

IN THE NEWS

Olmert, Bush to meet next month

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will meet President Bush in Washington in November.

Olmert, who met in Jerusalem on Wednesday with Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, told a Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations' conference call on Thursday that he would meet Bush on his way to Los Angeles for the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, which is slated for Nov. 12-15.

Powers to discuss Iranian nuclear program

Representatives of the major world powers will meet Friday to consider Iran and its nuclear program. Delegates from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China will meet in London, the U.S. State Department said in a statement Thursday.

Iran has rebuffed demands by the six nations that it stop enriching uranium, a key step in making a nuclear weapon, although Iran denies that is its intention.

Israel warned over Rafah crossing

Western officials urged Israel to keep a key Gaza border crossing open. U.S. and E.U. officials recently wrote to Defense Minister Amir Peretz to say that if Israel does not keep the Rafah crossing open, European security monitors there may be withdrawn, Reuters reported Thursday.

European monitors at the crossing are charged with making sure that no terrorist suspects, funds or arms get through. But Israel has frequently complained of security failings at Rafah and ordered it closed.

Reminder:
The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Oct. 9.



WORLD REPORT

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Cries of victory, sighs of defeat from Jews as Congress recesses

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If you listened closely, you could hear, beneath the noisy sex scandal roiling the 109th Congress, cries of victory and sighs of defeat from the pro-Israel and Jewish communities.

The revelation last week of salacious electronic exchanges between Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.) and teenage congressional pages — and the threat that allegations of a cover-up now pose to the Republican leadership — dominated coverage of Congress' last days before it recessed for midterm elections.

The news all but overwhelmed one of the busiest weeks of the congressional year, with Jewish victories on care for the elderly, abortion, evangelism in the military and funding for Israel defense programs; qualified wins on funds to protect Jewish institutions and Iran sanctions; and losses on civil liberties and Palestinian Authority sanctions.

Here's a rundown of how the chips fell on issues of interest to Jewish and pro-Israel lobbies:

- Iran sanctions, partial victory. Pro-Israel groups and Democrats expected the U.S. Senate to easily pass the version of the Iran Freedom Support Act that the U.S. House of Representatives passed overwhelmingly in April.

The act would considerably expand sanctions against Iran by targeting overseas parties that deal with the Islamic republic. U.S. officials from President Bush on down have strongly hinted that they would unilaterally consider such sanctions if the U.N. Security Council fails to act against Iran after it refused to stop uranium enrichment, a key step in producing a nuclear bomb.

The thinking was that forcing overseas



IA/BP Images

Israel's Arrow anti-ballistic missile was allocated \$135.6 million in a Defense Appropriations bill.

companies and nations to choose between dealing with the United States or with Iran, while not as effective as international sanctions, still would deliver a considerable blow.

In late September, however, Democrats were presented with a version of the act lacking language that would close a loophole for U.S. companies owning subsidiaries that deal with Iran. It also allowed the president to waive sanctions on other companies. The new version offers language extending such sanctions to companies that provide

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ As Congress recesses, Jews offer both cries of victories and sighs of defeat

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nuclear assistance to Iran, and including a provision barring any banks that deal with Iran from dealing in U.S. markets, a measure used recently to devastating effect against Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist group. Still, it was a narrowing of the original sanctions, which targeted all economic relations.

House Democrats were chagrined to see the changes, especially Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), who joined Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) in sponsoring the original act, but they felt they had little choice but to swallow hard and vote for it.

Democrats in the Senate also passed it Saturday morning. Democrats came under pressure from some pro-Israel lobbyists, who may have been disappointed by the act's dilution but who traditionally back the White House line on final language in bills.

■
• Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, defeat. This act, which would ban most U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority unless it renounced terrorism, disarmed terrorist groups and recognized Israel, already was written off this summer as unpassable because of irreconcilable differences between House and Senate versions.

No one expects to hear about the act until 2007.

• Homeland Security funds for non-profits, partial victory. Jewish community lobbyists, led by the United Jewish Communities, the Orthodox Union and Agudath Israel of America, lobbied hard for Congress to force the department to release \$25

million allocated for non-profits in 2006.

