



Women's Business and Professional Group Kicks Off the 1995-96 Season

By Meredith Levy

The Women's Business and Professional Group, co-chaired by Gail Osborne and Judy August and sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, has finalized plans for the first three meetings of the year. The B&P Group will kick off the 1995-96 season on Wednesday, September 20 with a *No Agenda Luncheon* uptown at Si! Piazza at 11:30 a.m.

Si! Piazza, a new uptown restaurant, is located at 227 West Trade Street in the Carillon Building. The cost of the lunch is \$10, payable at the door. Parking is available in the Carillon parking deck and Si! Piazza will validate the parking ticket. Please RSVP by September 12 to the Federation office at 366-5007.

On Wednesday, October 18, Stacy Levinson will host a dessert reception at 7:30 p.m. with Sandra Feldman as guest speaker on Sexual Harassment. On Wednesday, November 15, the group will meet for lunch at Providence Cafe at 11:30 a.m. The Women's B&P group alternates its gatherings between lunch and dessert in order to be flexible for its participants.

The B&P group meets monthly and provides an excellent opportunity for women to network and exchange ideas. This year's meetings will cover such topics as sexual harassment, politics in North Carolina and the challenges of juggling work and family. The meetings are open to all women currently in the work force, as well as those planning to enter or reenter the job market.

This year's committee members include: Ellen Block, Ruth Cohen, Sandra Feldman, Ellen Goldberg, Wendy Hennes, Sherrie Kantor, Alison Levinson, Stacy Levinson, Meredith Levy, Liz Mann, Debbie Rivkin, Tricia Sinoway, Julie Tache, Debra Van Glish, Terry Waldinger. For further information about the group and how to get involved, please call the Federation office. Your input is always welcome!

Small Town America: Being Jewish Takes Real Commitment

New York, NY — In the bible belt, Christian friends worry about your eternal salvation; in some parts of the Pacific Northwest, the Rabbi is the only Jew who wears a kippot twenty-four hours a day. In Key West, you give your money to the United Jewish Appeal not knowing that you're repaying a debt from decades before.

These are the stories of Small Town, U.S.A. Where Jewish life requires a commitment far beyond what most urban Jews can imagine.

"There's no hiding in a small Jewish community. If you work for UJA, you also have to work for B'nai B'rith, your congregation, Hadassah, everything," says Dr. Stanley Hersh, Waco, Texas, a member of the executive committee of the Network of Independent UJA Communities (NIUC).

"You do have to do things you don't really want to do," agrees Gene Hupp, NIUC's Washington State Chair. "A few years ago, some members of The Spokane Club wanted to bring down the club's religious barriers, and invited me to join. I'm not a country club guy, but I felt an obligation to do it. It took some time and the expulsion of a couple of bigots but it happened."

Spartanburg, South Carolina-businessman Ben Stauber, whose father was a rabbi, had to travel to larger cities to join BBYO. "Being one of only a handful of Jews was normal for me. There wasn't a lot of anti-Semitism. In fact, non-Jewish friends used to celebrate shabbat at our house on Friday nights. But as I got older, I had to seek out Jewish life."

UJA research found that there are more than 450 independent American Jewish communities not connected to Jewish federations. And in those communities, there are at least 350,000 Jews; 70,000 of them under 18. Beyond that, the

number is growing as young and middle-aged Jews move to smaller communities for a better quality of life. Nashua, New Hampshire's Jewish community has grown from 100 to 700 families. Reno, Nevada could barely support one synagogue ten years ago, now it has three.

In anticipation of this growing trend, in 1993 United Jewish Appeal launched the NIUC to build an infrastructure that links America's small Jewish communities.

Leading the NIUC effort is Martin F. Stein, a prominent Milwaukee businessman who headed the \$60 million Operation Moses campaign. When asked why he took on the new portfolio, Stein says that when he served as National Chairman of UJA from 1986 to 1988, he realized that "national Jewish organizations, especially UJA, have an obligation to reach out to small independent communities ... Deep down, I want to help Jews be more Jewish."

To help meet those needs, NIUC began to publish its own newspaper, Network, three times a year. The Network debuted in Spring 1994 with a mailing list of 25,000 people; and included subscription coupons and mission information requests — 150 people responded. The next issue was sent to 40,000 people and 250 coupons came back. In response to requests like these, the upcoming issue of Network will be distributed to 65,000 households in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Because most Jewish people in small towns still get their news from temple newsletters, the Network also is being offered in an abbreviated camera-ready form. Other things in the works: personal ads and the Network on the Internet.

Another NIUC plan just under

way is the Israeli Emissary program, where an Israeli is invited for a two-month stretch into a state to help organize its small Jewish communities. In a trial run, Michigan grew from seven active campaigns to fourteen. Emissaries are now in Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin, with start-ups set for Virginia, West Virginia, Florida and North Carolina.

NIUC North Carolina State Chair Linda Beerman, who is also a UJA Young Leadership Cabinet alumna, is excited about the arrival of her Israeli Emissary. "We have meetings already set up for his entire stay. The program has created so much enthusiasm."

Beerman and NIUC Nebraska State Chairman Gary Hill agree that it's tough to be maintain your Jewish identity in smaller communities and maybe that's why the communities are so strong. In any case, the NIUC has been an enormous help.

Repaying A Debt

Last year, when United Jewish Appeal Assistant Vice President Russell Robinson made a trip to Miami, he decided to make a detour to Key West. Gladys M. was a contributor to the UJA and had been for many years, but, because Key West is one of the country's 450 independent Jewish communities, no one at UJA had ever met or talked with her. As the new director of the Network of Independent UJA Communities, Robinson decided to make the outreach.

Gladys wasn't interested: "I'm 82. I'll continue to give the money. ... just leave me alone." Robinson persisted and the meeting was set. It wasn't going well. "It was a hot day and a cold meeting," he said.

Soon, Gladys started to reminisce. She mentioned that she was from Romania. She had lived in Key West since she was two, but she had relatives — aunts and cousins — who had remained there. They had told her about the food packages they received. Many times, that was the only thing they ate in a week. Gladys said that if she knew who gave the food packages to her family in Romania, that would be "something worthwhile." Those are the people to whom she would like to contribute. Robinson told Gladys she's been giving to the right people all along — The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), one of the primary UJA-sponsored organizations. The JDC has been running its food program throughout Romania for decades. In fact, it continues today, with more than 50 trucks distributing shabbat meals every Friday.

Gladys started to cry. Robinson said, "Come to Israel with me." She said she was too old, too tired, didn't have a passport. Robinson said he would take care of the passport. She gave him her birth certificate. It turns out, Gladys is 87, not 82. Since then she's been to Israel four times. The last trip she took her daughter and son-in-law; and Gladys now plans to send all her grandchildren.

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