

## Partnership and technology bring Israel 'home' for North Carolina high school students

By Jodi Keyserling

"Thank you for including me in this [cultural] partnership. I can not believe what a difference it has made to me. I hope that it affects the students as much as it has me." — Thelma Kastl, a teacher at Ashe County Career Center, a vocational high school.

For most Americans, the prospect of living in Israel is distant and removed from their daily lives, but for many students in North Carolina, the challenges of living in the Middle East have adopted a more personal significance. Technology and hard work have made it possible for high school students in Ashe County, North Carolina, to be linked in a cultural exchange with high school students halfway across the world in Ramat HaSharon, Israel. Through a program called International School Partnering through Technology (ISPT), coordinated by the North Carolina Center for International Understanding (NCCIU) and facilitated by the North Carolina-Israel Partnership (NCIP), high schools in North Carolina and Israel have been partnered with the goal of exposing students to new cultural norms.

The ISPT program involves students from both countries, ages 15 through 17, working together to complete a task developed by their teachers.

The assignments can involve the use of e-mail, videoconferencing, interactive chats and the production of World Wide Web pages if possible. Although the first tech-

nological exchanges were made only in mid-January, students have already been able to share much more than the information needed for the prescribed assignment; the road to greater friendship and understanding has been embarked on.

The extent of this relationship was realized as recent events in the Middle East began to unfold. In response to an e-mail from Jodi Schenck, an English teacher at Rothberg High School in Israel, about fears that had been surfacing in Israel over the possibility of an Iraqi scud attack on Tel Aviv, Thelma Kastl, a communications teacher and Jodi's counterpart in North Carolina made the following remarks: "I am stunned. I thought I had a grasp on what you might be going through, but after reading your e-mail I know that I do not. While I was in college I had to do a report on the history of Israel and follow it in the news for a semester. I felt very sorry for the Israeli people at the time. I still feel sorry, but now I also feel something more. I know you and your students. The things seem so much worse since I know people who are being affected by them. I am so sorry. We will continue to keep you in our prayers."

Currently, four schools in North Carolina are participating in the cultural exchange program with Israel. Due to the success of the program, the NCCIU is working to double the number of schools partnered with Israel next year.

For the 1997-98 school year,

ISPT has linked a total of 26 schools across North Carolina with 13 countries around the world to work on 29 different projects.

ISPT is NCCIU's newest program. Its main goal is to prepare North Carolina students to be able to compete in today's global marketplace. ISPT helps to achieve this goal by enabling students and teachers to interact directly through telecommunications technology with students and teachers from other countries. If you would like more information about ISPT, please call Diane Midness at the North Carolina Center for International Understanding at 919-733-4902.

The North Carolina Partnership helped to facilitate the connection between North Carolina schools with those in Israel. NCIP is a model for state-based international relations and the only one of its kind in the United States.

Rather than view the relationship between North Carolina and Israel as purely economic, NCIP takes a more holistic approach. Programs range in scope from the one discussed above to cultural events, international speakers, and various economic forums. Many states have sought NCIP's assistance in the establishment of a similar program in their home state. If you have any additional questions about NCIP, please direct them to Merritt Mulman at 919-489-0676. ☆

## Hornets sign on as the '98 Maccabi Games Diamond Sponsor

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Vice President of Public Relations, Harold Kaufman said. "Being a 10-year member of Temple Israel here in Charlotte, I feel a sense of pride that we could help the JCC Maccabi Games grow. I was fortunate to attend the Maccabian Games in Israel in 1981 and experienced a similar exciting sporting event."

Did you know that the NBA's Charlotte Hornets are one of a few

professional sports teams that put the name of their host city on the front of their home and away jerseys? It is not a fashion statement. It has everything to do with community-pride and a display of what the city of Charlotte means to all of the Hornets — ranging from the 250 part-time game-night employees all the way through to All-Star Glen Rice.

"I have attended many Hornets

events in which the team has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for many different charities. I have seen donations of canned foods, coats, toys, shoes and books," Gold said. "The Hornets have proved to set the standard in our area in corporate involvement for charitable causes." ☆



### Point of View

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of three rabbis active in the Charlotte Community.

