

IN THE NEWS
Lebanese troops deploy in South

Lebanon's army deployed in southern Lebanon in accordance with a U.N. cease-fire resolution.

The soldiers linked up with U.N. peacekeepers in an attempt to take over areas that were Hezbollah strongholds and had been taken over by Israeli forces during Israel's monthlong war with the terrorist group.

The ability of the army and the U.N. force to effectively control these areas is seen as vital in keeping peace in the area.

Ten percent of tanks lost

One-tenth of the Israeli tanks that took part in the Lebanon war were destroyed or disabled, a military study found. According to Armored Corps data published Thursday, Hezbollah anti-armor missiles penetrated 20 Israeli tanks during the monthlong war, killing 17 crewmen.

Another 13 crewmen were killed when landmines destroyed or disabled their tanks. The number of tank crewmen wounded was in the double digits. The high toll of the war on Israel's Armored Corps was a shock to top military brass, especially given the fact that Hezbollah has no tanks.

Some experts blamed the fact that many of the tanks dispatched to Lebanon were older, less protected versions of the locally-made Merkava. Two Israeli arms firms now have speeded up work on a tank anti-missile system.

Israeli minister could face charges

Israel's attorney general said Thursday he would press sexual misconduct charges against an Israeli Cabinet minister.

If Menachem Mazuz presses charges against Justice Minister Haim Ramon, Ramon will be required by law to resign.

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WORLD REPORT

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Brett Kline

Funding from UJC helped make it possible to open this camp up to kids from northern Israel.

As in past crises, U.S. Jews open their wallets when Israel's in trouble

By RACHEL POMERANCE

ATLANTA (JTA) — Hezbollah rockets may have stopped for now — but the American Jewish response to the crisis has not.

When American Jews think about Israel's war with Hezbollah, they recall numbers — 1948, 1967, 1973 — that mark previous wars of survival for the Jewish state. They also respond in numbers — dollars, that is.

"Philanthropically, American Jews feel such a sense of connectedness to Israel," said Darrell Friedman, a consultant to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and former president of Baltimore's Jewish federation.

When Jews feel their homeland is under siege, their philanthropic instincts kick into high gear.

"It's our tradition," Friedman said. "Jews will take care of Jews."

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

That's evidenced by the innumerable emergency campaigns under way and by the mere existence of the North American Jewish federation system, an unparalleled philanthropic network among American ethnic groups.

On Aug. 7, the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella launched a massive campaign to ease the humanitarian crisis in Israel, with the goal of raising hundreds of millions of dollars. So far it has raised more than \$175 million.

Much of those funds are being channeled through programs being run by the UJC's main overseas partners, the JDC, which provides humanitarian relief in Israel and abroad, and the Jewish Agency for Israel, which manages immigration and absorption in Israel and Zionist education worldwide.

The UJC campaign is the Jewish community's largest fund-raising response, but the options for giving right now are broad. The crisis has given rise to new organizational

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■ *The breadth of the U.S. Jewish fund-raising effort shows the extent of support for Israel*

Continued from page 1

partnerships, has brought certain groups to prominence and has elicited a mix of approaches to fund raising.

Efforts have focused on emergency services like first aid, upgrading bomb shelters, sending children from Israel's northern region to summer camps in the center of the country, and feeding and housing Israelis who have fled their homes.

But the needs are still developing and are sure to grow after the war, as Israelis begin rebuilding their cities and their lives.

The tenuous cease-fire reached Monday does not change that fact — and it's an open question how long the cease-fire will last.

The Israel Emergency Campaign was "established with a long-term view," UJC spokesman Glenn Rosenkrantz said. "So many needs exist, including economic revival, infrastructure and facility rebuilding, support for victims of terror and post-traumatic stress counseling for Israelis being among them."

Even as the UJC announced initial plans to raise \$300 million, its board determined that another \$200 million would be necessary.

"It's a moving target," said Howard Rieger, UJC's president and CEO.

Indeed, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres traveled around the United States this week to promote the emergency fund.

As the needs of the monthlong war became apparent, private and public philanthropies began working together to respond.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies' after-school program for disadvantaged Israeli youth ran a special operation in bomb shelters with support from the Jewish Agency and the JDC.

Like many other foundations, the Bronfman philanthropies used supplemental funds for the crisis in Israel to avoid detracting from other programs.

"There's no question that we've seen people reallocating, but I think what's been more striking is the number of people that we've seen not wanting to reallocate," said Mark Charendoff, president of the Jewish Funders Network, whose 1,200 members include some of the biggest Jewish names in philanthropy around the world.