Jewish institutions got most of the \$25 million budgeted in 2005, and were using it to reinforce security at federations, schools and synagogues. Homeland Security wanted to keep the 2006 money for first responders, but an attack this summer on the Jewish federation building in Seattle, which killed one staffer, changed the dynamic.

The UJC and the other groups had hoped for another \$25 million in the 2007 budget, and language encouraging states and local communities to consider at-risk non-profits in doling out money, but neither provision was forthcoming.

The Orthodox Union scored a success when Congress included language in the bill that ensures that money for schools affected by hurricanes and other natural disasters is distributed equitably to both private and public schools.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee scored a victory when the House passed a separate bill setting up an office within the Homeland Security Department that would coordinate cooperation with Israel, Britain, Australia, Canada and Singapore. The Senate may consider the bill in the lame-duck session after the elections.

■
• Evangelism in the military, victory. A wall-to-wall coalition of Jewish groups opposed language to be included in the Defense Authorization Act that would have allowed military chaplains to mention Jesus in their official prayers.

The language, backed by conservative Republicans, passed in the House but hit a roadblock in the Senate Armed Services Committee.

• Appropriations for U.S.-Israel programs, victory. An AIPAC priority, the \$460 million allocated for such programs in the U.S. Defense Appropriations bill is separate from the \$2.8 billion Israel receives each year in assistance, and is considered an investment.

The allocation includes \$135.6 million for Israel's Arrow missile interceptor program, a proven success. Within that allocation, Congress set aside \$18.4 million to develop a system to intercept short-range missiles, an outcome of the difficulty Israel faced in stopping Hezbollah missiles during this summer's war in Lebanon.

• Military tribunals, defeat. Republican majorities in both houses guaranteed passage of a bill that grants Bush considerable leeway in defining what constitutes torture and allows him to remove habeas corpus, the centuries-old right of a prisoner to appeal his detention.

Bush said the bill was critical in advancing the war against terrorism. Jewish civil rights groups, including

Reform's Religious Action Center and the American Jewish Committee, had opposed the bill, even in the "compromise" version negotiated by three Republican Senators who balked at Bush's demand that Congress redefine the Geneva Conventions.

■
• Abortion rights for minors, victory. A broad array of Jewish groups, including the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the umbrella body for Jewish community relations councils; the National Council of Jewish Women; the Reform movement; and the AJCommittee opposed a bill that would have made it a crime to take minors across state lines to have abortions.

Both houses had passed versions of the act, but Frist balked when he saw that the much tougher House version had emerged from the House-Senate conference. The House version mandated requirements for doctors that essentially would have nationalized parental reporting, opponents of the act said.

Sensing that the act would not pass when it landed on his desk, Frist, ordered an immediate "cloture vote," a procedural mechanism needs 60 votes to pass. It failed last Friday evening, bringing down with it a signature campaign for the conservative right. ■

There were Jew victories on care for the elderly, abortion, evangelism in the military and funding for Israel defense programs; qualified wins on funds to protect Jewish institutions and Iran sanctions; and losses on civil liberties and Palestinian Authority sanctions.



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Tensions simmer over St. Petersburg JCC

By LEV KRICHEVSKY & YASHA LEVINE

MOSCOW (JTA) — A state-of-the-art Jewish community center in St. Petersburg opened earlier this year, but tensions continue to simmer between some local community leaders and their prime donor, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The community center, known as YESOD, was built by the JDC with funds raised from North American Jewish federations.

It has fueled debate among some local leaders who say the JDC doesn't understand its needs and doesn't allow the local community to make decisions about how to run the center.

JDC says local leaders are unprepared to take full responsibility for the \$10 million dollar center, which was intended to become the central Jewish address in Russia's second-largest community.

The controversy in St. Petersburg underscores a larger issue in relations between local Jewish communities in the FSU and their international benefactors.

The post-Communist paradigm for Jewish life in the former Soviet Union, best described as "rescue and renewal," has given way to a more complicated reality.

Most Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union — even the better-off ones, like St. Petersburg — couldn't survive without external help, but they're clamoring for a greater role in making decisions and shaping their own futures.

"I have a two-sided attitude toward the JDC. On the one hand, it's this community's main donor. But on the other, I feel that they do not always hold real community interests in mind," said Yuriy Teplitsky, a St. Petersburg businessman and a former member of the YESOD planning committee.

