

LifeTown Legends luncheon ‘uplifts Ohio, saves the world’

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The 2022 LifeTown Legends luncheon “Uplifting Ohio, Saving the World” Sept. 13 drew nearly 700 people to the Greater Columbus Convention Center to not only celebrate the nonprofit’s work to support local children and other vulnerable populations, but also to recognize other organizations and companies doing good work in Central Ohio and beyond.

For Skip Weiler, board chair of the Lori Schottenstein Chabad Center, which oversees LifeTown, this was a time to honor that organization, which he said has done so much good in the community by providing programs including those teaching life, social and pre-employment skills. LifeTown also operates Stop to Live, a substance abuse prevention program, as well as Kitchen of Life, which provides inner-city youth an opportunity to learn cooking and resiliency skills. LifeTown estimates that it serves more than 4,000 students annually at its campus in New Albany.

“I’m proud to support LifeTown, we are one of only a few groups in Columbus that does what we do,” Weiler told the Columbus Jewish News.

He added that a driving force in the nonprofit’s success is Rabbi Areyah Kaltmann, executive director at the Lori Schottenstein Chabad Center.

“Working with the rabbi is amazing – he doesn’t take ‘no’ for an answer and new ideas are always coming forward,” Weiler said. “We want to help all underserved youth in the community.”

Kaltmann works alongside his wife, Esther Kaltmann, who is the director of LifeTown Columbus.

Dr. Derrick J. Rossi, co-founder of Moderna and the event’s keynote speaker, also touched on the theme of service – in this case, providing treat-



Dr. Derrick J. Rossi, co-founder of Moderna, discusses the importance of vaccines during his speech to the LifeTown Legends luncheon attendees. | CJN Photo/Kurt Schaffer

ments that helped protect health during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Rossi helped create the mRNA technology that is used to create numerous COVID-19 vaccines. The visit came on the heels of the latest release of Moderna vaccines aimed at keeping the latest COVID-19 Omicron subvariant at bay.

Rossi used his speech to discuss the importance of receiving vaccinations and boosters to fight COVID-19, and the essential role that information and open public dialogue can play in public health.

“I always tried – and still try – to emphasize to governments when I’m speaking with them how important it is to have information campaigns and have that open discourse with the public on the safety and efficacy of vaccines,” he told the CJN. “If there is anything I want people to take away from my speech at this event today, it’s that science is the way.”

Rossi, like Weiler, also credited Kaltmann for his persistence and persuasiveness.

“I was introduced to the rabbi through a working relationship I have up in Cleveland,” Rossi said. “He got me on the phone, and after one phone call I was thinking to myself that I can’t disappoint my rabbi – and I’m not even Jewish.”

Kaltmann told the CJN why he, his wife and the rest of his family are so dedicated to LifeTown.

“You cannot be oblivious to the cry of a child, it is always important to give back,” he said. “We want to create programs that are welcoming to all children regardless of background or religion, while emphasizing our faith. Our programs are not just for Jewish children, but they do have a Jewish character.”