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Israel Retreat Campaign Chairman's Retreat Held in Israel

by Sara Schriebman

During the last week in June, I was privileged to be in Israel on a mission with 50 other people who represented Jewish communities from all over the United States. The United Jewish Appeal Annual Chairman's & Director's Retreat was held for the first time in Israel so that we could all witness and experience first hand, our partnership with the people of Israel. It had been 11 years since Mike (my husband) and I were in Israel. The changes that had taken place are almost indescribable. In many ways, Jerusalem, like Charlotte, is enjoying a building boom: cranes everywhere, major construction projects underway and new housing rising on every hillside.

There was an emphasis during the mission, to help us realize that the Israeli people are our family and that not only do we share a common past, but common visions and common wishes for the future as well. We also have a collective responsibility to take care of Jews everywhere and nowhere is that more evident than in Israel.

On our first morning in Israel we visited Hadassah Technical College. I could immediately see our partnership, not only with the school in Israel but with Hadassah women every-



Campaign Chairman Visits Gaza Strip on Recent Trip To Israel
Pictured (from left) are Audrey Krakovitz, Shai Chermesh, Chair of Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council, Sara Schriebman, Brigadier General in Charge of Gaza Strip security and armed Israeli soldier.

years, sitting at computer terminals in this class. I was even more amazed when I looked at a screen and saw that the pro-

tural Center to talk to the director and a number of volunteers who are creating programs and opportunities to assist the Olim to acculturate into Israel's society. I was most impressed with an older woman who, by her own admission, was too old to get a "job." Instead, she is seeking grants and creating programs to provide opportunities for the Olim to enjoy the cultural life in Israel and to interact with Israel's young children as well as to experience other programs that will assist them in getting settled into society. Her energy and enthusiasm made us all feel that the efforts on behalf of the 500,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union was in excellent hands, the committed hands of one of their own.

We next had lunch at Beit Canada, an Absorption Center where the families who were recently rescued from Yugoslavia were our special guests. Seated at my table was the 11-

year old granddaughter of Hardaga Susic, a Righteous Gentile. Mrs. Susic and the other members of her family were there. Her daughter, Ava, who is going through conversion, spoke about their experience of going to the Jewish Agency to ask to be rescued. We then viewed a videotape and saw the Susic family among the crowds of people being rescued. One could truly feel the danger of this rescue and the genuine miracle of getting all the Jews and others out of that place.

Exposure to Jewish continuity and Jewish education were two areas of great importance during this mission. We were able to visit two youth programs - the first, the Livnot Center where Jewish youth from all over the world came together in search of their Jewishness. In this program they learn about their Jewish roots and heritage and at the same time work with Jewish people in Israel, experiencing their Judaism in an intense way. The other youth program we visited was OTZMA, a ten month Israel experience for college students, many of whom had already finished college. These students, who were sponsored in part by the Federation in their home communities, have

made a commitment to bring back to their communities their talents and experiences. Some of the young men and women we spoke to were planning to enter Jewish Federation or Jewish Community Center professional lives. Others were going to become Rabbis or teachers in their synagogues' Hebrew and Sunday schools.



Sara Schriebman

The future of our Jewish communities is very exciting if these young people and these programs are any indication.

End of Part One



where whose dollars are supporting this school in the same way that dollars from our Federation are supporting it. The first classroom we entered was a computer programming class. I got a satisfying feeling as I witnessed Ethiopian Jews, who have been in Israel about three

programming language was English. The expectations for these students were very high - communicate in Hebrew, program using the English language. The goal - become contributing Israeli citizens.

From the college we travelled to the Russian Olim Cul-

Inside The CJN

Jewish Family Service...Page 7
Jewish Federation.....Page 8
Teen Page.....Page 12
JCC.....Page 14
Candlelighting.....Page 32

May You All Have a Healthy and
Contented New Year
from the
Editorial Board and Staff
of the
Charlotte Jewish News