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A D-Icer serves up water ice on the store's first day.

## Nice Ice!

### Author Mitch Albom opens charitable dessert shop in the D.

**Robin Schwartz**  
Special to the Jewish News

It's not ice cream. It's not a snow cone. And it's not a slushy either. Detroit's newest dessert sensation, in flavors like Woodward Watermelon, Motown Mint, Corktown Cotton Candy and 17 more, is known as "water ice." The smooth, fruity, frozen treat, popular in Philadelphia and New Jersey, is fat-free, cholesterol-free, dairy-free, vegan and even glatt kosher.

It's also the main ingredient in a charitable endeavor known as the Detroit Water Ice Factory, started by author, columnist and philanthropist Mitch Albom, who enjoyed water ice growing up.

"Every dollar is going to help needy Detroiters," Albom explained in a recent *Detroit Free Press* column.

The shop at 1014 Woodward Ave., just north of Campus Martius Park, is now open seven days a week. All proceeds go to Albom's S.A.Y. Detroit charities, a nonprofit organization providing food, shelter, medical care, education and other assistance to Detroiters of all ages. The store's workers (or "D-Icers") are members of Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit's youth training programs and S.A.Y. Detroit's partner programs. They receive valuable on-the-job experience while having fun and helping others.

"The idea came to me a few years ago," Albom wrote in his column. "I convinced the best place in the world for water ice — Primo in Westmont, N.J. — to share its recipes for a good cause. The concept was nurtured and encouraged by Nate Forbes and Linda McIntosh of the Forbes Co. in Michigan. They led us to Bedrock Real Estate Services and Dan Gilbert, who offered store space rent-free in their building, thus giving us a prime window onto the bustling Detroit revitalization zone."

The Detroit Water Ice Factory has been open since early August and busi-

ness is booming. In addition to dishing out scoops in a rainbow of flavors, they offer customers "The Motown Twist" — water ice layered with vanilla or chocolate soft serve ice cream. There was a line of approximately 300 people waiting outside the door on the first day.

"The overwhelming response has far exceeded expectations since the moment we opened," says Marc "Rosey" Rosenthal, co-founder of Detroit Water Ice Factory and executive producer for Albom's radio show on WJR-AM.

#### Mitzvah Projects

Albom began forming charities in the mid-1990s, inspired by his late professor, Morrie Schwartz, the focus of his famous memoir *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Schwartz told him, "Giving is living" — a lesson Albom is now teaching others by example.

The water ice shop provides a unique opportunity for young people who want to give back to their community through "mitzvah projects." Any bar or bat mitzvah student can make a difference in Detroit by partnering with the Detroit Water Ice Factory. In addition to the retail shop, the company has a catering cart that can be reserved for all types of celebrations.

"The simple act of having the Detroit Water Ice Factory at an event provides funding for nine charities in Southeast Michigan alone," Rosenthal explained. "If you order water ice for your function, you are directly helping those in need, doing good and, as a parent, teaching your child about charity and tikkun olam, repairing the world. There are no other criteria except doing good for others." □

*The Detroit Water Ice Factory is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday and from noon to 9 p.m. Sundays at 1014 Woodward Ave. in Downtown Detroit. For details about catering or volunteer opportunities, visit [www.detroitwaterice.com](http://www.detroitwaterice.com) or call (313) 225-1500. For more about S.A.Y. Detroit charities, visit [www.mitchalbomcharities.org](http://www.mitchalbomcharities.org).*