

## L'Chaim

by L. Louis Albert, ACSW, Director Federation Social Services

I'd like to tell you about something that happened last Spring in the Jewish community and which passed by relatively unnoticed.

It was early March and Central Piedmont Community College was in the midst of a dispute over state funds that had been received. The State of North Carolina felt that there had been an overpayment of funds to CPCC and was requiring immediate steps to repay the money. As one economy measure CPCC chose to terminate its community programs for older adults. This decision effectively wiped out the core program of the JCC's Chai Group, an older adult group meeting each Monday. CPCC had provided two instructors each week: one conducted the current events discussion section and another provided artistic instruction in painting. Both classes were extremely well received.

Through its own efforts the Chai Group organized a committee to draft a letter of response to these cutbacks in program services which threatened to destroy their group. The letter went out to appropriate people at CPCC and in Raleigh. To quote briefly from the letter:

...Each Monday come rain or shine thirty-five to forty-five men and women gather together to socialize, attend classes and share a noon time meal. For many of us this highlights an

otherwise routine week and may be one of far too few chances to get out of the house and do something stimulating and enjoyable. . . . These classes...brighten our lives, and keep us involved with new ideas and people. We know what the effects of loneliness and depression are like when these do not exist. The benefits are enormous in human terms... To you it may just be a class or two, but to us it is a very special program which brings pleasure, knowledge and involvement.

In spite of strong feelings no other community group responded to these cutbacks. No other group bothered to raise its concerns. The Chai Group's actions were directly responsible for restoration of one of the two classes by CPCC. No other group had its classes restored. The second class was generously funded by the Blumenthal Foundation until CPCC restored full funding this summer.

The actions of the Chai Group educate the Jewish community in a number of ways. First, you don't get if you don't ask. Second, a group that works together can be very effective in its efforts. Third, older adults are far less fragile and helpless than many people think. And fourth, in any situation, focus on what is positive and possible rather than on what is negative and impossible.

Although simply stated, these "lessons" are applicable to every person and organization in the community, if only we pay attention to them.

## RANDOM THOUGHTS by Muriel Levitt

### THINGS I LIKE:

• Carolina blue skies and balmy days when everything goes well and all's right with the world.

• Ice makers that give you an abundance of cubes without having to kvetch out frozen trays and do the job manually.

• The politeness of Southern people. I am very big on etiquette and "Have a nice day" has become a welcome addition to my vocabulary.

• Going to the theater at the end of a movie's run. The place is usually empty, you have your choice of good seats, and the smell of popcorn is noticeably absent.

• The way that something beautiful grows around our house during all seasons. We have camelias, azaleas, white and red roses, plus honeysuckle with an aroma almost too delicious to describe.

• Little girls who wear ruffled dresses. I much prefer the flouncy feminine look to the ever present blue jeans and tennis shoes.

• The mysterious allure of a blazing fireplace. I am almost spellbound by the colorful flames and the crackling sparks that fly up our chimney.

• Movies that make me cry. They are very few and far between, but when they come around the women I know all line up with handkerchiefs in hand.

• Going to a party where no one, absolutely no one, smokes.

• Receiving unexpected phone calls from our kids in Atlanta showing that they care about us and want to know what's happening.

• Playing Boggle, a new word game. Boggle is so insidiously interesting that you're hooked before you realize it. We have become Boggle junkies and Scrabble is a thing of the past.

• Cakes and cookies made from scratch. What a vast difference there is between mixes and real home-style goodies created by loving hand.

• Books with understandable plots. The new wave of writing is so far out that I relish a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

• Newsy letters from old friends bringing me up to date on all the good stuff that has been happening in cities where we used to live.

• The Japanese cherry tree on my front lawn which brings an

ephemeral touch of early spring. For a brief period the blossoms share their exquisite loveliness with all who pass by.

• ACC Basketball. In my middle age I have become a devotee of this sport. The fast pace, the excitement, and the pride in local teams provides greater excitement than many professional theatricals.

• Parties, gatherings and get-togethers where one can enjoy old friends and also meet people. A stranger you have never seen before could become a valued and dear person in your life. What a wonderful possibility!

• Wash and wear fabrics. My cleaning bills are way down but my washer and dryer are working overtime. I love being able to care for clothing at my own convenience.

• Spending holidays with family. This year my husband and I, our children, and my sister and her family spent Passover together. What joy and delight it was! Family reunions are happy times to think on and remember whenever you need a pick-me-up.

• Restaurants where the lighting is good, the seats are comfortable, and the table is large enough for a party of six. And if the food and service turn out fine that would really be batting a thousand.

• Long distance phone calls at reduced rates. Oh, how I adore weekends when I can phone those I love without a guilty conscience.

• Editors who leave copy unchanged.

• Birthday cards. The older I get, the more I like them. Truth is, I think it's a privilege to age gracefully and I hope I'm traveling that route.

• Lighting Sabbath candles and dining by the glow of their solemn brilliance.

• Crab grass. Everyone hates it but I love anything green that covers the bare spots on our lawn.

• Envelopes that really close tightly when you lick them shut.

• The cool blessings of central air conditioning when the temperature goes above 80 degrees.

• All the beautiful, wonderful, marvelous readers who admire my work and take the time to let me know what avid fans they have become. It is my pride and pleasure to write about the times, places, and people with whom we relate and identify. Although we are of the present, we are also part of the fantastic, incredible and nostalgic past.

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