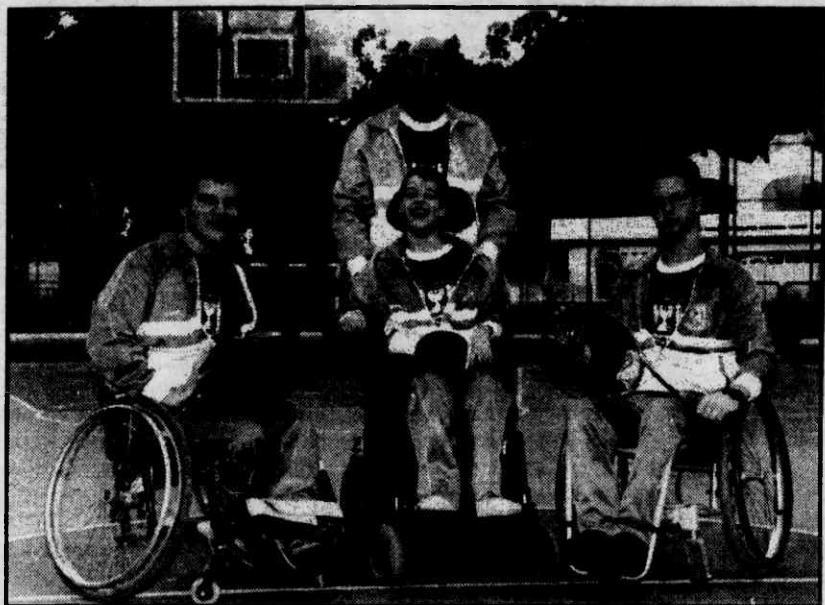


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Seated, right to left,
Ilan Lusky, Amir
Neufeld and Boaz
Kremer. Standing,
Reuven Heller.

Special Jewish Athletes Will Come to Charlotte

By Cynthia Chapman

Charlotte will play host to some special young athletes on December 4 at the JCC, thanks to the generosity of Abraham and Rose Luski and the Friends of Israel Sports Center for the Disabled. A tribute reception and wheelchair sports exhibition featuring children with disabilities from Israel will introduce our community to these young people. To help you appreciate their accomplishments, we provide you with some background information about the participants.

Amir Neufeld, athlete, is limited in his mobility because of cerebral palsy from birth. His is now fourteen years old and has only limited control over his arms and upper torso. He uses an electric wheelchair which he operates by using stick hand controls. He joined the Israeli Sport Center for the Disabled when he was three and he now mainly concentrates on swimming to improve his motor skills and strengthen his self-confidence. Amir is in the eighth grade at the Center's school, which coordinates its educational program with another junior high school. Amir serves as the pupil's representative for his class and is an excellent student, particularly in math. He uses a computer in the classroom with specially adapted controls.

Ilan Lusky was born with a muscular disease which affected both his legs. When he first came to the Center at age four,

he mobility was limited to crawling. With intensive work, his physical condition improved. He trained hard four times a week and concentrated on swimming, field events, table-tennis and tennis. He took first place several times in the Rosenzweig Family Championship for Disabled Children in Israel. When he was twelve, he won the World Championship for Disabled Children in Miami. Now seventeen years old, Ilan swims and does wheelchair racing. Like Amir, he is also an excellent student.

Boaz Kremer was in his mother's womb during an automobile accident and experiences paralysis as a result. He is a triplegic; both his legs and his left arm are affected. He uses a wheelchair for mobility and is active in basketball, tennis, table-tennis and swimming at the Center. He won four gold medals in Miami at age twelve for swimming and athletics at the World Championships for Disabled Children. His favorite game is basketball and he has a reputation as a real play maker. He has been chosen to be a part of the Israeli Youth Basketball team. Besides sports, Boaz enjoys playing the piano. He is an outstanding high-school student as well.

Reuven Heller, the team Coach, worked with wounded soldiers at a rehabilitation center during his Israeli army service.

He later became Head

Coach at the Israel Sport Center for the Disabled, and coached the Israel National Wheelchair Basketball team, which won many Olympic medals, and world and European championships. At the 1980 Paralympic Games, Reuven was chosen as the best international wheelchair basketball coach. He is a member of the International Wheelchair Sports Coordinating Committee, and is a member of the International Wheelchair Sports Executive Committee.

Moshe Rashkes is the Director of the Israel Sports Center for the Disabled and former Chairman of the Israel Disabled War Veterans' Association. Mr. Rashkes was wounded in the 1948 battle for Jerusalem and received the Citation of Valor. He is also an author, scriptwriter and dramatist.

Editor's note: Specialized adaptive equipment such as the individuals above need to lead active lives costs thousands of dollars. Ask Tammy Menaker, who was formerly Counselor-in-Charge with the N.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Independent Living Program, where we worked together. An electric wheelchair can cost a minimum of \$8,000. Specialized athletic wheelchairs, made of lightweight materials, are very expensive as well. Support these young athletes, their accomplishments, and the Sports Center by coming out to the JCC on December 4!

L'Chaim Charlotte '96 Great Success

The inaugural L'Chaim Charlotte festival on October 13 drew more than 3,000 people to Shalom Park to celebrate and explore Jewish heritage, culture and faith.