But JDC says the wide discontent in the community stems from a different cause: JDC is trying to push the communities to become more self-sufficient and raise more funds locally.

The three-story YESOD has a light, welcoming interior, organized around a large open hall covered by a glass ceiling.

The four organizations the JDC had in mind when it designed the center — the Hesed Avraham welfare center, the Adain Lo family network group, Hillel and the St.

Petersburg Jewish University — have all moved in, and there is plenty of activity, according to JDC officials.

But half of the facility remains empty.

Portions of the building were reserved for commercial tenants that the JDC hopes to attract to cover part of the maintenance cost. The idea of commercial tenants in Jewish institutions is new here but common in North America.

Asher Ostrin, JDC's director for the former Soviet Union, says the organization is trying to limit the commercial component to 20 percent of the space. So far, only two minor commercial tenants have signed up. The JDC said it is negotiating a lease with a health club.

YESOD may be JDC's flagship project in the region, but it's just one of a dozen or so properties in six former Soviet republics that JDC has built or remodeled in recent years.

All the buildings have to be maintained and managed, which seems to be the biggest problem for both the JDC and local Jews.

JDC estimates YESOD's annual maintenance costs at \$1.2 million, much more than the St. Petersburg community has collected in any single year for nonbuilding projects. Without JDC, the project simply would fall apart, especially considering that the JDC also provides funds and programming for the organizations the center houses.

With its current budget of \$100 million in the former Soviet Union, the JDC is the largest sponsor of secular Jewish life in the former Soviet Union. Acting with money raised from North American federations, Holocaust reparations and its own fund-raising initiatives, JDC is a major financial lifeline for nonsectarian Jewish life in the region's mostly impoverished Jewish communities.

According to Steve Schwager, JDC's executive vice president, 300,000 people

in 3,000 cities across the former Soviet Union receive welfare assistance through 170 JDC-operated welfare and community centers.

But local leaders say the property issue is harming the JDC's relations with local communities.

Furthermore, they charge that the JDC initiates flashy projects that help attract big donors but that don't fit community needs.

Having built YESOD and some other expensive real estate projects, such as JCCs in Kishinev and Moscow, JDC has become overly concerned with saving its investment, local leaders say.

JDC disputes this assessment. These facilities were "not a fund-raising tool, but a tool to build community," Schwager said.

In St. Petersburg, with some 100,000

Jews, he added, "this is the first space that is a Jewish facility designed by Jews and shared by Jews of all denominations."

Nonna Levina, the former director of YESOD, resigned from YESOD in July over a disagreement with the JDC managerial team on how to run the center.

"All decisions are being made somewhere else and not in consultation with the community. We don't even know who is making these decisions and why," she said.

For its part, the JDC is trying to push the community toward greater independence.

"After 15 years of providing free services in the old community model, we started to do things differently," Schwager said, referring to the modest rent and fees the groups are charged.

And, he said, there's a second issue: Who will support the buildings in the long term?

"Charitable dollars won't be here forever, and the community should take responsibility. This isn't an easy change," Schwager said, adding that the new situation is causing animosity in a number of cities.

AROUND
THE JEWISH
WORLD

The JDC is the community's main donor but it does not always keep the community interests in mind, says one member of St. Petersburg's Jewish community.

Israel a leader in in-vitro fertilization

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The waiting room at the IVF clinic at Ichilov Hospital fills up as the morning stretches on. Women and men fill out stacks of forms and nervously eye the nurses as they call their names for examinations. Some say silent prayers.

Behind the walls of the clinic's labs and treatment rooms, the science fiction of in-vitro fertilization unfolds: A woman's eggs are extracted through a long syringe, then mixed with sperm in a glass dish in the hopes an embryo will be created that can be implanted in the uterus.

For the lucky, pregnancy and, ultimately, a baby will follow.

Israel is a world leader when it comes to fertility treatments. As the only country that pays for infertile couples to have two babies, it has the highest number of IVF procedures per capita in the world, and its doctors are behind several cutting-edge procedures.

But the race to conceive, driven by demographic concerns and a family-focused culture, has its downsides. Some public health advocates and doctors argue that fertility treatments are pushed too aggressively even when it might be medically unwise. There are concerns that repeated exposure to fertility drugs could increase the risk of certain types of cancer.

