

Walk4Friendship LA in Purple

By Berenice Famili

Clad in "Walk With Your Heart" purple shirts, Friendship Circle families from all Jewish backgrounds, unaffiliated and observant, accompanied by teen volunteers from over 58 schools, gathered in attendance for the 5th annual Walk4Friendship LA on September 14th.

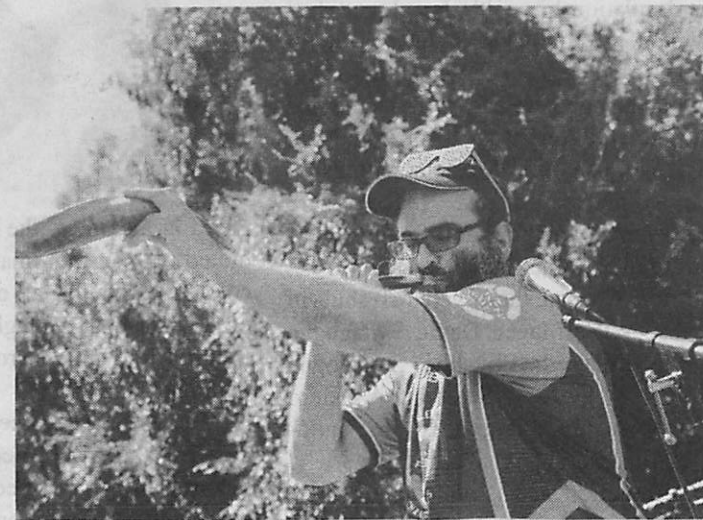
The 3k walk and festival raised beneficial funds and was successful in building community awareness for Friendship Circle of Los Angeles, a nonprofit organization that provides programs and support to children with special needs and their families. The organization raised \$158,000 prior to the event and money is still coming in. Development Director, Gail Rollman remarked, "I am thrilled with the collaborative fundraising efforts of our volunteers, families and donors. We are extremely close to reaching our goal of \$175,000 because of the generosity of those who believe in the work we do in the community. It is an honor to be part of such a dedicated staff and incredible organization."

The Sunday event kicked off with an inspirational opening ceremony. The most unforgettable moment during the ceremony was when teen volunteers discussed the unbreakable bonds they had formed with their special need buddies. Milken Community High School Junior, Melissa Simon said in her speech, "My buddy's positive attitude has taught me to appreciate life and always keep going, no matter what obstruction might be present. The love and joy that Liza and I share together is a feeling I want other children with special needs to experience."

The DJ played "The Macarena" and DJ Casper's "Cha Cha Slide" pumped up the

crowd before the walk left on the walk. Later, the post-walk celebration was set up in a way that fulfilled every little kid's dream come true. With Rancho Park as the backdrop, the festival was designed like a giant carnival filled with a plethora of fun activities, including train rides, rock wall climbing, a puppy party, a toddler play area, a mobile mural lab and other sensory sensations. What made the event even more special was the incorporation of the Rosh Hashana fair with a photo booth section that allowed participants to make Rosh Hashana cards. Every aspect of the event flowed seamlessly while live music played and a Kosher BBQ by Abba's was served.

The ultimate beauty of this empowering event was the positive feeling of unity as everyone came together to support an organization that undeniably does great work.



To learn more about how you can become a volunteer or to support Friendship Circle, please call 310.280.0955 or email info@fcla.org