"The response was overwhelming in terms of turnout, enthusiasm, and positive comments during and after," said event chair Adam Bernstein. "Clearly, this was an idea whose time has come."

The festival was presented by the Jewish Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte as an outreach and community-building project and as part of the 10th anniversary celebration of Shalom Park.

"Our goal was simply to bring Jews and non-Jews together to celebrate and learn more about Jewish culture and heritage," Bernstein said. "With the exception of High Holy Day services, no other single event has drawn that many people—and certainly non-Jews—to the park at one time. It was a success and set a solid beginning for what we hope will be an annual event that the Jewish community can be proud of."

Brightly-colored tents with exhibits from 19 area organizations stretched across the entire lower parking lot in front of the JCC's main entrance. An eclectic mix of Jewish music, provided by everything from rousing klezmer bands to children's choirs, filled the air. Festival goers wandered from booth to booth, pausing to sample ethnic food such as falafel, knishes, blintzes and bagels from the food tents. In front of the stage, circles of people swirled and clapped as they learned Israeli folk-dancing.

The educational theme was prevalent throughout. At Temple Beth El's tent, volunteers wrote visitor's names in Hebrew on refrigerator magnets. More than 400 bags of Jewish baked-goods were sold, each with a tag explaining the religious relevance of the enclosed mandelbrodt, rugulach or other tasty treat. At the Charlotte Jewish Pre-School booth, youngsters decorated their own kipot. Tzedakah was the theme of the Chavurah Tikvah exhibit, where visitors were invited to build and decorate their own tzedakah boxes. Dozens of people toured the tem-

ples and the JCC building.

Perhaps the highlight of the day was a mock Jewish wedding ceremony. Rabbi Jim Bennett "married" Jennifer and Jonathan Lahn, pausing to explain the rituals and nuances to the large crowd of onlookers. The ceremony featured singing by Cantor Elias Rookhvarg, and there was even chair dancing at the end.

Event organizers were pleasantly surprised by the turnout, although the large crowd posed challenges. Walkie-talkies crackled non-stop as volunteers scrambled to find parking spaces and re-supply food and drink vendors, who were overwhelmed by demand.

"As with any first-time event, there were glitches, and we learned a lot," said Cary Bernstein, project coordinator. "But what was amazing was there were no complaints. Even people waiting for food—and there were times in the afternoon when those lines were very long—told our volunteers, 'No problem—we're having a great time.'"

L'Chaim Charlotte was the brainchild of JCRC member Jerry Klein, local radio talk show personality and long-time Charlotte resident. It follows several earlier attempts to establish a Jewish festival similar to the Greek community's annual Yiassou Festival.

The Bank of Mecklenburg was the lead corporate underwriter for the festival. Presbyterian Healthcare Services, Temple Beth El, Temple Israel, the Federation and the JCC also provided financial support.

Planning is already underway for L'Chaim Charlotte '97. To volunteer, or for more information, contact Cary Bernstein, Federation Development Director and project coordinator, at 365-5007, ext. 209.

Many, many thanks to all who volunteered to make this year's effort such a huge success. Special thanks go as well the following for all their hard work: Wendy Rosen (L'Chaim Booth Organization Co-Chair), Jerry Klein (L'Chaim Co-Chair), Priscilla Walters (Event Planning Consultant), Yossi Shem-Avi (Entertainment), Debby Rosenberger (Food), Susan Hennes (Decorations) and Julie Tache (Media Relations Chair).

Federation Kicks Off Bernstein Leadership Development Program

As exciting new program sponsored by the Jewish Federation will offer the next generation of Jewish leaders an opportunity to learn more about what it means to be Jewish.

After a very successful preview kick-off party on September 7th, fifty-three people have joined the program.

Stacy Gorelick, Federation Chair for Leadership Development, said that she was "overwhelmed. Our goal is to pre-

pare the next generation of leaders for the entire Jewish community. Strong leadership is the key to success for the future."

Ms. Gorelick also announced that Don and Bobbi Bernstein have graciously agreed to sponsor the program for the first two years. The Bernsteins, who are strong and active community leaders, felt that underwriting this program would contribute to the future overall strength of the community.

Steering Committee members

Alison and Mark Lerner and Stacy and Dan Levinson worked together to create a program that will be both stimulating and informative.

Participants will meet over the next 18 months to increase understanding of their own Jewish identity and its effect on their roles as leaders. The itinerary has been created to foster understanding of the organized Jewish community, its local, national and international agencies.

The first meeting of the pro-

gram was held on Sunday, October 6th at the home of Mark and Louise Bernstein. Emily Zimmern, former Federation President and UJA National Young Leadership Cabinet Chair, spoke about her experiences as a leader and challenged the participants to take advantage of this leadership program as a way to expand their Jewish horizons.

Other featured speakers in the first year will include Malcolm Hoenlein (Executive Director of

the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations), Karen Marcus (Co-Chair of the UJA National Young Leadership Cabinet), and Joseph Telushkin (renowned Jewish author and scholar).

In the Spring, the group will take a one-day trip to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and in March of 1998, they will attend the UJA Young Leadership Conference, also in Washington.