"It's a two-edged sword. We have the technology, but the question is how to use it wisely," said Julie Cwikel, the director and founder of the Center for Women's Health, Research and Promotion at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

The subsidized cost of IVF treatment in Israel, even for those who are treated privately, is about \$3,000 per procedure, compared to \$12,000 to \$15,000 in the United States. The lower cost and Israeli doctors' vast experience with IVF has attracted "fertility tourists" to the country.

For Y., 33, who tried for nearly two years to conceive, IVF was the best hope for getting pregnant. She was not deterred by the potential drawbacks of hormone shots and the emotional and physical upheaval that can follow treatment.

"You need to feel like you are doing something, and IVF lets you feel like you're doing something proactive," said Y., who is now eight months pregnant. "It's a daunt-



Puah Institute

An Israeli baby born as the result of fertility treatments.

ing task, but then suddenly you get pregnant and you think, 'Yes, it was worth every second.'"

On average, about 20,000 IVF procedures are done annually in Israel, compared to about 100,000 per year in the United States, which has a population nearly 50 times the size of Israel's.

"Be fruitful and multiply," God proclaimed to Adam and Eve in Genesis. Later in the Bible, the issue of infertility was dealt with at length: Three of the four biblical matriarchs were infertile until God decided to "open" their wombs.

Israel has taken the biblical injunction to reproduce seriously. Covering fertility treatments costs the government-subsidized HMOs about \$57 million a year, much of which goes toward IVF procedures.

Having IVF treatments paid for by one's HMO makes it available for all Israelis, regardless of financial status. In the United States, by contrast, the treatment is the prerogative of those with financial means.

"If our society can help these situations by bringing a child into the world, what could be better than that?" Health Minister Yacov Ben Yizri told JTA.

Beyond the traditional importance Judaism places on family life, the cold calculus of demography perhaps best explains

the policy of funding fertility treatments. Israeli Jews fear for their majority status in the country, concerned they could eventually be overwhelmed by the Arab sector's higher fertility rate.

Figures released in September by the Central Bureau of Statistics show that the relative number of Jews in Israel has been dropping, while the percentage of Arabs is on the rise. About 76 percent of the population is Jewish, and 20 percent is Arab, according to current figures.

"If you are in Israel surrounded by Arabs whose mean family number is four or five children, and you still want Israel to have a majority of Jews, then there's no other way" but to fund fertility, said Dr.

Alex Simon, director of IVF at Jerusalem's Hadassah hospitals.

The focus on fertility also is colored by the memory of the Holocaust and Israel's precarious political situation.

"There's more pressure here to have families than anywhere else, and it comes from the post-Holocaust mentality

that everyone needs to populate the country and that we're under a sort of siege mentality," Cwikel said.

In Israel, a society that is highly divided on most topics, the issue of state-funded fertility treatment elicits little public debate.

"No one is against it," said Dr. Frida Simonstein, a medical ethicist at Jezreel Valley College. "It's incredible, there's no division of opinion whatsoever."

FERTILE GROUND

It's a two-edged sword. We have the technology, but the question is how to use it wisely.
Julie Cwikel
 Founder and director,
 Center for Women's Health,
 Research and Promotion

Fertility, halachah mix at counseling center

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prayer books and fertility pamphlets are scattered across the coffee table in the waiting room of the Puah Institute, a center that helps couples seeking to undergo fertility treatments in a way that accords with Jewish law.

Named for the Hebrew midwife Puah, who defied Pharaoh's orders to kill Jewish male newborns, the center receives about 150 calls and e-mails a day from childless couples.

"The goal is halachic advice and medical advice," says Rabbi Gideon Weitzman, head of Puah's English-speaking section.

Weitzman is one of 10 rabbis at the institute, all Orthodox, offering services not only in Hebrew and English but also in Spanish, French and Yiddish.

"The first mitzvah in the Torah is to have children. That's always going to be at our forefront — that we want to have Jewish families," he said. "There's a great desire on the part of the religious establishment to feel the pain of couples. The Torah spoke of our foremothers and forefathers as being infertile. That leads to a tremendous amount of being lenient where possible."