Most foundations already have set their budgets and commitments, so the principals are taking money from their personal wealth, he said.

That goes for average donors as well. According to Gary Tobin, an expert on Jewish giving, "People do not give anywhere near to their capacity, so when they feel emergencies, they give more of what they're able."

History has shown that the federation system's emergency campaigns tend to boost its general campaigns, Rieger said.

However, a special federation campaign that was already under way — Operation Promise, which aids the absorption of Ethiopians in Israel and funds welfare and renewal efforts in the former Soviet Union — likely will take a back seat, Rieger said.

Meanwhile, donors are taking different approaches to giving. In an era of increased independent giving — that is, donations made outside of central community campaigns — some foundations are partnering with private groups in Israel.

Steve and Linda Geringer of Phoenix gave an initial \$18,000 via the Jewish Funders Network to the Sacta-Rashi Foundation in Israel, which was helping with the crisis. Geringer, a JFN board member, said he trusted JFN and Sacta-Rashi to make "two dollars out of every one dollar."

Other foundations take the traditional

route, supporting the federation system.

Chicago's Arie and Ida Crown Memorial donated \$10 million to the Israel Emergency Campaign, said Charles Goodman, a member of the board.

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation in Baltimore put \$5 million toward the federation campaign, trustee Barry Schloss said.

The foundation normally donates to the federation, including some \$3 million of the \$100 million it gave away last year. But it gave 15 percent to 20 percent of that \$100 million directly to the JDC, a federation beneficiary.

"In this case, we felt that we needed to get the money out

and spent," Schloss said. The "best way to do that was through the overall federation system, which will probably raise more money than any individual charity."

The crisis has catapulted certain organizations to the forefront of the American Jewish philanthropic scene.

Israel Bonds, for example, raised \$30 million in two days through 11 events around the country with high-profile Israelis like Ra'anana Gissin, foreign media adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and Israel's ambassador in Washington, Daniel Ayalon, said Raphael Rothstein, Israel Bonds' spokesman.

The American Friends of Magen David Adom, the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross, is "up to our eyeballs" in checks — an unprecedented \$5 million since the war's outbreak — the group's executive vice president, Daniel Allen, said.

Some of that money is due to completely new partnerships. For example, a foundation connected to the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati donated \$300,000 for blood-testing kits. MDA is in conversation with five other federations as well.

"This could well be a serious breakthrough event, unfortunately, that indicates that people will continue to be significant supporters of MDA in Israel," Allen said. "I think people want to give to something in Israel where they know they are directly and immediately affecting the lives of people." ■

'So many needs exist, including economic revival, infrastructure and facility rebuilding, support for victims of terror and post-traumatic stress counseling.'

Glenn Rosenkrantz
Spokesman, United Jewish Communities



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Lamont camp: Positions will appeal to Jews

By CLAUDE R. MARX

SALEM, Mass. (JTA) — He has spoken out strongly in support of Israel, is skeptical about faith-based initiatives and opposes what he sees as unnecessary restrictions on civil liberties.

Those views could help Ned Lamont win more Jewish support in this fall's election for a U.S. Senate seat in Connecticut — even though his major opponent is a leading Jewish politician.

Lamont, a cable television entrepreneur who defeated Democratic incumbent Sen. Joseph Lieberman, 52 percent to 48 percent, used his strong opposition to the Iraq war as the major issue in the Aug. 8 primary.

But David Pudlin, a key adviser to Lamont, said that if Jewish voters look at a broad range of issues, they'll like what they learn about the political newcomer.

"On civil rights, civil liberties and war and peace issues, Jews in Connecticut, like those in most places, are more liberal than other voters. Ned shares those views," said Pudlin, a former Connecticut House majority leader who is a paid consultant to Lamont's campaign.

Pudlin said the primary campaign included very little direct outreach to the Jewish community, which represents about 3 percent of the state's population and 5 percent of the electorate. CBS/New York Times exit polls showed Lieberman outpolling Lamont 61 percent to 39 percent among Jewish voters.

Lieberman's pledge to run as an independent in the November general election against Lamont and Republican Alan Schlesinger may create a dilemma for some Jewish voters, who will have to choose between loyalties to the Democratic Party and to a co-religionist.

Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, said Lamont has handled issues of importance to Jews adeptly so far.

"He's saying the right things on issues that are important for the vast majority of Jewish voters. His statements on Israel have been correct, and he's been criticized from the left for being too supportive of Israel," said Forman, whose group generally does not make endorsements during primaries.

During the campaign, Lamont was endorsed by the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, civil rights activists who sometimes have had strained relations with the Jewish community.

