

Dear Members and Friends of Hadassah,

I'm taking this opportunity to advise that the announcements in both the Charlotte Jewish News and Hadassah Highlights about a Game Day/Card Party on behalf of the Women's Abuse Shelter is not endorsed by the Charlotte Chapter of Hadassah. Although the cause is a worthy one, it must be clearly understood that the Hadassah organization does not endorse or financially support any projects other than those within the defined scope of Hadassah. Furthermore, Hadassah would never plan a fund raising event on Shabbat. Any questions or concerns regarding this matter can be sent to me for further clarification.

**Bunny Bramson, President**  
Charlotte Chapter of Hadassah

## Hadassah Medical Organization

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today. Contact Bunny Bramson, President (704-341-8322/bunnybramson@bellsouth.net) or Penny Krieger, Membership V-P (704-542-9402/pbk96@msn.com). ☆

# The Jewish Traveler

By Maxine Silverstein

## NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island may be the smallest of the American States, but it remains wonderfully rich in history. And Newport is one of the prettiest places to find a unique slice of Americana.

I have always wanted to visit Newport and this past fall I got my wish. What a charming and delightful place. Funny, Newport doesn't look Jewish. Its harbors clogged with sailboats and its streets with the boats' preppy owners, this seaside town is a page more likely torn from a J. Crew catalog than from a Jewish history book. But with a 300-year-old Jewish community founded by Sephardic sea merchants, Newport is a reminder that Jewish America did not begin on the lower East side.

The colony's reputation for religious tolerance encouraged all types of religious groups to settle there. The Baptist churches in Newport are the oldest in the United States and the Quakers came to settle in 1656. In 1658, a group of fifteen Jewish families sailed into the Newport harbor. These Sephardim (the Hebrew

word for Jews from the region in the Iberian Peninsula that is now Spain and Portugal), who like their ancestors were seeking a haven from religious persecution, founded the second Jewish settlement in the colonies and Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Salvation of Israel). In 1677, they



Maxine at the plaque declaring Touro Synagogue a National Historic Site.



The Touro Synagogue

purchased and consecrated property as a Jewish cemetery. The Hebrew cemetery here may be the oldest in America. Over the next 100 years the Jewish population of Newport flourished. In 1758, a Dutch Jew named Isaac Touro became the congregation's first spiritual leader. A year later, the congregation purchased land and hired Peter Hanson, the preeminent architect of the colonial era, to design Touro Synagogue. The synagogue was completed and dedicated in 1763.

Virtually unaltered since its dedication, the Touro Synagogue is the oldest standing synagogue in the United States. Seen from the street the structure is all classical grace.

Inside, its ornate yet elegant sanctuary reflects traditional Jewish worship practices. Here, Newport's active congregation and visitors from around the world come to worship and

reflect. We so enjoyed our tour of the synagogue. Admission is free and tours last thirty minutes. Except for some new chairs and a carpet laid over the original, the synagogue looks just like it did 200 years ago.

We did save some time to see some of the marvelous mansions of Newport. During the Golden Age of Newport, at the turn of the century, such illustrious families as the Astors, Wideners, and Vanderbilts established their glittering "summer cottages" here. These homes are incredible and a home tour is such fun. These homes are magnificent and very ornate. One is grander than the next. We visited Hammersmith Farm the home of the Bouvier family. It was used for the reception when Jacqueline Bouvier married John F. Kennedy in 1953. Hammersmith also served as the "Summer White House" during Kennedy's years as President.

Newport may be small, but it accurately reflects many milestones of the American experience. Natural beauty and human skill live happily here, side by side. What a spectacular little gem. ☆

## Community News

### Teaching English as a Second Language

## HIAS Ensures Refugee Clients Have the Tools to Succeed

By Karen Brodsky

It's a great day for an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher when one of her students begins studies at a college. Sevda, a Meskhetian Turk, came to Charlotte as a 30-year-old mother of two young boys. Painfully shy and with very little English, she attended English as a Second Language classes with Dottie Shattuck, one of HIAS NC's ESL teachers. Sevda progressed rapidly. She was doing so well; she achieved a level of confidence, which led her to join an ESL class at Central Piedmont Community College.

At CPCC, Sevda applied to earn a degree as a certified nursing assistant. She had to study medical terminology and prevailed upon Shattuck, who was also new to medicine, to help. After hours of the two of them poring over medical dictionaries, Sevda was able to earn the CNA. She had come so far, she went on to nursing school.

At present, Shattuck teaches nine ESL classes a week, but has taught as many as 14. Joyce Garrett, an ESL teacher, recently joined HIAS NC recently to share in the heavy load.

HIAS has been in existence for more than 125 years. A grandfather, great-grandfather or mother might have been helped by HIAS in Europe, Asia, or the Arab countries, to name a few. HIAS was



In the beginning ESL class, a Liberian and ethnic Chin women from Burma learn with their babies.

founded on the Jewish principles and values of tikkun olam (repairing the world) and pikuah nefesh (saving a life). HIAS NC's director Ellen Dubin estimates that since 1996, HIAS NC has saved more than 1,200 from more than 36 countries.

Through various grants, HIAS NC provides service to refugees and asylees by resettling them and their families, placing them in furnished apartments, finding them employment, helping them to acculturate, registering their children in schools and providing funding for at least the first month of life here. They receive case management for up to six months, ESL classes for up to five years, and aid in finding employment for

up to five years.

The ESL program is a crucial step refugees must make in their acculturation process. Some who go through the program are illiterate in their native languages, having never had the opportunity to go to school. Others were on the run to refugee camps outside of the countries of their birth. ESL, Shattuck says, "helps to get them functioning, handle a job, ride a bus, and work with their children's schools. We teach them to read, write, tell time, and count U.S. money. They learn prepositions of place,

directions, how to call 911, read workplace safety signs, and even what to do in the event of a tornado." These are skills we take for granted, but for refugees they represent a big leap.

"ESL for the refugee client must be very practical. It is geared for the refugees' survival in English. The hardest part is that many don't have math skills," says Shattuck. In a previous position, her first refugee students were Hmong, who came from Laos. They were mostly illiterate and had no written history. Siding with the U.S. during the Vietnam War, the Hmong were targeted for extinction by the Communist government of Laos. Shattuck learned that adult refugees come with "vast experience unlike ours. My

job is to make this relevant to them — to put two worlds together. They worry about losing their identity. They have left so much behind."

With 23 years of teaching ESL classes, Shattuck moves confidently among the refugees, whose many languages and dialects make up a Tower of Babel. Among the populations she and Garrett teach currently are Liberians, Burmese, Iraqis, Montagnard, and Bhutanese. Some students bring their infants on their backs in order to attend the classes. Shattuck says, "I'd rather have them here with their babies than not come at all."

Those familiar with the Israeli Ulpan, or Hebrew immersion program, may think that ESL is similar. It is very different, says Shattuck. Students who attend Ulpan begin with education and experience. They can make notes and have the tangible skills to succeed. "For many of the refugees," she says, "memories are their learning tools."

For more information about HIAS NC, contact Ellen Dubin at 704-535-8805. HIAS welcomes volunteers, cash donations and donations of gently-used furniture and house wares. ☆



Shattuck teaches the advanced ESL class, where a married couple, both Iraqi and a newly-arrived young man from Bhutan all learn together.