



Community Rallies to Save Our Place R' Avi Fishof at Helm of Leadership

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More than fifteen years ago, when Our Place had the foresight to envision and acted to help our youth, government funds were available. "We preferred anonymity shielding our family and protecting the community" said Clinical director, Sony Perlman. Now with budget slashing and economic revisions Our Place is on the verge of termination and these *neshomos* are in danger.

The tales once told are now stories occurring in our own backyards. I received an anonymous lengthy letter this week: "When I was 15, I felt everybody hated me. I started taking pain killers and smoking a lot of pot. I was neglected of love and I used to always think of killing myself. I really felt that I would never become happy. It was then that I was sent to Our Place. When I came there I felt so amazing that there were people that cared about my well being. Being treated like a human came as a shock to me."

As the sense of urgency spikes, our community is responding. "We are anticipating and planning to raise large sums of money through appeals in shuls, fund raising events, parlor meetings and generous donations from *baal habatim* and institutions." stated the new director and noted askan, Avi Fishof. In fact, when Avi was approached by a delegation of Rabbanim and community lay leaders to take over the leadership and after subsequent visits to Our Place and its affiliate, the Living Room, he accepted the position. "I realized the dire urgency of the situation and immediately decided to answer the clarion call of the *gedolim* accepting the challenge of saving hundreds of *yiddische neshomos*," he shared with me.

"Baruch Hashem, with much success, we are within an achievable distance of our financial goal.

With the wisdom and guidance of Torah authorities such as Reb Shmuel Kaminetsky, the Novominsker Rebbe and Rav Mattisyahu Solomon and a host of local *rabbonim*, Our Place has been able to realize a success rate of over 70%. We all have a chance to remove this malignancy ensnared amongst us and help ensure the future growth of our community" he continued.

"If Our Place closed down, there could possibly be hundreds of kids ending up on drugs, other substance abuse and in terrible situations." This idea is echoed amongst many professionals. Although Our Place members are all male adolescents, the organization has a division for girls and a branch for people recovering from drug addiction and emotional horrors, referred to as the Living Room. There is also Yeshiva Simchas Chaim, a high school exclusively for boys, who have been refused by all other Yeshivos. The letter continues, "If Our Place did not exist, I could have deteriorated beyond return. Our Place provided me happiness which I never felt in my life. At the end of the day, if Our Place gets shut down, or is allowed to close, hundreds of kids lives will be affected and shut down as well. Please keep Our Place open for the sake of hundreds of others who are in similar positions." R' Fishof, his staff and communal leaders are also banding together meeting with government officials hoping to reinstate government grants that have been terminated. Your help is urgently needed.

Contributions can be sent to "Our Place", 44 Wall Street, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10005. Avi Fishof can be reached at 212-742-0707 ext 40 or at afishof@ourplaceny.org. For additional information, visit www.ourplaceny.org.