

CRRA Reunites Russian Jewish Family

By Ellen Dubin

The last time she saw her father and brother was at her mother's funeral three years ago. Evelina ("Eva") had been told her mother's murder was a hate crime committed by thugs due to the family's Jewish religion. It was only a few months after Eva had contacted the Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency (CRRA) to find out if she could apply to bring both parents and her brother to the US. Not yet eligible for citizenship herself, Eva and her husband David met with Ellen Dubin, Executive Director of CRRA. Dubin suggested she file an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) under the Lautenberg Amendment. As the paperwork got under way, Lautenberg was not renewed by Congress and no Jews or other persecuted religious minorities could come to the US from either the Former Soviet Union (FSU), or Iran. HIAS, CRRA's national office, held the papers. Eva's father suffered one stroke, then another, then a third as he anxiously awaited to be reunited with his daughter and live in a society that celebrates freedom of religion. Eventually Congress permitted a short window for Lautenberg applications and HIAS began to proceed with the AOR. There had been delay after delay and finally, the family was told that they would travel to the US as refugees and be reunited in Charlotte.

It has been a long and arduous process, but CRRA has been with Eva and her family throughout.

Eva, her father Ilya, and brother David are at last reunited. They were able to see her daughter, Naomi, who is now eleven, and her son, Jacob who is about to celebrate his third birthday. They had never met Jacob before, as he was only two months old when his grandmother was killed.

When the family arrived, they stayed with Eva and her family temporarily, as all awaited the availability of a nearby first floor apartment. CRRA is helping to set up the apartment near Eva's home including furniture, furnishings, and food. When a refugee family arrives, CRRA helps them apply for their social security cards, access social services, enroll in English as Second Language classes, enroll school aged children in school and provide them with case management services for up to three months. CRRA is appealing to the Jewish community for help with this family. Since Eva's resettlement, Ilya suffered three strokes after his wife's homicide, it is questionable if he will be able to work in the near future. Eva's brother, David has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and as a result is both mentally and physically challenged. Neither physical therapy nor special education classes were available to him in Russia.

CRRA is looking for funding to help support Ilya and David.



Front: David. Rear, left to right: Eva, Jacob, Ilya, Naomi

David should start to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in a few months; until then the father and son will receive a combined welfare check of only \$362.00 per month, certainly not enough to pay rent, utilities and other very basic necessities.

Volunteers will be needed to take them to medical appointments, as CRRA expects there to be many during the first few months they are in the U.S. The family requests a wheelchair (the one in the photo is very old and heavy, making it difficult for Eva's father to manage), a blood pressure gauge, bed side commode, and grab bars for the bathroom.

Additional volunteers and tax deductible donations, both financial and in-kind are needed for this family as well as the 300 other people resettled by CRRA each year. Financial contributions earmarked for this family should read "Melamed" on the memo line. For more information, please contact the CRRA office at 704-535-8803, call Dottie Shattuck, the volunteer and donations coordinator at 980-228-1020 or stop by the office at 5007 Monroe Rd. Charlotte, NC 28205. You can also contact Ellen Dubin at ellen.dubin@carolina-refugee.org. ☆

Lifelong Friends – Friendships Made at the J That Have Lasted over the Years

By Lauren Abeles

When I moved here six years ago from a small town in New England that had a relatively large Jewish population, I wasn't sure if Charlotte, NC, was a place where I would feel comfortable raising my kids Jewish. When my realtor brought me over to see the JCC, I knew instantly that my family and I could live and thrive in Charlotte. I could see that we would have a place to meet and connect with other Jewish families. Shortly after joining, my kids met other Jewish children in their very first JCC sports class with Coach Dan and Coach Stephanie. Since their first sports class they have continued to be with many of the same kids at camp, soccer and basketball teams, Teen Council Meetings, and tennis programs.

Laura Orland met her close friends, Kaitlyn Laxer and Rachel Frick, when they were all three years old at the Levine JCC pool the summer she moved to Charlotte. Their parents became friends, too, and they all shared holidays and travelled together on vacations. She has fond memories of cheerleading for her brother's basketball games at the J and attending Purim Carnivals, Teen Camp, and joining the same BBYO chapter. Now in college, the three still consider themselves BFFs. Laura says it is easy to stay friends since they share a bond from a young age.

The girls also grew up with family friends Zachary Maniloff,



When they were young: Keith Orland, Zachary Maniloff, Jared and Jason Stier, Rachel Frick and others.

Adam Levinson, Jake Sinsheimer, and Rachel's brother Eric Frick as well. The boys also met each other when they were three-four years old. They played sports at the J, went to Camp Mindy in the summers, and later attended the MacCabi games together. They participated in BBYO, played interfaith basketball, and worked out in the J Fitness Room.

"There is no doubt the JCC played a major role in creating friendships that not only wouldn't have been formed in the first place, but have been maintained over 15-18 years," says Jake Sinsheimer

Zachary Maniloff also made many lasting friendships through the J. He met some of his closest friends at the Charlotte Jewish Preschool. Other friends he met through J sports, Jammin' at the J, and years later they all went on a Birthright Israel trip together. Even though they went to different schools throughout the years, the friends still get together during the summer and school breaks for basketball games and working out at the J's Fitness Center. Zachary is spending this summer in Manhattan with three of his close friends from Charlotte: Eric Frick, Adam Levinson, and Laura Orland. They are all fortunate to have job internships through

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Rachel Frick, Laura Orland, and Kaitlyn Laxer: pictured left, in preschool; pictured right, today.



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