



YOM HAATZMA **YACHT** **WITH CHAI CHICAGO**

FOR ISRAEL  INDEPENDENCE DAY

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO ALYN CHILDREN 'S HOSPITAL IN JERUSALEM

by Ina Bochian

Chai Chicago has once again brought together the Chicago Jewish community and its allies for a meaningful cause. To enhance the spirit of “chesed,” (loving-kindness and compassion) a portion of the proceeds from the Yacht Party celebrating Chai Chicago’s first birthday on April 30th will benefit ALYN Hospital. Additionally, this event will also honor Israel’s Independence Day, **Yom Ha'atzmaut** (Hebrew: יוֹם הָעֲצִמָּאוּת), which comes after the Days of Remembrance of Holocaust Victims commemorated in the U.S., which includes **Yom HaShoah**, Holocaust Remembrance Day.



Photo Credits: Danny Jacobson



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With the concept of “Tikkun olam” in mind—meaning “repairing the world”—we find a complementary Jewish principle in “chesed,” which translates to “loving-kindness” or mercy. These two significant values, rooted in empathy, compassion, and restoration, are fundamental to embodying the essence of Judaism, regardless of one’s level of religiosity or observance. The most meaningful way for Jewish people, especially those in the diaspora, to celebrate their connection to the land of Israel is by engaging in acts of kindness that emphasize empathy and intentional efforts to improve the world.

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TIKKUN OLAM

RABBI TZVI FREEDMAN
(CHABAD.ORG)



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Celebrating Israel's Independence Day in Chai Chicago is also empowering decolonized Judeans to bring light to the part of the world they find themselves in. Coupling this festive day with a charitable cause helps Jewish people in the diaspora reconnect to their purpose and to the land of Israel, which is a magnet that pulls all Jews to their native home as well as to each other.

Furthermore, with the increase of antisemitism around the world, acknowledging the necessity for a Jewish homeland and celebrating its modern establishment, gives Jewish people a safe refuge in the event they want to return to their native homeland. We said NEVER AGAIN after the Holocaust and now The State of Israel exists to provide a home for Jewish people.

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Along with American Friends of ALYN Hospital (AFAH), Chai Chicago's contribution to Israel's "premier pediatric and adolescent rehabilitation center" will help fund research and state-of-the-art care for children and teens benefiting from medical interventions that maximize their quality of life. Founded in 1934, just a couple of years after the hospital, AFAH has contributed to the success and development of ALYN Hospital.

Located in Jerusalem, Israel, ALYN Hospital is one of the most renowned facilities in the world and the only rehabilitation centers for children and adolescents in Israel. Established in 1932 by New York orthopedic surgeon Dr. Henry Keller, ALYN Hospital has been a pillar in pediatric and adolescent restorative medicine for a wide range of physical challenges. Thanks to the efforts of a couple of community leaders from New Orleans, Malcolm and Dorothy Woldenberg, the hospital expanded to a modern facility in 1971. ALYN Hospital is dedicated to providing high-quality, multidisciplinary medical care to children with disabilities. Its primary goal is to enhance each child's independence and mobility, allowing them to thrive within their family and community settings.

The hospital employs a holistic approach that involves various specialists working collaboratively to address the physical, emotional, and social needs of each child. This ensures comprehensive care tailored to the individual requirements of patients. AFAH supports ALYN Hospital by raising funds and increasing awareness of its mission and achievements. This helps sustain the hospital's innovative approaches and advancements in medical technology. The foundation engages in various activities, including organizing events, educational programs, and donor engagement initiatives, to rally community support and build a strong network of contributors.



Photo Credit: ALYN Hospital Facebook Page

With the backing of numerous generous donors, collaborations with organizations like Chai Chicago, and an active Board of Directors, AFAH plays a crucial role in ensuring the financial sustainability and growth of ALYN Hospital's initiatives, ultimately enhancing the quality of care available to children with disabilities. ALYN Hospital and AFAH create a powerful synergy that aims to improve the lives of children with disabilities through innovative medical care and sustained community engagement.

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Photo Credit: Nikki Huber



Photo Credit: Ina Bochian

Upon learning about the fundraiser from [David Pawlan](#), the co-founder of Chai Chicago, I decided to contribute by donating 20% of the proceeds from an original art piece I created specifically for ALYN Hospital. Additionally, I will donate 100% of the proceeds from a framed print composite created from different pieces of art. The original piece has already been sold for \$1,500 to a generous collector, while the framed print is still available for \$250.

The original piece features a joyful teddy bear holding a cluster of red, orange, and yellow heart balloons. While I didn't have a specific meaning in mind, I intended to leave the artwork open to interpretation, using color to convey the complex emotions that often blend together. Knowing that I was creating this piece with a children's hospital in mind, I aimed to capture the positivity of overcoming pain, while also acknowledging that feelings of discomfort and joy can coexist.

Sometimes, we are forced to live on faded hope as we endure unseen ailments, even as adults. For children and teens facing both visible and invisible challenges, life can be particularly tough. While some disabilities come with a favorable prognosis and many individuals can lead full and meaningful lives, others may face ongoing complications with age that hinder their ability to engage in a variety of activities. Keeping this in mind, I reflected on the human mind's remarkable capacity to focus on envisioning someone or something comforting and joyful during difficult times.

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For me, teddy bears have always been a source of comfort. When I created the original teddy in my developing series, I did so with a specific person in mind—someone who helps me find calm amid chaos and loved when others mishandle me. Dealing with my own health challenges and chronic pain, I often have to navigate physical discomfort. During moments of dizziness or excruciating migraines, I focus on a person in the room who helps prevent me from feeling overwhelmed. The teddy I created not only represents this individual, but also embodies the essence of genuine friendship. To me, such a friendship calms the nervous system, providing support in any circumstance. True love and friendship can be found in that one person who shows up exactly when we need them, ready to offer a shoulder to cry on, a joke, or simply kindness and compassion. Most times, my real life Teddy has no idea he happens to be in the right place at the right time, like events are coordinated by HaShem.

Not everyone knows how to be a friend to those in genuine need, and many people lack the capacity for empathy, leaving those with chronic illness feeling forsaken and forgotten. Chronic illness can lead to financial uncertainties, deep loneliness, and a lifetime of being misunderstood, often lacking authentic friendships. However, the children who overcome illness and make a full recovery are often even better equipped to be companions to others like them. Additionally, kids can forge connections with others who share similar experiences. Regardless of whether someone fully recovers or not, I wanted to create an image of a joyful character. To further convey this message, I designed the teddy bear to carry heart-shaped balloons, symbolizing that love lifts us up, thus providing the best medicine.



Photo Credit: Nikki Huber

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