

## Ben Porat Yosef's Walkathon Raises Funds and Celebrates Community

Written by By JLBC Staff  
Thursday, 27 June 2013 22:20

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Ben Porat Yosef's Fifth Annual Scholarship Walkathon took place on Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup> and raised over \$120,000. What makes this accomplishment even more extraordinary is that it was done through the efforts of about 150 BPY families who generated over 1500 donations—with most donations being \$50 or under. Over 500 people participated in the actual event on Sunday at the outdoor track of The Frisch School, which graciously offered the use of its outdoor campus to BPY for the Walkathon.

But the story behind the story seems to be the school's pervasive culture of community, which fosters in BPY families a sense of pride, responsibility for one another, and an authentic desire to help fellow families in need provide a BPY education for their children. Several BPY parents commented that they also view the Walkathon as a genuine way for their children to learn the value of helping others.

As event chair, Danielle Tamir, parent of pre-k, third, and fifth grade students explained: "The real accomplishment here was the way our kids got to learn in a hands-on way the true meaning of *tzedakah* and loving their fellow Jew. They didn't know who they were helping to raise money for, just that there are people in their BPY family who need some help and we are here for them in any way we can be."

The leadership of the event also included Deborah Blaiberg and Jamie Toporovsky, who managed all of the "day-of" details and oversaw the dozens of volunteers who helped with the event.

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Walkathon 'frenzy' took over at BPY for several weeks leading up to the event. Creative energy was on display full force, as students sold lemonade and fresh-baked cookies to raise money; parents baked and sold challahs, cakes, and flower arrangements, held cupcake decorating and zumba classes, organized *shiurim*, and washed cars, to name just a few of the efforts that worked to raise money for the scholarship fund.

When the day of the walkathon arrived, the feeling of camaraderie and goodwill among the BPY community was palpable, as families came together in a walking celebration of their outstanding accomplishment. At the Walkathon, Leah Duerr, BPY parent of a second grade student, commented: "We are so amazed at the level of positive energy and commitment that BPY families have. It seems unique to BPY families, and is evidence of the love that we all have for this school, to take this fundraiser to the levels that we reached."

Many BPY parents remark that it is this sense of community that drew them to choose BPY for their family to begin with. Miriam Gitelman-Marks (parent of third and first grade students) remarked, "BPY is a community in every sense of the word, and my kids are in a place where they are respected and valued as its members. When there are *smachot*, we all share in each other's joys and accomplishments, and when there are tragedies, we all support each other in so many ways. The concept of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh la zeh* is embodied in every way at BPY. It is an easy to ask for donations because we believe in the merit of this cause, and it is also easy for the donors to give because they understand that they are contributing to something so positive and inspiring. I could not ask for a better educational environment for my children."

Chedva Breau, parent of a second grade student, underscored this sentiment: "BPY to me feels more like a movement than a school. When I think of BPY I am reminded of that saying 'it takes a village to raise a child....' BPY is fully part of our lives as a family. There are friendships, *chesed* projects, fundraisers, meal rotations when needed, organized *shiva* calls, and the list goes on. We are a community within the larger community."

Asked if he could explain the success of the Walkathon, Rav Ronen, *Rosh HaYeshiva*, further explained, "BPY families have a shared value system. They experience both the value of a BPY education and of being a part of a truly wonderful and connected community. This drives them to want to help others benefit in the same way."

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According to many of the parents, over the past five years, the Walkathon has become more than just a fund raiser, it has grown into an end-of-year festivity for the entire immediate and extended BPY family, full of school spirit, *ruach*, and good feeling.

Ahrona Amar, parent of kindergarten, third, and fifth grade students, says her family looks forward to the Walkathon at the end of the year. "The Walkathon is really so much more than a fundraiser. It's a celebration of the BPY community and the conclusion of another terrific school year. It has become the quintessential feel good BPY event of the year. Low key, connecting, exciting, a little friendly fundraising competition but most important, inspiring!! It is an incredible thing that the gravity of the need for scholarship funds is presented to the BPY community in such a way that it speaks to the heart. Even our really young children get to participate. This is a truly teachable moment for them—because they understand that families need their help to be a part of the BPY family. And yet, the walkathon itself is truly the most light-hearted, fun celebration. We celebrate that we have done it—not just raised the money, but created a committed, supportive, empathic and loving family who takes care of each other no matter what."