Marvin Lender, a Connecticut resident and chairman of the Israel Policy Forum who has been a strong Lieberman financial backer and adviser, said Lamont would have a solid voting record on issues of importance to Jews.

But he predicted Lamont would be less effective as a policy-maker because of Lieberman's long involvement in the Middle East.

"The Lieberman-Lamont primary wasn't about Jewish issues. Lamont would do all the right things with respect to Israel, and no one has led me to believe

he doesn't care about these issues," said Lender, who is backing Lieberman's independent candidacy.

But he added that Lamont "doesn't have Joe's experience in the region and the firsthand knowledge you need to make a contribution to trying to find a solution."

Pudlin countered that the policies Lieberman and President Bush have supported have made things worse in the Middle East, which is why Lamont appealed to many who are frustrated by the situation there.

One issue where Lamont is closer than Lieberman to the views of many Jewish voters is Lamont's opposition to expanding the use of federal funds to help religious groups deliver social services.

"For me, I'd stand up and say I think we need a bright and shining line there separating church and state. I think that's been one of the hallmarks of our country for 200 years," Lamont told The Associated Press during the primary campaign.

That position will resonate among

voters "who share that concern about the possible excesses" of these programs, Forman said.

Lieberman is one of the strongest congressional backers of faith-based initiatives, a cornerstone of Bush's domestic agenda. To help pass the program, Lieberman worked closely with several lawmakers on the other side of the aisle.

Those efforts led to charges by some Democratic activists that Lieberman, a three-term lawmaker, was too close to Republicans.

Like Lieberman, Lamont strongly supports abortion rights and expanding stem-cell research.

But Lamont won kudos among feminists who objected to Lieberman's backing of a bill that would have allowed courts to consider replacing a feeding tube used to sustain Terri Schiavo, a

39-year-old Florida woman who had been in a vegetative state. In the end, the tube was removed last year and Schiavo was allowed to die.

Lamont said those decisions should be made by the family in consultation with their doctor and clergyman.

But Lamont gained most traction on the

Iraq war, which Lieberman strongly backed. Pudlin said differences on the war and related issues had resonated most strongly with primary voters.

"We've moved beyond a point in American politics where Jews will automatically always vote for another Jew. Lieberman's support for the war and for programs that allowed for domestic spying, and his tacit and sometimes direct support for torturing prisoners, is opposed by the vast majority of Connecticut residents and an even higher percentage of Jews," Pudlin said. "Lamont will do well among Jews because he is right on the issues that matter to them."

A Quinnipac University poll released Thursday showed that Lamont still has to watch out for Lieberman: The incumbent was supported by 53 percent of likely voters, compared to Lamont's 41 percent and Republican candidate Alan Schlesinger's 4 percent.

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

During the campaign, Lamont was endorsed by the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, civil rights activists who sometimes have had strained relations with the Jewish community.

Rebuilding Jewish New Orleans

By GAIL NARON CHALEW

NEW ORLEANS (JTA) — One year after “the storm,” as New Orleanians refer to Hurricane Katrina, Jewish communal leaders describe the health of the community with certain expected terms — loss, trauma, devastation and challenge.

Unexpected is the word “blessed,” used repeatedly in reference to the outpouring from the American Jewish community of financial support, volunteerism and donations of everything from teddy bears to challah covers.

Funds from the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella of the North American federation system, and the national religious movements have kept New Orleans’ Jewish agencies and synagogues afloat this past year and are expected to do so through 2007.

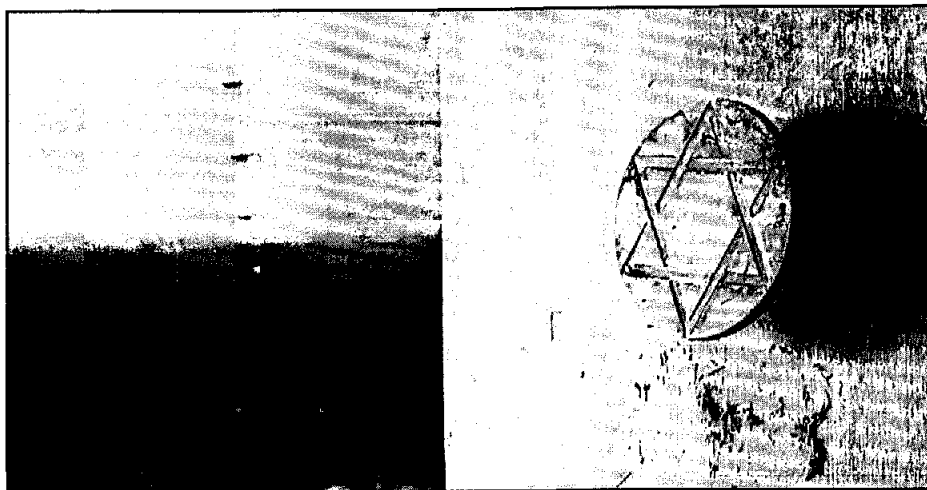
To date, the UJC has contributed more than \$17 million to the rebuilding efforts; the Reform movement has contributed some \$800,000 to local Reform congregations, with another \$800,000 available for recovery efforts not covered by insurance. Other movements have sent funds as well, though exact figures were not available.

