

Preventing Addiction and Overdose: Aleph Institute and Project Tikvah Bring the Community Together for a Common Goal

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A diverse crowd filled Kanner Hall on June 14th as the local community came together to combat the epidemic of drug abuse and overdose. Among the speakers and the attendees were Jews and non-Jews, men in suits and black hats, men in knitted *kippot*, women in head coverings and long skirts, as well as men and women with bare heads and casual summer clothes. As the speakers pointed out, substance abuse and addiction affect all segments of our community. The event, organized by Aleph Institute and Project Tikvah and entitled *We Need to Talk about Prevention*, raised awareness of the issues across the spectrum.

Rabbi Aaron Lipskar, Executive Director of Aleph Institute, opened the event with some history of Aleph Institute and Project Tikvah and expressed appreciation to individuals and organizations that partner with Aleph in its vital work. He mentioned the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *ztz"l*, as the inspiration behind Aleph's work, and then showed video clips of the Lubavitcher Rebbe speaking to the community about education.

Rabbi Zvi Boyarsky, Director of Constitutional Advocacy at Aleph Institute, introduced the keynote speaker, Los Angeles District Attorney Jackie Lacey, who "is transforming the criminal justice system with her remarkable balance of strength of compassion."

Mr. Andrew Friedman presented DA Lacey with a humanitarian award on behalf of Aleph Institute.

DA Lacey spoke about addiction prevention, both as a prosecutor and as a mother. She cited statistics that show an overwhelming increase in opioid addiction



in America. "We are living in a time when drugs have become so pervasive," she said, adding that the legalization of certain gateway drugs "can only exacerbate a bad situation."

"Everyone in this room is susceptible to this problem," said DA Lacey. "As parents, we are responsible for the wellbeing of our children." She recommended being involved in our children's lives, spending time with them, being "nosy," vigilant, and ready to intervene the moment we sense that something is not right.

Next, Jimmy Delshad, former mayor of Beverly Hills, presented a leadership award to David Wiener, a Holocaust survivor who mentors young adults struggling with addiction. Mr. Wiener addressed the audience, urging everyone to "be proud of what you are and never give up."

Next speaker, Becky Savage from Indiana, lost two sons on the same day to alcohol and drug overdose. She turned her pain into a mission to prevent overdose by founding the 525 Foundation, dedicated to raising awareness of prescription drug misuse and abuse. Ms. Savage showed pictures of her family and shared her dev-

astating story. Her sons attended a graduation party, where "somebody offered them a pill, and they made the unfortunate choice to take them." She spoke about the dangers of prescription medications for anyone who they are not prescribed for, the power of peer pressure, and the need for "exit plan" that would enable the children to leave a potentially dangerous situation. She also recommended disposing of prescription medication that is no longer necessary and keeping needed prescription medication out of reach.

The audience then watched a video about Aleph's work. Afterwards, Mr. Ari Stark of Destinations Teen Treatment Programs spoke about the direct impact of the addiction epidemic on the Jewish community. "We can't say that it's not our problem anymore," he said. He cited the alarming statistics of suicide and drug overdose in the Orthodox community and emphasized the importance of recognizing and treating mental illness.

Next speaker, Doug Rosen, LMFT, director of the Partners in Prevention program at Beit T'Shuvah addiction treatment center, spoke about the underlying roots

of addiction. "The problem is much bigger than drugs and alcohol," he said. "We are a gluttonous, materialistic culture. Our kids are not raised to tolerate discomfort." He urged parents to help their children stay connected and remind them what truly matters.

Dr. Donna Miller, director of Chabad Residential Treatment Center, spoke about the "three Cs" in treating addiction – connection, caring, and communication.

Then a recovering addict, Dovid Lebovitz, shared his story. "What made me turn to drugs?" he asked. "Everyone else seemed to have it easy. Why was it hard for me?" He advised parents to teach their children that "life is hard, it will throw us obstacles, but G-d gave you what you need to push through."

The program ended with a panel discussion, led by Tzvi Haber. The participants of the panel were Ari Stark, Donna Miller, Rabbi Yekusiel Kalmenson of Renewal Healthgroup, Sharon Dunas of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Asher Gottesman of Transcend Recovery Community, and David Lerner, a recovering addict.

We Came, We Heard, We Will Conquer!

The Winning Edge 2018 Was Met With Waves Of Positive Feedback

On Monday, June 18th, executives, entrepreneurs, and key business celebrities flocked to Montclair State University to spend the day learning strategies and tactics toward business growth.

Celebrated business expert and sought-after keynote speaker, Jeffrey Hazlett, ushered in the day with an electrifying lecture on the art of being relentless, radical transparency, and key methods for overcoming the fear that stands in the way of success. With fascinating anecdotes and deep insights from his years of experience as CMO of Kodak, Hazlett addressed the necessity for business owners to define their core reason for existence and embrace customer behavior in order to drive change.

"Kodak's mistake is that they weren't in the business of film. They were in the business of memories," he shared.

The next portion of the day brought an engaging and interactive series of breakout sessions which addressed everything from financial, health, and legal matters, to leadership and marketing hacks. Presenters included Saul and Simeon Friedman of Saul N. Friedman and Co.; Michael Macintyre of HSBC; Bradley Nash and Solomon Klein of Schlam Stone & Dolan LLP; Dr. Firzouz Daneshgari, founder of BowTie Medical; Eli Rowe, CEO of World Medical Bank; Moishe Katz; founder of United Refuah HealthShare; Michael Langer, founder and CEO of Gulliver's Gate; Allen Fagin, Executive Vice Presi-

dent of the Orthodox Union; and Yitzchok Saftlas, founder and CEO of Bottom Line Marketing Group.

"At the end of the day, a leader must be the one to make a decision in every situation." Allen Fagin shared, reminding us of Harry S. Truman's famous mantra that "the buck stops here!"

A trailblazer in the field of healthcare management, Eli Rowe, shared that leaders must know their weaknesses, step back, and surround themselves with teams of talent. He reminded attendees that even innovators like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg never finished college and are still extremely successful executives.

The day culminated with a riveting

Brass Tacks panel followed by an engaging closing keynote address from "Innovation Instigator" and business advisor, Stephen Shapiro. In his signature, captivating style, Shapiro provoked the audience out of their comfort zones and into new ways of thinking about change.

The overwhelming positive responses and still-palpable excitement following the conference are testimony to the great success of the Winning Edge 2018.

Attendee, Joel Whitehouse, President of Empire Benefits Solutions shared: "The diverse personalities, ideas, and opinions were so unique. I am excited to hit my desk this morning and start putting their advice into motion!"

Winning Edge 2019, here we come!