Most couples that turn to Puah for its free counseling services are religiously observant. They often come with questions about Judaism's approach to modern fertility technology, from in-vitro fertilization, or IVF, to egg donation.

Many inquire about how the laws of family purity can be coordinated with treatment and how procedures can be supervised according to halachah, or Jewish law.

Many of the religious couples' concerns are no different than those of non-religious couples, who also sometimes turn to Puah for advice, Weitzman said.

"A lot of the issues are similar, such as the feelings of hopelessness and the lack of control over one's life," said the British-born Weitzman, who comes from a family of scientists.

Like the other rabbis on Puah's staff, he has been trained extensively in the medical aspects of fertility treatment by medical experts.

Puah's counseling often addresses family tensions that can arise from infertility. The pressure to have children can be overwhelming in any society, but is especially intense in the religious community, where large families are the norm and family life is a crucial part of the community.

The rabbis also provide practical advice about the nature of available treatments and can suggest which specialists might be the best match for a particular couple. They sometimes even serve as sex therapists.

"There is a tremendous amount of stress on the family, and he really helped us in dealing with that stress and creating a game plan for ourselves," said one Orthodox woman who was counseled by Weitzman and eventually gave birth to twins. She asked that her name not be used in order to maintain her privacy.

The woman and her husband went to

Puah to make sure their fertility treatment plans were sanctioned by halachah, but ended up getting much more.

According to the institute's estimates, Puah is involved in about 1,500 births a year — not bad for an organization that started in the living room of its founder, Rabbi Menachem Burstein, in 1990.

Burstein had been asked by one of Israel's chief rabbis at the time to research the issue of fertility treatments and what might be possible under halachah.

Puah now has a four-story office in Jerusalem and a staff of about 70 people in Israel, the United States, France and Australia. The organization gets by on donations, mostly from contributors in Israel.

Aside from counseling, Puah also provides individual halachic supervision of treatments.

The main concern some rabbis initially had about treatments such as IVF was whether a mistake might happen in the lab in which sperm and eggs were misplaced or embryos switched or tampered with. Aside from the personal ramifications, this would call into question the child's future status for marriage or inheritance.

Among the rabbis who opposed IVF for that reason was the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Schneerson later changed his mind because of Puah's effectiveness in reducing error.

To prevent the chance of human error, Puah has trained about 50 women in Israel and others who work in overseas fertility clinics to oversee the lab work. In the case of an IVF procedure, the women lock the petri dish containing the embryo into a specially constructed sterilized stainless steel box that can be locked and then put in an incubator.

Egg donation is not currently allowed in Israel, so patients who decide on that procedure must travel abroad, usually to Eastern Europe. Puah offers supervision there and also arranges visas, hotels, flights and kosher food for their clients, some of whom have never left Israel before.

Since egg donation isn't covered by Israeli health funds, clients must pay for the procedure themselves. Still, the \$6,000 to \$7,000 that egg donation costs in Eastern Europe is far less than the \$25,000 or so it can cost in the United States.

The Puah Institute is involved in about 1,500 births a year.



Puah Institute

Rabbi Menachem Burstein counsels a religious couple seeking fertility treatments in accordance with Jewish law at the Puah Institute in Jerusalem.

Communal homes foster Jewish identity

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — Say you're a few years out of college, living with friends and working in a low-paying job for some do-good organization. You don't go to synagogue but you miss the camaraderie of your college Hillel, and you like to invite people over for Shabbat meals.

Imagine if someone was willing to pay you to keep doing it?

That's what's offered by Moishe House, a fast-growing network of subsidized homes for 20-something Jews committed to building Jewish community for themselves and their peers.

The project was launched less than a year ago by The Forest Foundation, a Santa Barbara, Calif.-based philanthropy. The foundation's executive director, David Cygielman, 25, says the goal was to give young activist Jews the financial freedom to focus on creative programming designed to reach other young, unaffiliated Jews.

To the people living in these houses, it's a terrific gift.

"We were already having Shabbat dinners three or four times a month and then they came along and said, 'We're looking for people doing what you're doing. Keep it up, and we'll support you,'" says Jonathan Herzog, 29, who lives in the Seattle house with his sister Norah and two friends.