What will happen in 2008 and beyond is the worry that both drives many planning meetings during the day and keeps communal leaders up at night.

“Fortunately, the Jewish community has not had to depend on the help of government, given its failure at all levels,” said Allan Bissinger, president of the New Orleans federation. “UJC has taken the place of what the government should normally have done.”

Roselle Ungar, interim executive director of the federation, said, “What UJC and the many generous contributions from individuals across the country have given us is the opportunity to take a deep breath, step back and take the time to make the hard decisions that will be necessary, so that in 2008 we can stand on our own two feet again.”

A community-wide task force is in the beginning stages of implementing a recovery plan. The plan focuses on such issues as how to retain current residents while encouraging new ones to resettle here. It also is determining how the organized Jewish community can work smarter to make the best use of limited dollars.



Hannah Chalew

Beth Israel Congregation, an Orthodox synagogue in New Orleans that was damaged by 10 feet of water in Hurricane Katrina.

One of the positive outgrowths of the storm has been the burgeoning spirit of cooperation among all the New Orleans Jewish institutions. Beth Israel Congregation, the Orthodox synagogue that took on 10 feet of water, is now holding a Shabbat minyan at the Reform Gates of Prayer Congregation.

The Anti-Defamation League is sharing federation office space. Interagency programs are on the upswing, and a Hebrew free loan program is in the works.

The JCC is getting needed revenue by renting out its facilities to community groups.

Tackling the population issue will not be as easy. Current estimates are that the Jewish community will stabilize at about 65 percent its pre-storm strength of about 10,000 individuals.

Although there are no hard and fast data about the population exodus, the increasing number of “For sale” signs attests to residents’ continued impatience with the slow pace of recovery, frustration with the government and concern about the rising crime rate. And it would be difficult to exaggerate the impact another hurricane would have on people’s decisions to move.

Although all age groups have joined this exodus, one particular cohort — those in their 60s and 70s with grown children in other communities — has been leaving in large numbers.

Communal officials count the loss of these individuals particularly troublesome because these are the big machers — those with the money and the time to make significant contributions. Every institution has lost some of its biggest donors and officers.

At the same time, each of the five synagogues surveyed has reported new members, mostly young people drawn by the pioneer spirit of rebuilding and the opportunity to make a difference.

And, even against the backdrop of government incompetence and uncertain levees, many residents are buoyed by optimism.

On Sunday, community members gathered in the afternoon for a chanukkat habayit, a home dedication ceremony in which a mezuzah is hung, for Georgette Somjen, a physician moving to town. Later, a brit milah, or circumcision, was celebrated for the son of Gary and Susan Lazarus, who are committed to remaining in New Orleans.

**ONE YEAR
AFTER
KATRINA**

The increasing number of ‘For sale’ signs attests to residents’ continued impatience with the slow pace of recovery, frustration with the government and concern about the rising crime rate.

Committed or crazy? A return to New Orleans

By GAIL NARON CHALEW

NEW ORLEANS (JTA) — There's a joke going around New Orleans now: To choose to live in this city, you need either to be committed to its recovery or you just need to be committed.

After spending the past school year in Baltimore, where my son attended Jewish day school, I returned to my damaged home and my damaged city in late June, and I am still unsure which category of the joke applies to me.

Depending on what part of the city I am driving through, or whether I just read a newspaper article describing any of a litany of New Orleans' problems — such articles are given front-page coverage in *The Times-Picayune*, whereas a new feature, "Signs of Recovery," appears infrequently in the back of the paper — I am either energized and optimistic about prospects in this city or downright depressed.

