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A Long, Cold Winter for Russian Jews

The collapse of the Russian economy has left members of Jewish families in desperate situations. Before the fall of the ruble, older Russian Jews lived on meager, fixed pensions. Their pensions now are worth only one-half their former value, and people are going hungry. With the onset of winter, some people will have to make the difficult choice of heating their apartments or food.

It is estimated by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), an international Jewish relief agency, that 150,000 elderly Russian Jews are affected by this economic turmoil and they are increasing their efforts to assist.

Jewish communities around the world are being asked to step up their efforts to support Russian Jews through increased financial assistance. These extra dollars will enable JDC to purchase food to be



delivered to homebound persons and to purchase clothing and other essentials. Locally, the Jewish Federation supports JDC through its overseas allocation. "Hunger relief in the former Soviet Union is on our minds," stated Bill Gorelick, Federation President, "and we will do everything we can to relieve the pain of hunger." ❖

Special Jewish athletes will come to Charlotte

By Michelle Siraz

Charlotte will play host to some special young athletes on December 9th at 7:30 PM in the JCC gym. Honorary chairpersons for this event are Eric and Lori Sklut and the Friends of Israel Sports Center for the Disabled. Permanent chairpersons include Abraham and Rose Luski. The Israel Sports Center for the Disabled serving over 2,500 youths is one of the three largest sports centers for the disabled in the world. With its 24 sports branches, the Center specializes in the physical and psychological rehabilitation of Israeli children and youth. On December 9 a tribute reception and wheelchair exhibition featuring children with disabilities from Israel will introduce our community to these young individuals. To help you appreciate their accomplishments, we provide you with the following background information about the participants in the program.

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

his 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 the Disabled Children in Israel. When he was twelve, he won the World Championship for Disabled Children in Miami. Now, in his final year in high school, Ilan was recently elected to the Center's Board of Directors as the representative of our young athletes.

Gil Mizrachi, aged 12, is handicapped by cerebral palsy which injured all four limbs, his speech, and his sight. Gil arrived at the Center at age 3 in a complete state of physical and psychological helplessness. He started exercising in the swimming pool, and only after a few years began to play table tennis and participate in light athletics. Encouraged by his slow but stable progress, he has also now started wheelchair racing and judo. Gil is a good pupil.

Shimon Skhayak, aged 14, is handicapped by cerebral palsy,

which injured all four limbs and his speech. Shimon started at the Center at age 4, in the swimming pool. He also participates in field

achievement in 1998 was taking part in his wheelchair, in the Tel Aviv Marathon. Shimon is also a good student.



Seated left to right: Shimon Skhayak (14), Gal Mizrachi (12), Ilan Lusky (19). Standing: Coach Reuven Heller.

events, tennis and recently wheelchair racing. The intensive sports programs at the Center have considerably improved his physical and psychological states. His great

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 numerous Olympic medals, and world European championships. At the 1980 Paralympic Games, Reuven was chosen at 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.

Sports activities are an integral part of the rehabilitative process of the disabled, prolonging their life expectancy and motivating them to turn from a state of helplessness toward constructive and meaningful lives. Israel Sports Center for the Disabled serves as an international pioneer in the field of sports for the disabled. For the past ten years disabled athletes from Israel have taken part in the Miami Orange Bowl World Championships for Disabled Children and Youth. Following their arrival in Charlotte, these three Israeli athletes will continue on to Miami to compete in the Miami World Championships. Support these young athletes, their accomplishments, and the Sports Center by coming out to the JCC on December 9! ❖

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