

# Caring community's Fab, says Hamilton

BY JOHN FISHER

**THE** third Leeds Mitzvah Day brought the community together in a stunning display of kindness, benevolence and good deeds.

The event, which attracted some 150 volunteers, was kick-started at the community centre where Fabian Hamilton MP was invited to get the ball rolling as guest opener.

Mr Hamilton said it was a privilege opening Mitzvah Day and praised organiser Sara Saunders and her team.

He expressed his delight at seeing so many young people giving their time and services to help others.

"You are doing something so important not just for our community, but for the whole of the city," the Labour MP for Leeds North East said.

"People from other communities are looking at us to see how much we care about each other and that is a message we should continually broadcast.

"We should say this is a community that cares not just about ourselves but about everybody else — and that is what Mitzvah Day is all about."

Fourteen members of The Zone, participants in the



**GOOD DEEDS:** Bonnie Berman, Bryan Gothelf, Katherine Gothelf and Emma Falk help out with the shoebox appeal

Leeds Leaders course, helped with good deeds that included working in the community centre's communal garden, giving computer lessons and collecting and distributing bags of clothing and household goods to the wellfairshop.

Other activities included collecting food for Chanukah parcels, reading for the blind, escorting older people to do shopping, sweeping leaves, cleaning windows as well as visiting residents in Skyte House and Donisthorpe Hall.

Donisthorpe resident Vera Banasch was given a special

treat when she was taken with other residents to the Jewish Heritage Centre for Children at the Lubavitch Centre.

The group of eight was given a guided tour of the shtetl by Ruth Bell, the centre's project coordinator.

Vera had wanted to see the centre since its opening earlier this year. She couldn't wait to get back to Donisthorpe to tell other residents about it.

"I am in awe at the reproduction of shtetl life, the detail of the little village shops and the depiction of

Jewish traditions are wonderful to see," she said.

Mitzvah Day was brought to a rousing conclusion when 14 acts entertained at Donisthorpe in the JFactor Variety Show with Howard Lee as master of ceremonies.

Show producer Sara Saunders said it was heart-warming to see the residents enjoy the performances.

"Every act was spot on — we are very lucky in our community to have such talented people," she said.

Rabbi Jason Kleiman passed on the Mitzvah Chain baton to Raina Sheaf, director of operations at The Zone.

Rabbi Kleiman had received the baton from Donisthorpe Hall just before Simchat Torah and Raina now pledges to pass it on to a suitable recipient next month.

The project, now in its fifth leg, was organised by shalich Gilad Amit earlier this year and aims at motivating communal organisations to perform good deeds for one another.

"I was very proud of the young people involved in Mitzvah Day," added Raina.

"One group of young volunteers helped an elderly lady who lives alone and has no family and they enjoyed being with her so much that they are going back to visit her when they can."



L-R Rabbi Jason Kleiman, Fabian Hamilton MP and Sara Saunders

**WELL ORGANISED:** Howard Foreman (UJIA), Raina Sheaf (The Zone), Fabian Hamilton MP, Sara Saunders (Mitzvah Day organiser), Darren Cooper (Housing Association), Tracy Rickler (Welfare Board) and shalich Gilad Amit. Below, The 22nd North Leeds Scouts and Explorers and the 61st Leeds Guides arrive at Donisthorpe Hall to sing for residents