This Month:  
Rabbi Yossi Groner  
Lubavitch of North Carolina

## Passover — A Prayer for Redemption

Passover celebrates the Israelite Exodus from ancient Egypt 3,300 years ago. The Exodus is monumental in Judaism as it led to the eventual emancipation of the Israelites and is regarded as the birth of Judaism.

The long period of bondage the Israelites endured as slaves in Egypt is likened to birth pangs. The birth of Judaism occurred in a miraculous manner and reached fulfillment when the new nation entered the land of Israel. This was the Land chosen by G-d and promised to the Jewish Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as the land that their descendants, the Israelites, would inherit forever.

The redemption of Passover was not only to achieve physical freedom, it was for spiritual liberation as well. After leaving Egypt, the Jews headed to Mount Sinai, where they received the Torah from G-d through Moses. There, in the Sinai desert, they made an everlasting commitment to G-d to keep his Torah and its commandments. It was only after receiving the Torah that they were instructed to journey to the land of Israel.

Once Israel became the Jewish homeland, it gave them a sense of belonging. The land was their G-d given eternal inheritance, as was the Torah. They built the Holy Temple in Jerusalem for worship and settled the land and brought it to prosperity.

On Passover night, we tell the story of the Exodus in its full detail. The Seder contains much tradition, education and ritual. The central theme of the holiday is the celebration of freedom and redemption. As we recite in the *Haggadah*, (Passover book), if not for this night, we and our children might still have been slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

The symbols and rituals of the Passover Seder reflect the passion Jews have for freedom. Israel is very much on the mind of Jews during Passover, as both have come to symbolize freedom and independence.

During the thousands of years of exile, Jews clung with faith to the hope of returning to the Land of Milk and Honey. The very thought of Israel gave Jews hope that someday G-d would gather the oppressed and suffering Jews from the Diaspora and bring them home to the Land of Israel. Even during the Holocaust, many Jews recited the "Ani Ma'amin," a proclamation of faith in the final redemption and the ultimate return of Jews to Israel.

Although the final redemption through *Moshiach* (Messiah) has not yet arrived, nevertheless, Israel has become a place of the ingathering of the exiles. In just the past few years, we have seen a massive emigration of East European and Ethiopian Jews who have left behind persecution and despair and are making their new home in Israel.

American and Western Jews support Israel since it is home and thus a safe haven for Jews fleeing oppression and persecution.

This year on Passover, Jews will have much to ponder, as the sense of security in Israel has been shattered in recent years by acts of terrorism in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This is a struggle for the very soul of the land. To make Jews feel unsafe in their own homeland is to further distance the hopes and aspirations of Jews worldwide for over 2,000 years.

Israel needs to take strong defensive measures to restore the sense of security to its people. We need to realize that "peace through strength" is what will work in the Middle East. Peace in this case is the notion that there will be zero tolerance for terrorism.

On the first night of Passover, families will gather in Charlotte and the world over to celebrate freedom and redemption. Our hearts will go out in prayer to our friends and family in Israel. We will eat matzo and drink four cups of wine and recount the journey of our ancestors from bondage to freedom. We will praise G-d for our good fortunes. But most of all, we will pray for true and everlasting peace in the Holy Land that can only be delivered by G-d with the coming of *Moshiach* (Messiah). ☆

## Our thanks to Susan Kramer

By Marvin A. Goldberg, on behalf of the CJN Editorial Board

Saying good-bye to someone you do not want to say good-bye to is very difficult. At the last CJN Editorial Board meeting, Susan Kramer, our outgoing editor, was presented with a gift. It was a sterling silver heart necklace with Hebrew letters on it that spell *chai* — meaning "life." Susan was deeply appreciative of this gift and immedi-

ately put it on. We hope she will wear it every day as she moves on to the next stage of her life.

Susan was an outstanding editor of the CJN and she still has many chapters of her life to write. We wish her the best, and Susan, this is for you from all of us on the Editorial Board of the Charlotte Jewish News:

L'Chaim! — "to life!"

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