



## Mobile Clinic Serving Underprivileged Children Visits New Rochelle

*The clinic is operated by the Children's Health Fund and was founded in 1987 by singer/songwriter Paul Simon and Dr. Irwin Redlener.*

*By Michael Woyton*



Sitting in the parking lot of Temple Israel of New Rochelle Tuesday was a big blue RV-like vehicle.

The "mobile medical clinic" is owned and operated by the Children's Health Fund, an organization that provides state-of-the-art health care to, among others, children housed in New York City homeless shelters and their families.

The Children's Health Fund, co-founded in 1987 by Dr. Irwin Redlener and singer/songwriter Paul Simon, operates 24 programs in rural and urban areas with 50 of the mobile clinics. They have also been called on to provide health care during such crises as the 9/11 attacks and Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina.

"We treat about 75,000 low-income children and their families every year in these units," Redlener said, adding that they like to call them "doctor's offices on wheels."

The fund's mission "is to try to get kids as healthy as possible," he said.

The reason for the mobile clinic's appearance in New Rochelle was not to treat area residents but to serve a fundraising purpose.

Redlener's grandson, Caleb Redlener, 12, who is a sixth grade student at Albert Leonard Middle School and attends Hebrew school at Temple Israel, wanted to do something for his grandfather's organization.

For the Hebrew school's annual *Tzedakha* (charity) Fair, Caleb Redlener said he wanted to have the Children's Health Fund be an organization for which his class could raise money.

"I suggested it. We had a class vote and everyone said, 'Yes'," he said.

"I know they (the fund) give health care to children who need it," Caleb Redlener said, "and I'm lucky that I have good health care. It's good to donate to people who don't have it."

He said it was a *mitzvah*—a good deed.

"Doing something for somebody else," Caleb Redlener said, "that makes me feel good."

Students from the Hebrew school climbed the front steps to take a tour of the vehicle as Irwin Redlener showed them around.

The vehicle has a reception area, which doubles as the drivers seat while in motion, a nurses station, two examination rooms and a room where blood work and tests can be processed.

The clinics operate on a schedule, and the patients can make appointments for doctor's visits. Medical records are stored electronically, so any clinic can serve any patient already on registered and recorded.

Rabbi Beth Nichols of Temple Israel said the fair is a longstanding tradition at the Hebrew school, and the visit by the mobile clinic provided a unique opportunity.

"The students get to see hands-on an organization that they are helping," she said. "Close up and personal."

Irwin Redlener said the situation his clinics are faced with is a reflection of a broader problem among not only the homeless but the poor—especially in health care.

"There is a great disparity between the haves and the have nots," he said.

"These kids without health care will be liabilities in the future," Redlener said. "As opposed to contributing to society, they will be a drag on it," unless something is done to help them.

The clinics do what they can, he said, as the largest health-care provider for disadvantaged children using a mobile strategy.

"But on the face of it, the injustice is painful," he said.