The project is a validation of these young Jews' efforts to create a Jewish home for an age group they feel gets lost in the communal shuffle.

"After college, there's no more Hillel, and they don't join the Jewish community until they have families," Cygielman notes.

The first Moishe House opened last December in San Francisco. Seattle was next in February, joined quickly by houses in Boston and Los Angeles.

New ones are to open in October in Oakland, Calif., Washington, Uruguay and Nigeria, and the plan is to have 12 houses up and running by next year.

Except for the Nigerian house, which is a one-man outreach operation, they all follow the same formula: Three or four Jews in their 20s receive a rent subsidy of up to \$2,500 a month, along with \$500 for programming, and are expected to become a communal hub for young Jews by hosting Shabbat meals, card games, Yiddish lessons, film nights, book discussions, neighborhood clean-ups and other social,

intellectual and civic-minded activities.

Residents say the formula works because it lets young people organize events they themselves would want to attend, rather than having something imposed from above by a synagogue or JCC.

In many ways, it's the bait of the 21st century. But unlike those communal Jewish homes of the 1970s and '80s, which usually were sponsored by Zionist youth groups, residents of Moishe Houses don't subscribe to a particular ideology.

The focus varies according to residents' interests: The houses in Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco host a lot of poker parties and film nights, while the Boston house is more involved in social action.

Houses have great freedom, Cygielman says, so long as they meet the minimum requirements: hosting eight to 12 events a month, making weekly reports, maintaining a Web site and reaching out to young people. Funding can be withdrawn if a house doesn't perform.

"I won't tell them what's a wrong program or a right program," Cygielman says. "I don't care, so long as they're building community and lots of people are coming."

Maia Ipp, 24, moved into the San Francisco house in June. She runs a women's group and a cooking club that is working its way alphabetically through the world's cuisines.

"We're not affiliated with a movement that has a belief system, which frees us to do new, fresh work and engage young adults in ways other movements and campus groups can't," she says.

One recent evening, the four young residents of the San Francisco house got together for their weekly meeting. They sat around the large table in the dining room, which opens onto a large patio they use for Shabbat dinners and holiday parties.

David Persyko, 25, started hanging out at the house soon after it opened.

"I found myself really attached to being part of a Jewish community again," he says. "Some of my fondest memories grow-

ing up were from Camp Swig, and coming here, I felt that rush of support I hadn't felt in 10 years."

He moved in in June and now runs poker night, which draws a group of guys every three weeks to "vent about the women in our lives," Persyko says.

The house holds a big Shabbat dinner once a month and sponsors a softball team called the Matzah Ballstars. But the events and programs are secondary to the real draw.

"At our core, we're four people who live in a house and we're inviting people over. That's appealing to people like us. It's not institutional," says Isaac Zones, 24, national director of the Moishe House network and a founding member of the San Francisco house.

The Moishe House concept is still in its early stages, and some things need to be tweaked. For example, the Los Angeles and Seattle houses are trying to beef up their social action component, while the Boston house is being encouraged to offer more "fun events," Cygielman says.

It's all part of figuring out what constitutes a Jewish community, or even a Jewish event. Must it be something devoted purely to a Jewish ritual or Zionist goal? Or is it enough to bring together a bunch of Jewish people to shmooze and eat?

It works out well for the entire Jewish community, Cygielman says: For the same money it would take to hire one full-time Jewish professional, a Moishe House funds four people doing non-stop youth programming, and provides a space to hold the events.

The Moishe Houses aren't permanent living situations. Those who live in them know they have a sweet deal that will expire as they age. While Zones can't conceive of forcing someone out after a milestone birthday, there probably will be a natural progression as people move on with their lives.

"I can't imagine people in their 30s wanting a bunch of people coming over their house all the time," he says.

Some of my fondest memories growing up were from Camp Swig, and coming here, I felt that rush of support I hadn't felt in 10 years.

David Persyko
Moishe House resident

An environmental Sukkot

By JANE ULMAN

ENCINO, Calif. (JTA) — During Sukkot, families of Keshet Israel, a modern Orthodox congregation in Washington, will gather for a special celebration. In the synagogue's sukkah, they will be treated to a tantalizing array of chocolate cakes and candies, accompanied by delicious cups of tap water.