At times, I do feel like you would have to be crazy or at least in serious denial to choose to stay in this city. Crime is creeping up to pre-storm levels, even though the population has been halved; the justice system is in shambles with a judge threatening to release 6,000 prisoners if they do not receive a court hearing by Katrina's anniversary at the end of August; the health care system is in worse shape, with only one-quarter the number of doctors and half the number of hospitals; and the mental health system is basically nonexistent for a community in which half the people are thought to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mayor Ray Nagin continues to disappoint and dismay; his promised "100 Days" of action since his election are nearly three-quarters over, with little evidence of action, and his proposal of a comedy night at a casino and a fireworks display to mark the storm's anniversary shows a supreme lack of taste and understanding of how to commemorate that day of loss.

Parts of the city are still without phone service and electricity and functioning streetlights, and a community rebuilding plan is just getting under way. After taking on 4 feet of water in Katrina, my home shows a similar lack of progress. Despite numerous promises from our contractor, our first floor looks just like it did after my

husband and several workers gutted it in October: The walls are stripped to the studs, and the floor is bare concrete.

But in some ways, life post-Katrina is much sweeter here.

Perhaps because we know we cannot depend on government but only on each other, I have finally met my neighbors and am involved in our neighborhood organization.

Bonds are much closer between friends because we have all experienced loss; synagogue members are more committed to its well-being because so many played a part in its reopening and religion just seems so much more important now.

And there are little victories to savor every day. The first time we received our *New Yorker* in the mail, 10 months post-Katrina, was cause for celebration. The reopening of a favorite restaurant is another occasion to raise a glass. Even a newly functioning streetlight brings a smile.

It is quite heady to know that merely deciding to stay makes a difference, let alone pitching in to help the recovery. We are all *chalutzim*, pioneers, who are part of history in the making.

Katrina has been the ultimate catalyst of change, both on the personal and institutional level, and many

of those changes have been for the good.

A plethora of creative charter schools have replaced the woefully inadequate public schools, and some government agencies are now taking advantage of 21st-century technologies.

Katrina has pushed people on to the next stage of life, maybe a few years ahead of the usual schedule, but in the intended direction nonetheless. Young couples are deciding to have babies earlier, empty nesters are moving out of too-large homes into condos and others are going into new business ventures that had never gone beyond the idea stage before. Young couples who have plenty of energy but not much money are moving into gutted homes in neighborhoods they could not have afforded pre-K and fixing them up.

As a result of Katrina, we will be renovating our gutted first floor into a rental



Gail Naron Chalew

ONE YEAR
AFTER
KATRINA

In some ways, life post-Katrina is much sweeter here.

apartment, now that our three daughters are at college or beyond and only our son lives at home. We most likely would have come to this decision without Katrina, but probably years down the road.

But dramatic changes, no matter how positive, are never easy, and the approach of the anniversary of Katrina, combined with the fear of another hurricane, has greatly increased everyone's level of stress this

August.

This stress is evident in the large number of fender benders, the outbursts triggered by inattentive salespeople and the tears that still accompany the memories of Katrina are also markers of stress.

But New Orleanians have always known how to live with sadness; what else is a jazz funeral but a celebration and affirmation of life. And we Jews certainly have had much practice in this art.

In the haftorah, the added portion, from Parshat Eikev, the Torah portion that we read a few weeks ago, Isaiah comforts the Jewish people with these words: "As for your ruins and desolate places and your land laid waste — you shall soon be crowded with settlers."

May this be true for New Orleans.

Gail Naron Chalew is a writer and editor rebuilding a life in New Orleans. ■

Jews flocking to Toronto area

By BILL GLADSTONE

TORONTO (JTA) — Seven years ago, when Rabbi Ezriel Sitzer opened a storefront Jewish educational center north of Toronto, the area was just “pasture and sheep.”

It's a lot more than that today.

Construction of new homes has been rapid since developers arrived in the area known as Thornhill Woods four years ago. Today about three-quarters of some 6,500 planned single-family homes have been built and sold.

So far the area is at least 50 percent Jewish, with young married couples predominating, drawn by the slightly lower housing prices.

As many as 80,000 Jews — about 40 percent of the greater Toronto area's Jewish population — live in the area immediately north of the city's northern limit.

A magnet for new immigrants from Montreal, Winnipeg, Israel, Russia, South Africa or Argentina in recent years, the York Region, which boasts one of the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the Diaspora, is the fastest growing census division in Canada.

Its population has grown by 19 percent since 2001 and is nearing the 1 million mark. Jews are just one of many burgeoning ethnic groups.

“I had my eye on this area, hoping and thinking it would become Jewish, and thank God I was right,” said Sitzer, dean of the Jewish Center for Learning and Living, which recently purchased a five-acre site for an expanded spiritual facility.

