

# HATZALAH COMES TO CHICAGO



Anyone who has been to NY, NJ, or numerous other communities around the world, has probably heard of Hatzalah. Chevra Hatzalah, is a non-profit all-volunteer emergency medical service with affiliates throughout the United States, Israel and even as far away as Australia. The mission of Hatzalah is to provide premium quality pre-hospital emergency medical treatment at no cost to all who need it, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

The original Hatzalah EMS was founded in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York, USA by Rabbi Hershel Weber in the late 1960s, to improve rapid emergency medical response in the community, and to mitigate cultural concerns of a Yiddish-speaking, religious Hasidic community. The idea spread to other Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods in the New York City area, and eventually to other regions, countries, and continents and now to Chicago.

Hatzalah comprises several thousand volunteers and numerous branches serving communities throughout the U.S. and the world. In the U.S., Hatzalah is in full force throughout Jewish communities in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Miami, Maryland and California. While each organization is completely independent, they share the same goal – to save lives. Similar to other Hatzalah affiliates, Hatzalah Chicago is a non-profit voluntary emergency medical service that provides emergency medical response 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at no cost *to all who need it.*

**HATZALAH CHICAGO**

**T**he impetus for Hatzalah Chicago comes from Tzvi Montrose. Last year, Tzvi came to recognize the value of having a Hatzalah affiliate here in Chicago. One day while driving through the neighborhood, he witnessed a woman who had just been in an accident and sustained serious injuries. He stopped to help and soon realized that he was limited in what he was able to do because of lack of training and a lack of access to the necessary basic equipment. A second incident where he witnessed a child who had a seizure convinced



**CLASSES ARE GIVEN AT THE WI-FI BUILDING BY CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS**

him that he needed to do something. After investigating Hatzalah programs in other communities, what they do, how they function and how they help the community, Tzvi became convinced that Chicago could benefit from its own Hatzalah program. He then approached several prominent figures in the community regarding Hatzalah, and was told to first train to be an EMT and then come back to discuss it. He and his wife did exactly that. They both trained to be EMTs and Tzvi soon spoke to Rivka Kompel, who is a CPA and has an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, and asked her to work with him given her leadership experience in non-profit and business management, and expertise in translating passion into action. They were soon joined by several others

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**(L-R) HILLEL SHAPIRO, TZVI MONTROSE AND SIMCHA FRANK**

who felt just as strongly about the need for Hatzalah in Chicago including Simcha Frank, who recalls many conversations with families that too often regretted not having called emergency services to assist their elderly family members because they didn't want to "bother strangers late at night." Yet they admittedly would have been comfortable in calling on a friend or neighbor down the street to just "check in" on their loved one. With this group of idealistic and dedicated volunteers, the nascent Hatzalah was born. Their attention to detail combined with their energy and passion, as well as their devotion, assures that Hatzalah Chicago will surely exceed the highest standards of medical and halachic expectations.

**WHAT EXACTLY IS HATZALAH CHICAGO AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, WHAT ISN'T HATZALAH CHICAGO?**

Simply put, Hatzalah Chicago's mission is to save lives by enhancing the existing emergency medical services in the Chicagoland area. As they do anywhere they can be found, Hatzalah volunteers put their life on pause to respond to emergency calls, often leaving their jobs, homes, Shabbos meals, Pesach Seders, children's graduation ceremonies and warm beds to save lives.

Hatzalah Chicago was formed to supplement pre-hospital care and develop a higher level of emergency preparedness and support in the Chicagoland Jewish

Community by augmenting the existing services provided by the local municipalities. In emergency medical situations where every second counts, immediate emergency care can mean the difference between life and death. Within the next year, Hatzalah Chicago's goal is to provide emergency medical response within defined geographical boundaries in Lincolnwood, Peterson Park, Skokie, and West Rogers Park. Hatzalah's role is to stabilize patients until 911 arrives and then transfer care to them. Hatzalah is not an ambulance service and *will not* provide transport. They are currently working to be approved and licensed by the State of Illinois through Illinois Masonic Hospital, who will be their resource hospital and is the resource hospital for the Chicago Fire Department, as a private emergency medical service.

