure about food items that someone else had prepared, they accepted the package. After Rabbi Begun had come several times, Bob finally said to Kathy, "Well, invite him in, I want to meet this person!"

Bob and Rabbi Mendy had a conversation in the garden, and the two began to bond. Bob didn't belong to a synagogue and wasn't very religious, but he attended High Holiday services and he loved Judaism. "He was very spiritual," says Kathy. "He felt very close to Rabbi Mendy and was so happy when he came to visit. He was so glad that he had a rabbi to call at any time."

When Bob got sick, he wanted to see Rabbi Mendy. "He was in hospice at the end, and Rabbi Mendy came to visit. They sang all these Jewish songs



*Thanks to you, Bob could pass on to the next world with dignity*

together. The rabbi couldn't believe how many religious songs Bob knew. They had a great time."

True to his word, Rabbi Mendy took care of all the funeral arrangements, which ended up being complicated due to flying the body up to San Jose, where the burial plot was. "Rabbi took care of everything. He was incredible. The funeral was beautiful. Rabbi Mendy explained all the rituals."

Thank you for giving Bob a Jewish funeral, so he could pass on to the next world with dignity.

# We Call Ourselves the Three Musketeers

*How Betty, Monica, and Guila formed a beautiful friendship*



*Thanks to you, Betty, Monica and Guila feel like family*

Betty Escobio has lived in Chula Vista for 41 years. "Throughout the years, I've seen our small community grow. Unfortunately, many people in our community have had to drive for hours to other places for services. We're so blessed to have Rabbi Mendy and Mussie Begun here now. For the first time ever, I've seen Chanukah menorahs in our shopping centers and other public spaces. We have

educational classes and superb services, as well as homemade lunches after services."

At the Rosh Hashanah community dinner, Betty and her husband were assigned seats next to two other couples. The three women, Betty, Monica Jones, and Guila Armenta, started chatting, and they quickly felt a connection. On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, they met up for Shofar in the Park. They started singing together, and then dancing.

"The three of us and our husbands felt like we were old friends," says Betty. "We've been very close since then. We're like family. It's like a miracle. And you made it happen!"

Monica, who grew up in Mexico City, adds, "We do dinner together, and we chat all the time. I really believe Chabad did that for us. The activities and the soulfulness brought us together."

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...continued from page 3

# We Call Ourselves the Three Musketeers

"We call ourselves the Three Musketeers," says Guila, who is originally from Venezuela. "Although we are all from different places, we feel so close."

For the three friends, Judaism is an integral part of life. Coming to Chabad solidifies their identity and helps them pass Jewish values along to their children. "Rabbi Begun and Mussie show you how to bring authentic Judaism into today's world—with

ease and happiness," says Monica. "They make you extremely proud of being a Jew."

Betty says, "I am extremely grateful for your kindness for continuing Chabad here in the South County of San Diego. It is an outstanding donation you are making that will impact many people throughout the years. Thank you tremendously."

# You Touched Sierra's Life With Your Kindness

Both of Sierra Green's parents are park rangers, so she grew up in small, remote towns. "I lived in Bodie State National Park for a while. It's literally just one tiny road with an ice cream shop, a mailing room, and a pizza shop. The nearest Chabad was hours away. I was very limited in what I knew about Judaism."



*"Thank you for giving me the Jewish education I never received," says Sierra*

parents were in town for a visit, Rabbi Mendy and Mussie invited them for a Shabbat meal. "I just felt super welcomed from the beginning. And the food was so good!"

Sierra says that she used to be scared about attending synagogue. "I was unsure how accepting they would be, and I've never been really a part of one. I thought I would be judged for knowing so little. But Rabbi Mendy was just the kindest person ever, and he just took me in. And all the people there were very kind and welcoming."

After high school, Sierra went on a Birthright Israel trip, which inspired her to get more in touch with her Judaism. At age 18, she moved to Chula Vista to explore her Judaism and attend college. She was driving down the street when she saw Rabbi Mendy walking past. "I was so excited to see him, I got out of the car to say hi to him. He was very warm and said he would come by to visit."

Now Sierra loves attending Chabad events, including the women's class. "We're learning about mitzvahs, like about kosher food. The classes keep getting better and better."

It turned out that Sierra lived two doors down from the rabbi. "His wife and his family came by, and they brought me soup and challah bread." When Sierra's

Sierra says, "Thanks to you, I'm getting a Jewish education that I never received. You touched my life with your kindness."

## CHABAD CHAI CLUB

*Chabad of Chula Vista is committed to reaching out in genuine love, providing an enriching life and community for everyone.*

*Your generous donation makes a difference!*



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