

Mazel Tov & Congratulations

Three Community Women Honored by Their Peers Claire Krusch, Suzanne Meyer, and Vicki Parker Receive Awards

The Mecklenburg Times has selected **Claire Krusch**, Director of Marketing and Human Resources of Krusch & Sellers, Attorneys at Family Law, one of Charlotte's 50 Most Influential Women. The award is created to spotlight women in business, government, education and the non-profit fields.



Suzanne Meyer

Founder of the Welcome Committee, Inc. is one of 33 successful work-at-home moms featured in the newly released *Mogul Mom, How to Quit Your Job, Start Your Own Business, and Join the Work-at-Home Mom Revolution*. Suzanne is a

Life Member of the Lake Norman Hadassah Chapter, a member of Temple Israel and Beth Shalom of

Lake Norman and volunteered as an usher at the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival this past March.

Dr. Vicki Parker has been named "Rising Star" in a Charlotte Women Business Owners competition. Parker, founder of The Brain Trainer, has won the NAWBO Rising Star Award from NAWBO Charlotte – the Charlotte chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners. Parker's company, The

Brain Trainer, is an evidence-based brain training and speech therapy center in Charlotte. Vicki Parker, Ph.D., is a speech language pathologist with a concentration in neuroscience who has worked in this field for nearly 30 years and a member of Temple Beth El. ☆

Engagement

Nusbaum-Kaufmann

Judy and Steve Kaufmann are pleased to announce the engagement of their son, **Craig** to **Keri Nusbaum**, daughter of Sheri and the late Jay Nusbaum of Boca Raton, FL. A summer wedding is planned. ☆



Community News

Jews Could be Denied U.S. Refugee Status

By Karen Brodsky

After his mother-in-law was murdered in 2010 in the former Soviet Union because she was a Jew, David* appealed to Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency (CRRRA) to get his father-in-law and brother-in-law out of the former Soviet Union (FSU) to Charlotte.

Grassroots anti-Semitism still exists in the FSU.

Dmitri*, who is also from the FSU, supplied CRRRA with all the necessary papers—and there are many, which the agency filed - to bring his parents to Charlotte.

Now it is a waiting game for both David and Dmitri. If it is possible, CRRRA and its affiliate agency, HIAS, will have success with these two families — but only while the Lautenberg Amendment provisions are still in effect.

In the early 1990s when the flood gates opened in the U.S. to welcome Jews from the FSU after its collapse, HIAS and its affiliate agencies settled thousands of them across the country. The Charlotte Jewish community pitched in to help. HIAS NC — the predecessor of CRRRA — was born during

those years.

So was the Lautenberg Amendment, which is named for Senator Frank Lautenberg, long-time senator from New Jersey. The amendment facilitates Jewish exits from the Soviet Union. According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "It broadens the definition of religious refugee for groups designed by the U.S. State Department as of 'humanitarian' concern." The amendment was expanded in 2004 to include Iranian religious minorities, including Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Baha'is.

In February in a letter, The Jewish Federations of North America, HIAS, and other Jewish and Christian groups appealed to the U.S. House of Representatives to extend the Lautenberg Amendment, which was due to expire in October 2010, saying "hundreds of Iranian religious minorities will be stranded in Iran, unable to access the protection of the U.S."

The Lautenberg Amendment has been renewed each year since its first passing; it expired on October 1, 2010, and was extended to March 1, 2011. This allowed

applications filed since October 1, 2010 to be considered retroactively. Now it has been extended to June 1, 2011. New applications will also be considered only if received by June 1. HIAS is encouraging its affiliates to consider June 1 as the end of the amendment, although there is ongoing advocacy from HIAS' Washington, DC, office to extend it into 2012. It is not possible to know if it will resurface later.

In 1988, the HIAS network resettled 10,300 refugees from the FSU; in 1989, the number jumped to 36,114. In 1992, an increase in the refugee quota resulted in a record number — 48,871 — of refugees arriving in the U.S. from the former Soviet Union. Thousands arrived from 1993 through 2004, when the numbers declined to hundreds. Since, it seems, there are fewer who wish to leave, but the mere existence of the Lautenberg Amendment

entices families who are in the U.S. to apply to bring their remaining relatives here.