Hatzalah Chicago has been established as a grassroots volunteer organization. Its members span and reflect the Chicagoland Orthodox community. The volunteer members will work side by side with the existing municipal emergency service providers who train the volunteers and direct the protocols under which Hatzalah members function. Each of the more than 40 Chicago Hatzalah volunteers undergoes a rigorous and extensive training course that upon successful completion will allow them to sit for EMT-B licensing exams. This training consists of hundreds of classroom hours as well as ambulatory ride time and emergency room observation. Hatzalah Chicago works under the auspices of its Medical Board and Rabbinic Advisory Board who assure that Hatzalah functions within the highest level of professionalism and in

conjunction with the dictates of halacha. The funding for Hatzalah Chicago comes strictly from donors who are already convinced as to the necessity and benefit that Hatzalah will provide the community. Training courses are held locally at the Wi-Fi building and are coordinated through Malcolm X College and Vista Health Systems. Courses are taught by licensed instructors, paramedics with years of experience in the Chicago Fire Department. Local Rabbonim also teach and train Hatzalah volunteers regarding the halachic aspects of emergency services. **Hatzalah members are bound by HIPAA laws and understand the critical aspect of confidentiality and adhere to a strict ethical code. When community members contact Hatzalah, they are assured of their privacy.**

**IS HATZALAH NEEDED HERE?**

One of the frequently asked questions has been "Is Hatzalah really necessary in the Chicagoland area"? The short answer is YES. The reasons are many fold. Hatzalah will save lives, provide our community with the best possible emergency medical care, activate the emergency medical system, and promote sensitivity and understanding.

**TO SAVE LIVES**

Hatzalah has saved thousands of lives in other communities because its volunteers are local and live and work in high population areas. As members of the community they serve, Hatzalah volunteers will naturally be present in shuls, schools and at simchas and will be able to respond when moments might count.

A few examples where early intervention is critical are worth noting. First, anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction to a simple bee sting can be potentially life threatening with seconds or at most minutes available to respond. Second, one in 400-600 children have Type 1 diabetes and are susceptible to life threatening emergencies with little or no prior warning. **Lastly, according to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death for adults 40 years of age and older. Each minute that passes before a cardiac arrest victim receives defibrillation means a 7 to 10% reduction in that patient's chances of survival. Few attempts at resuscitation are successful if CPR and defibrillation are not provided within minutes of collapse. Brain death starts to occur four to six minutes**

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- Joel Gorenstein

after someone experiences cardiac arrest if no CPR and defibrillation occurs during that time.

**TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE CARE**

Hatzalah volunteers approach each call with a fresh enthusiasm to comfort and save lives. They bring a sense of urgency and compassion that is unparalleled because their patients are also their friends, family and neighbors.

**TO ACTIVATE THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SYSTEM**

Hatzalah members may already be on-scene or called when community members initially hesitate to dial 911 because they are uncertain if medical attention is necessary or are reluctant because they are underinsured or uninsured. A quick assessment by an Emergency Medical Technician may encourage the patient to seek definitive care sooner than they would have otherwise. Better medical outcomes usually reflect faster care.

**TO PROMOTE SENSITIVITY AND UNDERSTANDING**

Hatzalah members are trained in both emergency medicine and Jewish law, and with an understanding of the unique needs of the community, are sensitive to cultural considerations and can direct patients to go to the hospital when they may not otherwise. For instance, a Hatzalah member’s explanation of the severity of a patient’s symptoms may alleviate the fear of chillul shabbos (forsaking the sabbath) and inspire keeping the mitzvah of hatzalas nefashos

(saving of life), a form of patient advocacy that can only be provided from within the community. The holistic approach takes into consideration, the patient, the family and the unique culture of the community where we live.

**WHAT MAKES A HATZALAH**



TRAINING CLASS AT THE WI-FI BUILDING

**VOLUNTEER SPECIAL?**

**- THE PATIENT -**

While EMTs are all professionals, the Hatzalah volunteers come to their task with a unique perspective. **Hatzalah volunteers understand that each patient is a human being made in the image of G-d and that they have a sacred duty to assure that each patient’s dignity**

is protected. Additionally, the patient and their family may well be the volunteer’s friend or neighbor. Recognizing this, the role of the volunteer is multi-faceted. Thus, providing immediate medical aid is not the volunteer’s sole task, even if it is the most pressing. Patients have other needs that should not be forgotten. Hatzalah members

understand that the patient may need someone to stay with them in the hospital or care for them at home. Hospitalized patients have additional needs and concerns as well. Will their home be locked and secure? Will their doctors be notified? Is there an urgent matter that requires immediate attention? Hatzalah volunteers ensure that these needs and many others are not forgotten.

