

Academy's pupils ready to 'repair' world

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NORTHAMPTON — Students at the Lander Grinspoon Academy are working hard toward a brighter and more peaceful world.

Formerly the Solomon Schechter Day School, the academy Wednesday celebrated its eighth annual Tikkun Olam, or "repairing the world" assembly, when students at the school told family and friends just how they were planning to do it.

Tamar Fields, the school's Judaic holiday coordinator and organizer of the Tikkun Olam assembly, told the audience that helping others is "one of the most important things you can do in your life."

She also described a song's meaning that the children were about to perform in Hebrew.

"The lyrics explain that it's not our job to fix all the problems in the world," Fields said. It's just our job to try."

Indeed, students at the school have many opportunities to try. The school's motto is "learning while learning to care," and each class at the school, which runs from kindergarten through sixth grade, picked an area to focus their efforts for the rest of the school year.

Kindergartners visited with the elderly last week, singing and doing crafts with the residents at Ruth's House in Longmeadow to fulfill their Tikkun Olam of communing with their elders.

In the words of one kindergartner, "we cheered them up really much."

First graders decided to use coins collected weekly in their classroom, meant for charity, to purchase toys for sick children in local hospitals.

A first-grader told the audience



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Kindergartners and first-graders sing "Act of Loving Kindness." They are, from left, Hadas Bromberg Seltzer, Leah Barondes and Caleb Staples.

that the class has brought the children balloons and flowers, and donated books, art supplies and toys, and made cards for them.

Second-graders are helping the homeless by selling handmade cards to raise money for the Red Cross disaster relief fund, while third-graders are helping to feed the hungry by starting a collection of food for the Northampton Survival Center.

"When we help the homeless," one third-grader said in front of the packed common room, "we are helping the poorest people straighten up and feel better about themselves."

Earlier in her speech, she said her class was thankful that they were able to get up each morning and straighten and stretch their bodies.

Fourth-graders decided to raise money for the care of animals through Helfer International, which aims to end hunger through helping the poor become self-reliant.

"It's up to us to make sure animals have good lives," a fourth-grader told the audience.

Fifth-graders will visit with senior citizens several times at Congregation B'nai Israel, while sixth-graders will choose this year's environmental project during their annual week-long visit to the Teva Learning Center in Falls Village, Conn.

Guest speaker David Mazor of Amherst, the executive director of "Reader to Reader," an organization that has donated a million books to poor schools in the country, told students that they are capable of great change.

The idea to start "Reader to Reader" came to him, he said, at 3 a.m. one night after going through old books that belonged to his now-grown children before going to bed.

Looking back, he said, he never imagined the organization would grow as much as it has.

"The ideas that you have," Mazor said, "that may start in a



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Second-graders Rose Cole-Cohen and Jordan Kuhr of the Lander Grinspoon Academy explain their class project, which was selling handmade cards to raise money to donate to a local family shelter and to Red Cross disaster relief. Teacher Tamar Fields, left, holds the microphone for Rose.

small way, have the potential to change the world."

Rabbi Yechiel Lander of Northampton, who, along with Harold Grinspoon, the school honored with its new name, attended the assembly.

When asked what he liked best about the program, he said "the children."

"But to see them understand the whole concept of Tikkun Olam makes me feel that our school is achieving its major purpose."