

## Addressing the *Shidduch* Crisis, One Date at a Time

*Devorah is a young married woman living in Lakewood. Every once in a while, her thoughts wander to the plight of her close friends who are still single and haven't dated in months. She even considers redding shidduchim for them. But the thought of the endless phone calls and the sleepless nights is just plain discouraging. And besides, what are the chances that any shidduch she reds would actually come to fruition? So Devorah abandons her plan as being too risky and time-consuming. And her single friends stay single for much longer.*

How many of us are like Devorah? We wake up in the morning with a burst of energy, a *shidduch* idea germinating in our heads. But by the middle of the day we lose momentum. More often than not, we are scared that our suggestion is going to flop.

For all the attention paid to our community's *shidduch* crisis, how many of us are actually doing something about it? Our *shadchanim* and mentors are certainly working hard to keep our young people dating, and we all truly appreciate their efforts. But maybe it's time we took a long and

hard look at the system itself to see where it needs improvement. That's where the Nasi Project comes in.

For the last three-and-a-half years, the NASI Project has been dedicated to alleviating the *shidduch* crisis by encouraging more close-in-age *shidduchim*. NASI started by educating people about the nature of the age gap, which contributes to the stigma associated with dating slightly older girls. Hundreds of *shidduchim* took place with girls who were close-in-age to the boys, if not older.

Now the Nasi Project is introducing an innovative and simple plan that has the ability to generate more *shidduch* attention for the slightly older girls.

Here's how Moshe Pogrow of the Nasi Project explains it: "Let's face it. Being a *shadchan* is a difficult task. It's no wonder that even the best of them get frustrated. And people like Devorah are afraid to even try."

For the hundreds of people who attempt to *redd shidduchim*, very few last more than

a few tries simply because no one likes being a failure, and that's exactly how they have been treated. No engagement, no success. And we all know, failure breeds quitting.

"Our goal with this program is to illustrate to those who *redd shidduchim* that we absolutely do appreciate their efforts," says Rabbi Pogrow. "When a *shidduch* doesn't materialize, there's no reason to think it's a failure. If you got it to a first date, it was a success on a certain level. If you got it to go to a fourth date, it was an even greater success. This has proven to be a tremendous motivator to get people to *redd shidduchim*. Both novice *shadchanim* as well as experienced *shadchanim* say that this concept is a huge motivator to focus on the slightly older girls. And the more quality *shidduchim redd* for the slightly older girls, the more *shidduchim* will ultimately be successful for those girls."

Here are the numbers: In Community #1, after twelve months, 90 dates have been arranged - 30 dated seriously - and 12 engagements have resulted. In Community #2, after six months, 60 dates were arranged and 3 engagements resulted. Recently, more communities and even one school have implemented this concept on behalf of their girls.

But the figures and statistics only tell half the story. The interest and excitement generated through this program is unprecedented. People are eager to *redd shidduchim* to these girls like never before.

Each community funds, runs and monitors the program on their local level. The basic concept - though each community structures it as appropriate for its situation - is that if you get a slightly older girl to date number 1, the *shadchan* will receive \$100. If it reaches date number 4, the *shadchan* receives an additional \$300. Some of the

communities are instituting a second level, whereby even greater appreciation is shown for the dates that are set up for the girls who have been previously dating more than 6 years.

NASI will help any community, school or *shul* implement this program to benefit their girls.

Those who are doubtful about the effectiveness of this program may first want to hear out Mrs. JR, the coordinator for the community where this project is already in effect for the past twelve months. She is overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Here's what she says: "There is no question that this initiative has produced major positive effects and results. Many more dates have resulted for the slightly older girls that would never have been achieved otherwise. Numerous engagements have resulted. And most of all, the girls know that they are being cared for and looked after. That is the greatest *chizuk* to them."

Of course, only the *Ribono Shel Olam* is *Mezaveig Zivugim*, and our efforts *redding* and coordinating *shidduchim* are just that - human efforts. But the *hishtadlus* must be made and the *shidduchim* must be *redd* in order for the Master *Shadchan* to do His holy work.

*Devorah wakes up in the morning with tremendous enthusiasm. She has begun dabbling in shidduchim and actually feels that she has a knack for it. Her friend Suri will be going out with Heshy for the third time tonight and Yehudis is scheduled to have her first date with Yaakov tomorrow. Raizy dated Yochanan twice and it didn't work out, but it was exciting to get a check in the mail anyway. And now, Devorah thinks, maybe Raizy would be perfect for Aharon...*

For information on how to bring this program to your community, contact the Nasi Project at [nasishidduch@gmail.com](mailto:nasishidduch@gmail.com).