“This community, including Dufferin Hills and Coronation, is well represented by many different Jewish groups — Russian, Sephardic, Israeli, South African — and we intend to develop this project with all of their needs in mind,” Sitzer said. “Rather than one large sanctuary, we're planning to have a ‘synaplex’ consisting of smaller sanctuaries for each of these groups.”

Other new residential areas in the region include Elgin Mills, Coronation, Dufferin Hills and Shaftesbury.

Three miles north of older and more developed areas like Thornhill and Concord, Sitzer's neighborhood of Thornhill Woods still has no operating synagogue, though several congregations meet in private homes.

“It's still so raw here,” he said. “There's not a kosher restaurant here in this part of the Woods. There's not even a kosher pizzeria here yet.”

Several restaurants have opened to the south, including a branch of the Israeli chain Me-Va-Me, to cater to the estimated 12,000-15,000 Israeli-Canadians living in the “905” region, as the area is known, based on its telephone area code.

Numerous synagogues have been built in the more established southern section of the region, including the 25-year-old Temple Har Zion, which shares a parking lot with a mosque.

Rebecca Soberman, her husband and their infant daughter moved into a house in Thornhill Woods eight months ago, which at the time was just the third house occupied on their street. Now all the houses are built and occupied.

“People called us true pioneers, because it was just dust and mud,” Soberman said.

“It's an area of young couples, newlyweds and very young families. We wanted to be among our peers,” she said. “A lot of young people are moving into the new areas all at the same time and will be growing together.”

According to Bryan Keshen, a strategic planner for the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, there has been no corresponding drop in Jewish residents within the city to account for the sustained Jewish growth along its northern fringe.

It's not a case of “people moving out of the city and into the suburbs,” he said. The York Region “is growing organically unto itself as the rest of Toronto is growing. Nothing else is shrinking Jewishly.”

Community planners first recognized the demographic trend in the mid-1990s, and in 2001 arranged the purchase of a 50-acre tract for future community needs.

Conducted quietly and covertly through agents, the deal relied upon the generosity of scores of benefactors and donors, who each contributed some US\$110,000, or about the price of an acre.

The land, which lies adjacent to a nine-acre protected woodland, has since risen significantly in value.

Last year the federation broke ground on a mammoth northern campus to house schools, service agencies, conference facilities, a health and fitness pavilion, restaurants and cultural enterprises, all in an environment of public gardens, courtyards and streets. A main boulevard has been named after Col. Ilan Ramon, the Israeli astronaut who died in the 2003 Columbia shuttle crash.

With an estimated cost of nearly US\$89 million, the Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Jewish Community Campus is scheduled to open in stages, beginning in September 2007, when the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto opens. Four elementary schools also are planned for the complex, which reportedly will boast the largest gathering of Jewish day-school students outside of Israel.

“We know that the population is growing so rapidly that we absolutely have to be there,” said Karen Palkin, spokesperson for the UJA Federation's Jewish Family and

Child Services. The agency is planning a branch office in the Lebovic campus to help it provide counseling and programs related to child protection and domestic abuse, as well as other social services.

The Chabad-Lubavitch organization long has had a presence north of Toronto. It operates five centers in the region, including the eight-year-old Chabad Flamingo, which is set to undergo a major expansion costing nearly \$5.8 million.

Some new residential areas, such as the Shaftesbury neighborhood, are 70 percent Jewish, Keshen said, adding that the 200,000-strong Jewish population in the metropolitan area gives many residents the confidence to live as Jews.

Even so, many still have to drive two or three miles to get to the nearest kosher butcher or supermarket with a wide range of kosher products.

“The infrastructure just hasn't kept up with the community needs,” Keshen said.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

‘It's an area of young couples, newlyweds and very young families. We wanted to be among our peers.’

Rebecca Soberman
Resident

ARTS & CULTURE

Peace-and-love singer hits Israel

By PENNY SCHWARTZ

BOSTON (JTA) — Neither war nor the cancellation of the WorldPride parade in Jerusalem, where she was scheduled to perform, can keep Sonia Rutstein from Israel.

The award-winning American singer-songwriter, who generally uses only the name Sonia, is bringing her message of love and tolerance to a series of concerts throughout Israel during the first few weeks of August.

Sonia is scheduled to perform in a variety of locations, including on a moshav in northern Israel and at a free outdoor concert in Tel Aviv. She also is expecting to perform at events associated with the WorldPride gay pride celebration in Jerusalem.

With 10 CDs and a Grammy nomination, Sonia often is compared to singer Ani DiFranco and is firmly established in the folk music world and on the gay and lesbian cultural scene.

Her lyrics range from boldly political to tender and personal; her musical style ranges from folk, bluegrass and blues to pop-rock and rap-like rhythms, all infused with rich, melodic harmonies.

