

On The Issues

By Ira Gissen, Director
North Carolina/Virginia Region
Anti-Defamation League
of B'nai B'rith

In recent weeks we have been addressing audiences from Asheville, NC to Virginia Beach, VA. They have covered a spectrum of interests.

William & Mary

At the College of William & Mary we met on a Thursday evening with Jewish students and faculty under the auspices of the Hillel Foundation. Our remarks focused on the impact of anti-Jewish discrimination upon our choices of: where to live, what to study in school, and what careers to pursue. The discussion grappled with solutions to these basic issues.

Asheville

A large turnout at the Jewish Community Center was further augmented by folks coming in from miles around. An update report on ADL's activities overseas, on the national scene, and in North Carolina was the focus of interest. A lively question and answer period topped off the Sunday afternoon meeting. The visit to Asheville was complete with interviews on television, the daily newspaper, and further meetings on into the evening.

Virginia Beach

The Beth Shalom Home in Virginia Beach provided two audiences. One was a meeting with a group of administrators to view an ADL film and conduct a discussion on Jewish family values. That was followed by our addressing over seventy non-Jewish staff members that same afternoon. The staff development coordinator wrote after the meetings: "Feedback from both the Judaica group and general staff was extremely positive and informal buzz groups, formed later on, attested to the impact of your talk."

Lynchburg

A Sunday afternoon meeting at the synagogue, sponsored by B'nai B'rith, provided a forum to bring the leaders of the Jewish community up to date on the most recent activities of organized hate groups and their leaders. Members of the audience also expressed their concern about the incursions of religion into public education and express-

ed their expectation that ADL would continue to provide the leadership in dealing with that growing problem. We were honored to have Virginia State Senator Elliot Schewel in the audience.

Virginia Union University

The students provided an extremely interested audience. Our remarks covered a period ranging from the origins of the NAACP to the present day activities of hate mongers. Questions from students as well as faculty and administrators who were present were practical and down to earth. Following the meeting we received a letter from the Professor who had extended the invitation: "Feedback given to me thus far is highly positive and, in my estimation, you provided a solid learning experience for our students." We had shared the platform with the President of the NAACP, the Director of the Commission on Human Relations and the Director of HOME.

Norfolk

"Jewish Family Celebration" was the theme of the program at the Jewish Community Center of Tidewater where we conducted a workshop on the topic: "Rising to the Challenge — Anti-Semitism's Impact On Home, Education and Career." The participants expressed interest in a variety of concerns, as varied as that of the total program and priorities of the Anti-Defamation League.

B'nai B'rith Women

We were honored to be invited again this year to speak at the Gila Chapter's Annual Interfaith Seder. The guests were members of the Junior League. Following the conclusion of the Seder we spoke on the theme of "Interfaith Understanding." The Gila Chapter did its usual superb job of successfully putting together an important event.

Thoughts From Adrienne

By Adrienne Rosenberg
Jewish Social Services

Jewish Social Services is moving more and more toward locating resources within the Jewish community for Jewish persons who have special requests or needs. These come in various forms of tzedakah, but what they all have in common is that they assist those in need.

Most Jewish persons seem to share the same stereotypes as the general public, that Jewish people do not have financial concerns or the same social problems the general community has. Unfortunately, although it may be a smaller percentage of the total population, Jewish families are not immune to poverty, divorce, unemployment, or family crises.

Because it is Jewish tradition to take care of those in need in our community, Jewish Social Services wants to encourage individuals and organizations to provide money or items for deserving persons and families. For example, during the month of March, Ha Lailah Chapter of B'nai B'rith Women donated 22 Passover baskets to be distributed by Jewish Social Services. Eleven of these were given to Jewish elderly in non-Jewish nursing homes, four were given to families with children, and seven were given to individuals or couples in need.

The Beth El Religious School donated \$90 of their Karen Ami money to be given to someone in need at Passover time. Clothes were provided by several individuals. Food and gift certificates were made available for distribution. Job opportunities were called in for those who are unemployed. Persons willing to volunteer to assist seniors have called. All donations are tax deductible. Jewish Social Services has contribution cards available in memory of or in honor of, which we'll be glad to send out on behalf of contributors. Because the majority of our services are offered at no

charge, contributions will enable us to continue our present fee policies and to expand future programming.

Beginning April 16, Dr. Marvin Weber will join the staff of Jewish Social Services as a part-time social worker. He will be available up to 20 hours per week. This should eliminate our current waiting list and mean that people who contact us for services can be seen sooner and be given more intense casework. Dr. Weber comes to Jewish Social Services with an extensive vocational teaching and consulting background. Because our largest caseload continues to be in the vocational component, we welcome Dr. Weber's expertise. Dr. Weber's office will be in the Armstrong trailer.

Two very successful groups were begun during the month of March in cosponsorship with the Jewish Community Center. The first of these was a Jewish Family Life Education Group entitled "Coping with Aging," offered for three weeks for grown children of aging parents.

The first week's session was entitled "The Physiological Aspects of Aging." It consisted of numerous simulated experiences to sensitize persons to the physical processes of aging as it affects the senses: vision, hearing, touch, dexterity, taste, smell, mobility and balance. This was to help the participants get in touch with the sensory changes which are likely to affect the way an older person reacts to his changing life situation; although in no way should it be assumed that these adaptations imply dysfunctioning or inadequate coping skills for the majority of older persons.

At the second session, Dr. Rick Deitchman, a psychologist at Mecklenburg Mental Health Center and in private practice, spoke along

with me on the emotional aspects of aging as it affects the family. Some of the issues examined and discussed were role reversal problems, memory loss and how this affects family members, the problems when aging parents are out of state, and coping with one's own feelings as parents age.

The third session consisted of a panel of five, representing community resources serving the elderly. The panel consisted of Rita Arundell of Senior Centers, Bridget O'Connor of Shepherd's Center, Claire Kushner, Care and Share Senior Adult Daycare Center, Marsha Lambert from Visiting Nurse Association Home Health, and Lauren Jones from the Blumenthal Home for the Aged.

The second group, which is meeting for six weeks, is an Interfaith Support Group. Five couples are participating. Topics being discussed are background differences; extended family reactions and pulls; support within the marriage for the "other" partner in a religious setting; the raising of children; holiday participation; rites of passages; and the Jewish community's responsibility and response.

It has been discussed by the present group members the possibility of forming ongoing groups for social support. It is also planned that a second interfaith support group will be held in the near future. Pam Crown, a social worker in an interfaith marriage, and I will co-lead the group.

Jewish Social Services, a nonprofit department of the Charlotte Jewish Federation, provides a full range of professional social work services including the areas of geriatric, vocational, family counseling, adjustment to community and/or family needs. For assistance, we can be reached at 364-6594 or 366-5007.

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