

**107,000
children are
currently learning
and playing in
school.**

**52 children
are currently
learning and
playing from
a blue bag.**



Easing the burden of illness.

Right now in the tristate area, 50 members of the Kapayim Team are educating and creating at the bedsides of pediatric patients. Each Kapayim team member comes equipped with educational toys, crafts, games, activities and food customized for each little patient's interests and learning level. Each bag costs around \$150 per child.

Donate today so we can continue to alleviate the trauma of illness.



Shopping bags make a statement. Some boast designer brands while others brag of purchases of great value. Some are unassuming and don't draw any attention at all. As dependent as my daughter was on her oxygen-tank for her physical well-being, she was on the blue bag for her emotional well-being. The blue bag was our lifeline; for in this oversized, durable, blue plastic bag lay the key to a successful day; success, in this case, being the distraction of one very smart, little girl. A challenging feat indeed.

The challenge was... this little girl needed to be distracted from dreadful hospital visits, frightening pricks, fasting deep into noon, and sometimes traveling for many hours in a row.

The challenge was... this little girl had a memory so sharp— she remembered every activity she'd already done, and it couldn't be repeated.

The challenge was... this little girl was out of school for four months and expected these bags bright and early to give her a sense of purpose to replace the quiet humdrum her siblings left behind as they rushed off to school.

The challenge was... this little girl, who quite literally had seen it all, slowly lost mobility and was no longer able to use her hands to craft and paint. Now the challenge was greater still.

My daughter excitedly announced to her teacher “Yay, today I’m going to the hospital!”

From these bags the sweetest memories were created. Jewelry boxes, alarm clocks, paintings, and stuffed teddies adorned the rooms of our house. Hand painted ceramic plates and mugs decorated our kitchen. (Each **יום טוב** the bags became really ‘theme’y with little **מנורות, סוכה לעך**...)

The crafts were related to the **פרשה** too. Anything edible was always measured out to perfection. We literally didn't need to bring anything, down to the plastic tablecloth.

I vividly recall the attention Ruchele would draw from the doctors and nurses as they admired her handiwork. They saw how she was filling up her time and not a minute was wasted.

I remember when she didn't cooperate at an exam and I told the doctor, “Just

look at her artwork and you'll see her fine motor skills.” The bond we shared by meticulously creating charm bracelets, painting rocks and umbrellas, making gooey slime, and even planting in the hospital room, cannot be overestimated, especially in a generation when most patients are just



Motzei shabbos we would shmooze and excitedly anticipate what the new week's theme would bring.

doped up with their iPods and iPhones, plugging themselves out of their pain.

I realized how successful these bags were when my daughter excitedly announced to her teacher, “Yay! Today, I'm going to the hospital!” When her teacher asked her why she was so excited about that, she responded, “Because I get to do all the fun crafts.”

Now, don't think we were happy just to keep her busy; we wanted this smart little girl to use her bright head too! So the next mission was to incorporate some age appropriate learning in a fun way. The bags went up a notch, with an array of educational books and games for our smart little prodigy.

The most painful episode was when my daughter, who was so aware of her limitations, answered me when I tried to coax her to paint. She said, “If you couldn't use your right hand you wouldn't either paint!” She went through a stage where the things that once lit up her face no longer interested her in the least bit. We racked our brains and thought some more; how can we lift the spirits of our little girl who was so confined? Then came the *Eureka!* moment! We would do a weekly theme, which our

precocious patient would suggest, and the blue bags would revolve around it. Once more Ruchele's world brightened. Disney World came to life, followed by a week of Hello Kitty. I remember she wore a Hello Kitty t-shirt, slept with a Hello Kitty pillow and blanket, ate toast from a Hello Kitty toaster, and popcorn and cupcakes from other Hello Kitty gadgets. She even wore Hello Kitty tattoos on her hand that full week. Motzei shabbos we would shmooze excitedly and anticipate what the new week's theme would bring. Inwardly, I would cringe and think, “Help! What other stuff would be brought into my already bursting-at-its-seams abode?” It was my daughter's idea to record each day's activities in a diary so we would be able to read about all of the excitement that happened in her final days.

So when the blue bags were emptied from our house, to be sterilized for another child in need, we felt such intense emotion.

It's not the countless blue bags that were filled

Nor the pain and sadness that was stilled. It was our appreciation towards **נפלים** for helping us fulfill Ruchele's daily dream,

In a frightening and foreign realm.

We may have had but mere limited moments, but those bright blue bags filled every one with immeasurable, everlasting joy.

Rucheles's חנוכה savings of \$70 is the first deposit in the Blue Bag Bank account.

Join Rucheles's Fund: The Blue Bag Bank

\$50  Crafts

\$150  1 Bag

\$300  2 Bags

\$750  5 Bags

\$1500  10 Bags

Join our campaign! To donate please call:

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