On a recent, sweltering summer weekend Sonia performed in Worcester, Mass., at a peace concert organized by the Healing Light Institute.

Between talking with fans and autographing CDs, Sonia told JTA she was aware of the controversy and threats of violence around the WorldPride parade in Jerusalem. The parade ultimately was canceled because of the war with Hezbollah, but not until Israeli Jewish, Christian and Muslim clerics had lobbied aggressively to prevent the march from taking place.

"What better place" to hold a gay pride march than Jerusalem, a focal point for three major religions? Sonia asked. "The whole essence of my music is that when you disappear fear between people, you have love."

This will be Sonia's fourth trip to Israel.

The first time came on a United Synagogue Youth tour in 1974 when Sonia was 15. In 1999, this time toting a guitar, she returned to perform for the Folkstuff Society at clubs in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. ■

Israeli kids find shelter in Poland

By DINAH SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — Even a decade ago, almost no one could have predicted that Poland, of all places, would serve as a refuge for Israeli children.

But a country that some Jews still think of as ground zero for European anti-Semitism is among the first in Central and Eastern Europe to sponsor a free getaway for young Israelis who were spending most of their time this summer in bomb shelters as Hezbollah sends rocket salvos into the Jewish state.

Jerzy Kropiwnicki, mayor of Lodz — once home to the second-largest Jewish population in Europe — decided his city would pay for 15 teens from the northern Israeli city of Nahariya to escape to Lodz.

The young Israelis embarked on an 18-day vacation in Poland, to include sightseeing, educational programs and Jewish community visits.

"We want them at least to forget for a little while about what is happening in Israel," said Jarek Nowak, a member of the Lodz City Council who played a key role in organizing the trip.

In an afterthought that belies the city government's well-known affinity for Israel, Nowak added, "This is the least we can do. If we can't solve the situation they are in, at least we can give them a little rest to comfort them."

He said the Israelis, ages 12-16, were from poor and single-parent, mostly Sephardi families. Their home city, which chose the children to participate in the visit, has been hit particularly hard by Hezbollah rockets.

Israel's ambassador to Poland, David Peleg, who met the children when they arrived at Warsaw airport, said he wasn't surprised by the Lodz mayor's initiative.

"He has been involved in Jewish issues for some time, including the annual commemoration of the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto," Peleg said.

"Our embassy is providing logistical help for the young people's trip,

but the credit goes to the city," he said. "The mayor's gesture warmed our hearts."

In a phone interview, Nowak said the teens so far were infatuated with Poland and the reception they have received.

"They're so excited. For all of them, it's their first trip on an airplane, their first trip outside the country," he said.

The program includes horseback riding, kayaking, painting classes and photo classes; tours of Warsaw, the Warsaw Ghetto monument and Lublin; visits to the Jewish communities of Wroclaw and Lodz; and Shabbat dinners.

"We will offer them some Holocaust education as

well, but not until the end of the trip," Nowak said.

One of the group's two Israeli guides, Dima, said they were having the time of their lives, though they were constantly worried about friends and family back home.

"They can't believe how green Poland is," he said. "But what I think they like most are the shops."

Symcha Keller, cantor of Lodz and chairman of its 300-member Jewish community, said the teens were dining at the community headquarters and that he was honored to help organize the itinerary.

"For the first time, the mayor of a city in Poland, in this case of Lodz, is helping people from Israel," he said. "It's very beautiful that we Poles can give something to Israel."

Lodz is paying for the children's daily kosher meals. Accommodation at hotels, arranged by the Lodz Jewish community, has been provided free of charge. LOT Airlines paid for most of their flights, while the Polish president's office took care of the remaining amount.

"Once the Polish media started to cover the visit we started getting calls from hotels, restaurants, businesspeople, asking how they could help," Nowak said. ■

'We want them at least to forget for a little while about what is happening in Israel.'

Jarek Nowak

Member, Lodz City Council

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel wants Turkish embargo on Iran

Israel reportedly wants Turkey to impose an air and ground embargo on Iran to prevent weapons from flowing through Turkish territory to Hezbollah.

Israeli security sources told Reuters on Thursday they believed that nearly all of Hezbollah's heavy weapons passed through Turkish ground or airspace en route to Syria and then Lebanon.

The sources said Turkey had become a critical arena after alternative arms routes through Jordan and Iraq were blocked.

Israelis wonder who won

Israelis are divided on whether their country won the Lebanon war, a poll found. Thirty percent of those polled by Yediot Achronot this week said Israel won the monthlong war, while an equal number said Hezbollah won. Thirty-six percent said neither side won.

