

NCSY SPREADS THE SUKKAH SPIRIT

New York NCSY spearheaded a unique outreach operation to inspire Jews who have never had a Sukkah of their own to experience the immersive *mitzva* of Sukkot. Now in its third year, The Sukkah Project gifts Sukkahs to families across New York who are committed to eating meals in their Sukkah and hosting other Jewish friends and family.

This year NCSY provided 67 Jewish homes with a Sukkah, and with these families averaging 20 guests over the *chag*, over 1,300 unaffiliated Jews experienced Sukkos in a way they never had before. In addition to providing the physical structure, NCSY also arranged for Zoom classes to teach participants about the spiritual themes of the *chag*, and set each family up with teen volunteers from local yeshiva day schools to help them build their Sukkah.

"Building a Sukkah adjacent to your home for 8 days is a significant commitment for people who don't live in a *frum* community and do not identify as fully observant" said Rabbi Gideon Black, CEO of New York NCSY, "I find their willingness to step out of their comfort zone to be incredibly impressive". Yet the families who made the commitment found it to be really uplifting and hope to encourage their friends to take part in the Sukkah Project next year. "This is a remarkable journey and a true blessing it has been to have shared our first *sukkah* with our friends and family," said Lori

Levine from Bellmore, NY. "Never would I have thought that by having our new *sukkah* I would feel even more connected to Judaism, NCSY, and new friendships than I have by sharing in this experience."

Brooklyn mom R Vays added "The family quality time that we got from this experience is completely priceless. We had such a good time putting the *sukkah* together and building it, decorating it, and most importantly inviting the grandparents to join us for a meal. It was like 'Eating in our little clubhouse.' It taught us so much to appreciate family while enjoying the holiday."

Kayla Paul, a sophomore in SKA, one of the teens who volunteered to help build for the Sukkah Project during the Aseret Yemei Teshuva reflected, "Building *sukkahs* with my friends was so meaningful. We've never built a *sukkah* before, so we were a bit nervous and unsure what to expect. But... it was an awesome bonding experience! It was so crazy to think that this family may have not even had a *sukkah* if we didn't come to help."

The Sukkah Project is a fantastic example of the inspirational year-round programming that New York NCSY does to inspire Jewish teens and their families to grow in their Judaism. 40 generous donors funded The Sukkah Project. To support NCSY's upcoming outreach initiatives, please reach out to Rabbi Mikey Albala ma@ncsy.org.



LOS ANGELES WELCOMES AGRA D'PIRKA!

AGRA D'PIRKA STAFF

Los Angeles, the second largest Jewish community in the USA, welcomed Agra D'Pirka to their area this week with open arms. The grand opening event marked the very first time that the famed Torah learning program would be held on the West Coast and by all accounts it was a huge success. The program is being held at Congregation Shaarei Torah, which is located at 334 North La Brea.

Agra D'Pirka, the widely acclaimed morning Kollel program which already services over a dozen communities on the East Coast, is relentless in its quest to expand, to grow, and to seek new horizons. While its current programs continue to set standards of excellence in each of its popular locations, the founders and directors of Agra D'Pirka are constantly seeking new areas in which to set up shop. So, it's no wonder that the Torah community in Los Angeles was chosen as an ideal location to establish yet another Agra D'Pirka success story.

Community Rabbonim were joined by Agra D'Pirka staff members who flew to LA in honor of this historic grand opening. The weekly schedule will include a daily Gemorah *shiur* on Masechtas Brachos given by Rav Reuven Markin, followed by *shiurim* on various topics including Sefer Hamitzvos LehoRambam by Rav Shlomo Luria, as well

as Chumash and in-depth Parsha *shiurim* given by Rav Nechemia Langer, Mora d'Asra of Shaarei Torah and Rav Binyomin Lipschutz. Clearly, Agra D'Pirka has gathered an outstanding lineup of distinguished Rabbonim for this community's program.

According to Rav Markin, Agra D'Pirka is appropriate for everybody, no matter their schedule. He indicated the words of Chazal which state that those who depart from this world will be asked, 'Kavata Itim LaTorah? - Did you set aside fixed times for learning?' "The Hafla'ah points out," said Rav Markin, "that the word 'kove'a' also means to steal. Did you steal time to learn Torah? Agra D'Pirka satisfies both needs. Those who wish to set aside time for their learning will certainly find the program most rewarding. But the scheduling also accommodates others who must 'steal' precious time from their work day for a *shiur* or two."

According to Rav Luria, the opening of Agra D'Pirka in Los Angeles right after Simchas Torah is significant. "Rav Mechel Zilber," he said, "once observed that when one attends a wedding, it is difficult to identify the *chosson*. Everyone is dressed in their finest clothes and everyone is dancing. The way to spot the *chosson* is to see who is walking out with the *kallah*. Similarly, we just completed a very festive Yom Tov of Simchas Torah during



which everyone rejoiced with the Torah. But it is an organization like Agra D'Pirka, through its many programs, that transforms that energy into practice."

Rav Nechemia Langer echoed those sentiments as he expressed the community's excitement. "It's a wonderful and exciting time for Los Angeles," said Rabbi Langer, "as we join the national Agra d'Pirka network. Just having celebrated the Yom Tov of Sukkos followed by Simchas Torah we again declare: 'Ein lanu shiur rak haTorah hazos'. Torah is our only remaining resource. How appropriate that Agra D'Pirka chose this auspicious time to bring its program to us."

"Los Angeles is proud to join twelve other Jewish communities in hosting an Agra D'Pirka program," Rav Lipschutz said. "I look forward to being a part of this unique program. All indications are that the program will be a great success as it has been in other locales around the United States."

The grand opening was a wonderful start, but it was just the beginning. The Agra D'Pirka schedule is consistent and relentless and those who participate are dedicated to maintaining the commitment and continuity that Torah learning deserves. Community Rabbonim are confident that the people of Los Angeles, including students, balabatim, yungeleit, businessmen, retirees, and anyone else who wishes to enhance their mornings, will be thrilled to join. Those who already attend Agra D'Pirka in its other locations will attest that it is a life-changing experience.

"We encourage those who have the time to participate," Rav Langer suggested. "And those who do not have the time, to find the time."

Congratulations, Los Angeles, on welcoming Agra D'Pirka! Be prepared to enjoy one of the best things to happen to your community!

For more information about Agra D'Pirka in Los Angeles or to learn about its many locations, call 212 661 9400 or visit agradpirka.org.