

August 12, 2008

To: Rabbi James Gordon

From: Phil Samuels (father of Avi – participant of LHSVS)

What a wonderful program “LHSVS” (Lifting the Human Sprits by Visiting the Sick) is.

Our son Avi who is 11 ½ years old has been a volunteer in this program since its inception.

This wonderful program, not only benefits the individuals who volunteer, but also benefits the residents at The Claremont Rehab and Living Center.

Rabbi James Gordon has developed such a unique and wonderful program – “Lifting the Human Sprits by Visiting the Sick”. The common theme is “sports” by bringing in guest speakers to talk about how sports have enriched their lives. But as important, it teaches the youth volunteers that they can succeed in any of their endeavors if you put your all into it. Also, just as important, it brings the seniors and youths together. The youths are benefited by talking & listening to the seniors. The seniors are benefited because they enjoy talking about sports especially with the youth volunteers.

The LHSVS program has had many wonderful guest speakers – talking about “sports”. Each of the guest speakers in their own special way Lifted the Sprits of the residents at Claremont and taught valuable lessons to the youth volunteers.

Mr. Lee Stern - owner of the Chicago Sting and part owner of the Chicago White Sox was one of the guest speakers at the LHSVS program. Mr. Stern had stated that Sports had changed him & his family lives for the better. He stated that he was almost 82 years old – but truly looked 25 years younger. The seniors definitely related to Mr. Stern as well as the, youth volunteers - especially my son (Avi) whose lives have changed for the better by meeting such a wonderful person.

Also, Mr Bob Love who played for the Chicago Bulls was a guest speaker. Mr. Love explained that he overcame a speech impediment and became one of the best basketball players of the Chicago Bulls – before a gentleman named Michael Jordan had broken some of his records. Mr. Love explained to the youth volunteers that if you work hard in school you can accomplish anything. We all look up to adults - and especially we have a high regard for sport athletes. Mr. Love during his presentation, told a youth volunteer that he will be a successful doctor also, telling a young girl that she will be a successful lawyer – just work hard in school. What touched me was when he looked at my son (Avi) and said: “Young man – one day you will be the President of the United States”. My son & I still talk about that day – and every so often he will say “I will be the “President” of the United States – just like Mr. Love stated.

In regard to my son (Avi), to give you a little insight into my son. Avi has cerebral palsy and a tracheotomy. My wife (Judy) & I are blessed to have Avi – he is truly our miracle boy. I believe, that Avi has been put on this earth to make a difference. Avi goes to school in Buffalo Grove, Illinois and is mainstreamed. Avi is one of the brightest kids in his class.

There are two more stories that I will share with you – believe me, there are many more. But, the common theme is the same, this wonderful program LHSVS has brought these residents and

these special and gifted volunteers together to make a difference and this program actually does Lift the Spirits of these residents...

My first story is about a resident at Claremont. This individual when he first met Avi last year in the LHSVS Program did not have a tracheotomy. However, when Avi joined this program again this year – this individual told Avi that his doctors wanted to put a trach in him. The individual was quite shaken and scared. He asked Avi a lot of questions and after their conversation – it was quite noticeable that this resident was not nervous or scared about getting a trach. The resident did get a trach – and when Avi sees this individual - they hug & high five each other. My son calls this individual my Big Brother – and this individual calls Avi "his little Brother!"

My last story, was told to me by a son whose father lives at Claremont and is part of this tremendous program "LHSVS".

The son's name is Joel, and told me that he overheard Avi & a resident talking last year during one of the sessions for LHSVS. Joel, told me that after he heard Avi's response to a resident – it has changed his life for the better.

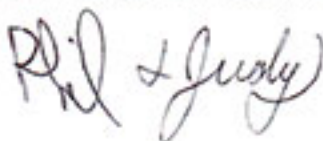
Avi had asked the resident how their week was – and how they were feeling. The resident responded by saying well I have some ache & pains & not feeling so good.

Avi's response was "You know it could always be worse". Joel was so impressed that these words came from a child with all of his medical stuff. Joel told me that Avi is so positive and that we should all take a lesson from him.

Avi not only spends time with the residents at Claremont during the LHSVS sessions, but visits the residents on his own time. Avi has played bingo, talked, listened and laughed with some of the residents at Claremont. When it is time for Avi to leave after his visit - the residents all tell him thank you for visiting and they also tell him they feel better after his visit.

The LHSVS program in such a short time has made a huge impact on my son's life and on the lives of the other youth volunteers. Most importantly it has made a huge impact on the lives of The Claremont residents.

I hope the program continues, because it truly Lifts the Human Spirit by Visiting the Sick.



Phil & Judy Samuels