Seventy percent of respondents said they were against the cease-fire declared this week, as it did not guarantee the return of two soldiers whose July 12 abduction by Hezbollah triggered Israel's offensive in Lebanon.

Lebanon toll shows pioneer spirit

Israeli fatalities in Lebanon included a disproportionately high number of settlers and kibbutz members, a military study found. According to the study published Thursday, 42 percent of the 116 soldiers killed in the war on Hezbollah were from kibbutzim, moshavim or West Bank settlements, even though these communities constitute only 11 percent of Israel's general population.

By contrast, 25 percent of the fatalities were from cities, which make up 60 percent of the population.

The figures suggested that volunteering for combat duties is something more common to Israel's "pioneering" communities than to more urban and mainstream society. Maj. Gen. Elazar Stern, the military manpower chief, made this case in an Army Radio interview Wednesday, only to be rebuked by Tel Aviv residents who served during the monthlong war in Lebanon.

Suha Arafat an Arafat no more?

Yasser Arafat's widow is rumored to have remarried. Yediot Achronot quoted sources Thursday in Tunisia, where Suha Arafat lives, as saying she may have secretly married a local businessman with whom she is romantically involved.

Her putative spouse, Balahsan Trabulsi, is the brother-in-law of Tunisia's president, who granted Suha political asylum after Arafat died in 2004. The Palestinian leader's widow is considered unwelcome in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, given the widespread belief that she inherited millions of dollars in foreign donations that Arafat embezzled.

NORTH AMERICA

Experts skeptical about peacekeeping prospects

A panel of U.S. peacekeeping professionals expressed skepticism about the success of an expanded international force in southern Lebanon.

The U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington assembled a panel Wednesday of four U.S. officials who have led peacekeeping efforts across the globe and two former ambassadors to Middle Eastern nations to assess last week's U.N. Security Council resolution ending the Israel-Hezbollah war and increasing the number of UNIFIL personnel to 15,000.

The officials, whose experience ranged from the Balkans to Sinai,

Afghanistan, Somalia and East Timor, expressed varying degrees of skepticism about the viability of such a force.

Fund to help Seattle shooting victims

A fund was established to assist victims and families of the July 28 shooting at the Seattle Jewish federation.

Donors can visit www.jewishinseattle.org to make a contribution.

The fund is being administered through the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco. Some of the funds may be used to assist in renovation and security costs for the federation's offices.

The attack left one woman dead and five people injured.

Representative reassures angry Jewish leaders

A Democratic congressman reassured local Jewish leaders after criticizing the Bush administration and Israeli policy on Lebanon.

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) told the leaders in a Maryland suburb last week that he still supported Israel despite his July 30 letter to the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, arguing that a "continuation of the bombing campaign as it is being carried out is against the interests of Israel and the United States."

Van Hollen also called for an immediate cease-fire, while suggesting that the U.S. should have asked Israel to limit its attacks to "clear, identifiable Hezbollah military assets."

Hollywood stars condemn Hezbollah, Hamas

Eighty-four celebrities signed a statement blasting Hamas and Hezbollah for terrorism and harming civilians.

The statement, published in the Hollywood Reporter, Los Angeles Times and Variety, says that terrorism must be stopped around the world or else chaos will rule and innocents will continue to die.

Signatories included Sylvester Stallone, James Woods, Bruce Willis, Ridley Scott, Serena Williams, Nicole Kidman, Michael Douglas, Dennis Hopper, William Hurt, Joshua Malina and Rupert Murdoch.

Camp hosts Israeli children

A summer camp in the United States is hosting 23 Arab and Jewish children from Haifa.

The children arrived Saturday on the campus of Buckley Country Day School on Long Island and will stay with host families.

The camp says its hope is not only to provide a safe haven for children caught in war, but to foster goodwill between Arab and Jewish children.

WORLD

Return of Nazi-looted art criticized

The return of a painting to its Jewish heirs could endanger Germany's cultural heritage, a German historian said.

Christoph Stolzl, former head of the German Historical Museum, has criticized the decision by the Berlin Senate to force the city's Brucke Museum to return Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's painting "Street Scenes" to the heirs of its former owner, Alfred Hess.

The painting, returned in July, is due to go on the Christie's auction block in New York, where it is expected to bring in more than \$20 million.

Clinton: Prepare to back circumcision

President Clinton called for cultural taboos surrounding circumcision to be tackled if experiments show that the procedure protects people from AIDS.

Clinton made his comments Tuesday at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto.

A study performed in South Africa found that circumcised men are far less likely to contract HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.