JEWISH CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Principals rally for worthy cause

REBECCA DAVIS

IN a historic first, the 11 principals of Melbourne's Jewish schools joined together to support the launch of the Jewish Children's Aid Society (JCAS) fundraising drive for Jewish children with disabilities on Sunday.

JCAS presented a cheque for $600,000 to the schools – funds that have been raised over the past year from the hard work of Rosalie Silverstein and the volunteers of the Posh Opp Shoppe; and philanthropic groups and private donors.

JCAS is dedicated to integrating Jewish children with physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities into Melbourne's Jewish day schools.

Held at the home of Sue and Michael Karp, the afternoon tea attracted more than 180 community members, raising an additional $100,000 for the organisation. Michael, who is also JCAS' chair of fundraising, emphasised that over 99 per cent of funds raised go directly to the cause.

"The feedback has been fantastic," enthused JCAS board member Melody Curtis.

"We are a very old organisation that few people have heard of, but now people are really understanding the magnitude of what we do.

"We are making Jewish education accessible to everyone – and that has an incredible impact on the children with disabilities, their

The Jewish Children's Aid Society presents a cheque for $600,000 to the principals of Melbourne's Jewish schools. Photo: Peter Haskin

families, and the entire school community."

As a mother of a child with a disability who is entering prep, Chabad Malvern's Rebbetzin Menucha Cooper shared the significance of her son being able attend a Jewish school alongside his siblings. Meanwhile, Bialik graduate Josh Batten illustrated how JCAS had played an integral role during his school life, before entertaining with an original song he had written.

Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, principal of Bialik College and JCAS board member, offered his perspective on the fundamental importance of inclusion, explaining that a generation of school children had now been educated to embrace difference.

Originally founded as the Jewish Orphan and Neglected Children's Aid Society in 1882, JCAS is one of

the oldest continuous Jewish charities operating in Melbourne, and is managed by a board of volunteers.

"Since 1985, JCAS has helped over 1000 children with disabilities attend a Melbourne Jewish day school and has assisted schools with just under $10 million in funds," Curtis told *The AJN*.

"A wide spectrum of children receive assistance for disabilities that may be physical, intellectual or emotional – from those that have a disability from birth, to those that become sick during school and have to spend periods of time in hospital."

This year alone, JCAS will be assisting 250 children of the community.

For information on JCAS, visit jcas.org.au or contact Melody Curtis on 0418113922.