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My 2 cents: Sometimes you can choose your family

By Rochel Leah Goldblatt

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I want to take a minute (and this column) to talk about a pretty serious topic: addiction.

I recently went to Rabbi Yosef Lipsker's house for a Friday night Shabbat meal.

Lipsker is the spiritual leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch of Berks County synagogue, but he is also an addiction specialist who works very closely with the Caron Foundation in South Heidelberg Township.



At dinner, he had a group of people from the Caron Foundation, and at one point during the meal, everyone took a moment to share, much like at an Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meeting.

I was surprised to hear how many people struggling with addiction spent the week looking forward to the few hours on Friday night they spent at the rabbi's.

It wasn't just the food, which was prepared by Lipsker's wife, Chana, and was amazing, and it wasn't just the chance to get away and have conversation outside of the center.

There was warmth and a sense of family at the rabbi's house, which is something that I think everyone needs.

Now, I'm no stranger to addiction. I grew up seeing the effects.

My brother in Maryland just celebrated seven years clean and sober, and he invited me to his home group meeting of NA.

I have gone to a couple of meetings with him before, and I've gotten to know some of the fellow addicts who my brother has become family with.

At his home group anniversary meeting, family and warmth was a common theme in the shares that I heard.

This group of people, who often felt out of place, found their place with each other, and that was the same thing I saw with the group from Caron at the rabbi's.

I come from a big, warm, loving family, but seeing people form a family from something beyond blood is an amazing thing.

It truly shows that sometimes you can choose your family. As a last note, congratulations to my big brother. I'm so proud of him!

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