There are three applications (six people) pending for families still in the FSU and eight applications (eleven people) for relatives still in Iran that have been filed by CRRRA. The agency is encouraging others who wish to bring relatives here to complete the applications no later than the end of May.

In 2009, Senator Lautenberg celebrated the 20th anniversary of the amendment, saying the U.S. has a "special responsibility to those who have been displaced because of political conflict and those who are threatened by ethnic, racial, or religious persecution, and I have worked hard to guarantee the Lautenberg Amendment is renewed by Congress each year."

This is a different year, and a different time, when appropriations bills are being picked apart and the funding scrutinized because of the government's mas-

sive deficit. Indeed, the refugee resettlement program itself is in danger of being reduced in future appropriations bills. Please find the names, e-mail addresses and fax numbers of your legislators at www.Congress.org and appeal for the continuation of the Lautenberg Amendment and the refugee program:

"HIAS NC and now CRRRA have resettled hundreds of Jews from the FSU and Iranian religious minorities since its inception. It would be a *shanda* — a shame - for us as Jews and for the U.S. if we were to allow partisan politics to end their resettlement and acceptance in our great country. Please let your legislators know how you feel, and please support CRRRA."

CRRRA needs cash donations and furniture and housewares donations. Please call us to donate and volunteer at 704-535-8803 or visit our website at www.carolinarefugee.org. ☆

* Not their real names.

Hebrew Cemetery Association

By Lorrie Klemons, publicity

At the writing of this article, we have just completed the holiday of Passover and with it, we commemorated yet another Yizkor memorial service for those loved ones who preceded us in eternal life. What is it about Yizkor that so connects us to our past? What is it about Yizkor that draws non-observant Jews to the synagogue four times each year to recite the kaddish - the mourner's prayer? What is it about Yizkor that has even the most secular of Jews lighting Jewish memorial candles for their dearly departed?

Judaism is an ancient and historic religion. We are connected by our collective sacred past, our ever-changing present and our precarious future. We were all at Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and the Torah and we have been passing on those traditions for almost 3,500 years -from generation to generation. *L'dor v'dor*.

By the time you read this article, the Passover dishes will have been stored away for yet another year, and it will be Shavuot, the celebration of our receiving of the

Torah at Mt. Sinai. It was the moment when we Israelite slaves became a people, a Jewish people. This gifting of the Torah to us from God took place more than 3,500 years ago, but every year on Shavuot, it is as though we were receiving it all over again. Each year on Shavuot, we renew our acceptance of God's gift. The giving of the Torah was a far-reaching spiritual event — one that touched the essence of Jewish souls for all time. Our sages have compared it to a wedding between God and the Jewish people. One of the meanings of Shavuot is "oaths" and on this day, God swore eternal devotion to us, and we in turn pledged everlasting devotion to Him.

In turn, we pledge our everlasting devotion to those we loved and cherished over the years who have been called to their eternal rest. We loved them in life and we cherish their memory when they are lost. We long to renew the relationship we once had with them. We yearn to recall the joyous shared memories. The passage of time doesn't ever fill the hole in our hearts left by their death. It is

that connection, that longing for renewal, that sense of gratefulness for having them in our lives, and yes, that sense of loss, that keeps us going to Yizkor services and visiting the cemetery where loved ones lie in holy repose year after year.

Rabbi Yossi Groner of Congregation Ohr Ha Torah says that when you go to visit your loved one at the cemetery, you should make sure you are talking to the soul and not to the bones. In doing so, you elevate the soul and validate the eternal relationship that all righteous souls have with God. By placing stones on your loved one's tombstone, which is an old Jewish custom, you leave your mark for the soul to embrace. By reciting Yizkor, you eternalize those memories and perpetuate the traditions of our ancestors.

For more info on membership benefits, graves, prepaid funeral costs, donations, endowments, and/or including the cemetery in your estate planning, contact contact Cemetery Director, Sandra Goldman at 704-576-1859 or 704-944-6854 or director@hebrew-cemetery.org. ☆

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