Dr. Shimi Krauss, a prominent area dentist and now a Hatzalah trainee demonstrates the spirit of enthusiasm that is typically found

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- Dr. Shimi Krauss



among the Hatzalah volunteers. When asked about his involvement in Hatzalah Chicago he said, “Personally I gain tremendously out of doing things to help the community. B”H there are many chesed organizations that are very successful, however because I am in the health care field I thought it was a natural fit to get involved and help contribute in an area that I already have some familiarity and expertise. I am used to dealing with patient care so I thought if I could expand my skills and help improve someone’s quality of life, or even help save a neshoma, it would be a tremendous zechus. The effort and dedication that it takes to become an EMT is much more than I anticipated, but I hope in the long run it will help save lives, and certainly would then be worth it.”

Dr. Krauss added, “I also must give a tremendous yasher koach to the organization in the way that they are handling the education and coordination of the myriad of details that need to be accomplished. One can easily see how much care has gone into this project. Those that are running it and organizing it behind the scenes are serious, caring and very effective in making it happen, and doing it properly. I am quite proud to be part of this program.”

Joel Gorenstein, another Hatzalah Chicago member expressed his feelings as well, “I was first introduced to Hatzalah over 15 years ago, while visiting New York City when I was in college. I remember seeing young men wearing kippot and carrying “jump bags” and learning what they did. I was instantly impressed. I thought to myself how meaningful it was for Orthodox Jews to be community first responders and EMTs. When I heard that Hatzalah was being formed in Chicago I thought back to that initial impression and I decided that it was something that I wanted to do. I felt excitement at the opportunity to

serve my community and to be an example of what it means to give back in the ultimate Jewish way. I am privileged and honored to be a part of the first Chicago Hatzalah class and I look forward to beginning my service to the greater Jewish community.”

### **THE FAMILY**

The family and caregivers have needs that are often overlooked in a patient-centric environment. They are often pushed to the sidelines as all available resources are directed towards the patient. In many communities, Hatzalah volunteers assist the caregivers who accompany the patients by giving them advice, food packages, and sometimes even some money when people are caught short. Hatzalah sees to it that children left at home will be taken care of. When necessary, Hatzalah volunteers arrange for support and assistance to be provided by other agencies.

### **HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY GET INVOLVED?**

Hatzalah is more than the EMTs themselves. Hatzalah is a community project. To succeed, Hatzalah needs volunteers to function in many different roles including, but not limited to, dispatching and equipment maintenance. The EMTs sacrifice their time and family life so it’s important for the rest of the community to show them their support, moral and financial. Already, several generous donors have stepped forward. Mrs. Phyllis Needle has dedicated a founding sponsorship in memory of her beloved husband Rabbi Marvin Needle z”l. Likewise, Mr. and Mrs. Maury Aaron have generously

**“If even one life is saved, it will be worth all of the effort.”**

- Rabbi Leonard Matanky



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**Rivka Kompel**

pledged a significant donation in honor of Maury's father, Mr. Chaim Tzvi (Herman) Aaron, also becoming founding sponsors. A limited number of founding sponsorships remain. This year's Chicago Women Charity Players have dedicated the proceeds from their show to Hatzalah Chicago. A strong community attendance and generous support will not only benefit Hatzalah directly but will demonstrate that the community recognizes the valuable contribution a viable Hatzalah service makes to the community. Our Sages have taught us that the world was created with a single person to teach us the

immeasurable value of even a single human life and that one who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world. As Rabbi Matanky, a Rabbinical Board member, noted "If even one life is saved, it will be worth all of the effort." The volunteers who work tirelessly as Hatzalah EMTs understand that it's an honor and a special zchus to be a Hatzalah member. Those who work for and on behalf of Hatzalah undoubtedly share in that zchus.

For further information on how you can volunteer or help please visit [hatzalahchicago.org](http://hatzalahchicago.org), or contact Hatzalah Chicago at (224) 534-9867 or e-mail [info@hatzalahchicago.org](mailto:info@hatzalahchicago.org).


Chicago Women Charity Players  
Presents



# Seussical the Musical

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 28 – 11 AM & 3 PM  
MONDAY NOVEMBER 29 – 7 PM  
TUESDAY NOVEMBER 30 – 7 PM  
3000 GLENVIEW RD. WILMETTE

SUNDAY TICKETS AVAILABLE AT  
HUNGARIAN KOSHER FOODS  
4020 WEST OAKTON STREET, SKOKIE  
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TUESDAY TICKETS AVAILABLE AT IT'Z YOU!  
2936 WEST DEVON AVENUE, CHICAGO  
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General admission tickets are \$20, \$25 & \$36  
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ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT HATZALAH CHICAGO  
WOMEN AND GIRLS ONLY, PLEASE