## Rabbi Herschel Leiner Brings American Concepts To Europe

By Nesanel Gantz

Fresh off the success of his annual fundraising seminar co-hosted with Yitzchok Saftlas for fundraisers and CEOs of non-profit organizations, Rabbi Herschel Leiner was asked to deliver remarks at the annual conference for European rabbis and outreach professionals held at the Dream Castle Hotel in Paris.

The conference featured many rabbis and *kiruv* professionals who offered their expert advice on various topics. Representatives from Greece, Italy, Russia, the UK, Croatia, Antwerp and other locales described the trials and tribulations of their *kiruv* and fundraising work in their respective cities.

Rabbi Leiner noted how many of the attendees worked in tandem with their spouses in the world of *kiruv* and always displayed a high level of enthusiasm and positive attitude. These special people, faced with the daunting task of bringing Jews closer to Judaism while raising the necessary funds to do so, pride themselves in their efforts for *Klal Yisroel*. "These emissaries, many of them facing daunting tasks in Russia that we can never comprehend in the United States are happy to be involved in their *avodas hakodesh*, and it is an inspiring lesson I will try to give over to my clients back there."

Rabbi Leiner and his consulting company, H. Leiner & Co., have created a name in the non-profit industry for expertise in running all-comprehensive dinners. He was thus asked to deliver a session on dinners and introduce American concepts to the European attendees.

Rabbi Leiner's speech and other speeches were often simultaneously translated into Hebrew, French and Russian, with a live translator translating the speech directly to the attendees, who had headphones allowing them to hear the speech in their language.

The next day featured a panel of experts, with Rabbi Leiner explaining the

importance of branding and the importance of properly sharing the message of a non-profit organization in today's ever changing



world. While Americans are bombarded with advertisements in every way imaginable - phone, text, print media, direct mail and online - Europeans are only now starting to utilize the strategies that are commonplace here.

Rabbi Leiner introduced the concept of multi-angle marketing, in which one utilizes different types of marketing in conjunction with each another. When campaigns are rolled out one after the other with the same theme, tagline and message, the campaign can reach a wide range of people and deliver resounding results. Complementing marketing and fundraising strategies creates a successful campaign, with the prospective donor constantly seeing the non-profit as a viable and important place to donate.

"I was honored and privileged to have been asked to speak at this important event. To see *mesirus nefesh* in its simplest form is a lesson I hope to take with me for a long time," said Rabbi Leiner.

## Mesivta of Ellenville Honoring Three Unique Individuals

Hamesivta, after many successful years in Brooklyn, has reshaped itself as an out-of-town *yeshiva* and renamed itself the Mesivta of Ellenville. The *roshei yeshiva*, Rabbi Chanoch Levovitz and Moshe Ginsburg, have decided to honor at the *yeshiva's* upcoming annual dinner three individuals who have contributed enormously toward Torah and the *klal*.

Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Freedman is one who never sought fame in any way and is yet known by many for his forty years as a *marbitz Torah* in one of the foremost *yeshivos* in New York, while simultaneously carrying on his shoulders with tremendous dedication the poor and the downtrodden. Many worthy organizations entrusted him to raise funds for them. It is said that the Satmar Rov gave him a donation for Chinuch Atzmai. That Rabbi Freedman has accepted this honor is itself testimony to his love for Torah as exemplified by the Mesivta of Ellenville.

Rabbi Nochum Lehman is another unsung hero who has made a unique contribution. While at Kollel Bais Hatalmud, he was aware that a *talmid chochom* in the *beis medrash* was going blind. Feeling his pain of not being able to continue learning, Rabbi Lehman sprung into action. Using his prodigious computer talents, he devised a program that allows one to sit in a *bais medrash* and be connected to a computer that recites the

*Gemara* and other *seforim*. This project took off, and there are many others who have Rabbi Lehman to thank for being able to *shteig* despite their handicap. Rabbi Lehman also introduced and devised the Zemanim Hotline for the blind who have no access to a calendar.

At the dinner, the Mesivta will seek to perpetuate the memory of the former rabbi of Ellenville, Rabbi Tzvi Eisner. Not many know of how much this Holocaust refugee, who arrived here in 1949, accomplished for the community at large. His work for the community benefited *Yiddishkeit*. It was Rabbi Eisner who laid the groundwork for the Torah *mosdos* that are in the Catskills today. He helped raise huge sums of money for one of the leading *yeshivos* today, the famous *Yeshiva of South Fallsburg*, even involving his own donors in this work. He was instrumental in helping establish the network of Satmar *mosdos* in Sullivan and Ulster counties. He had a close relationship with the Satmar Rov, as well as with Rav Moshe Feinstein, who conferred *semichah* upon him.

The *kehillah* of Rabbi Herman Eisner was inspired by him to build the great edifice which houses the Mesivta. The *yeshiva* is indebted to him and his esteemed rebbetzin, *shetichyeh*.

The dinner will be held at the Torah V'yirah Hall in Brooklyn on May 15.