"Which are you enjoying more, the sweets or the water?" congregant Evonne Marzouk will ask, knowing that the cups of water will remain largely untouched.

This activity is a reference to Simchat Beit Hashoeva, the festive water ceremony that took place on Sukkot while the Temple was standing. It is part of True Joy Through Water, a new program created by the Orthodox environmental group Canfei Nesharim, designed primarily to educate the Orthodox community about water conservation.

"At the time of the Temple, people lived on the land and understood that if there wasn't rain, there wasn't food. That absolute dependence is still true today, but we don't think about it because we live so far from the land," said Marzouk, executive director of the three-year-old group.

True Joy Through Water will be celebrated at more than 30 Orthodox congregations in the United States. It is one of many programs that Jewish environmentalists are promoting this Sukkot, which begins on Friday night.

Rabbi Everett Gendler sees another link to the environment through the holiday. "The fragility of the sukkah and its shelter is eloquent testimony to both our

dependence on the environment and the environment's dependence on us," said Gendler, the rabbi emeritus of Temple Emanuel in Lowell, Mass.

Gendler, who admits to a fondness for pumpkins stemming from an overflowing pumpkin patch he visited yearly as a youth in the Midwest, invented the Yaakov Lantern. It's a pumpkin, grown by Gendler every year, on which he carves a jack-o'-lantern face on one side and a Star of David on the other. Inside, he places a candle.

At night, the lantern invokes the ushpizin, the biblical forefathers whom Gendler refers to as the "ancestral spirits," and also lights the sukkah in an environmentally friendly manner.

"It's hard to imagine the sukkah with wires attached," said Gendler, who invented the first solar-powered ner tamid, the light that is always on in a synagogue, and espouses alternative energy sources.

Another longtime environmentalist, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, founder and director of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia, is hosting an expected crowd of some 300 Jews, Christians and Muslims to address the question of how religious tradition can help global scorching.

Leaders from the three faiths will speak to the participants, who will build a sukkah together. There will also be petitions on global warming and alternative energy sources that will be delivered to national, state and local legislators.

"I'm hoping to have some direct impact right there on the spot, both in terms of public policy and in terms of congrega-

tions' and congregants' energy use," Waskow said.

The event takes place on Sunday and celebrates Sukkot, Ramadan and the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi. It is part of a nationwide effort initiated by the Tent of Abraham, Hagar & Sarah, a network of Jews, Christians and Muslims.

For Barbara Lerman-Golomb, executive director of Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life or COEJL, Sukkot, as a harvest holiday, is a perfect time to talk about organic foods.

"Many individuals who have joined community supported farms and co-ops

are bringing their organically grown fruits and vegetables into the sukkah," she said.

On the first day of Sukkot, Lerman-Golomb is slated to speak on the Jewish response to environmental issues at the Conservative Kane Street Synagogue in Brooklyn.

"I coined the phrase 'energy observant,'" Lerman-Golomb said. In particular, she will stress the problem of global warming, part of a five-month nationwide campaign that began in August, called How Many Jews Does it Take to Change a Light Bulb?

Richard Schwartz, president of Jewish Vegetarians of North America, views Sukkot as a time to reflect on how future harvests are endangered by global warming, water shortages and soil erosion and depletion.

"As our Israelite ancestors were sustained with manna, a vegetarian food," while in the desert, he said, "we should sustain ourselves with tofu, the modern-day manna, and other plant foods, for the sake of our health and that of our precious, but imperiled, planet." ■

SUKKOT FEATURE

A new program is designed primarily to educate the Orthodox community about water conservation.

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

- The Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel named Alice Kolman its new president.
- The Jewish Agency for Israel named Oded Salomon as the director general of its aliyah and absorption department.
- Hillel named Julian Sandler the chairman of its board of directors.

HONORS

- The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation honored Croatian President Stipe Mesic with Raoul Wallenberg Award for 2006.
- The American Jewish Congress honored writer Salman Rushdie and four others with the Stephen S. Wise Humanitarian Award.

Chabad offers shelter during Thai coup

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A shofar believed to have been hidden in a German beer cellar during World War II was discovered in Haifa.

The 200-year-old shofar was recently found in the warehouse of Haifa's Gordon College, whose former deputy director had served as a rabbi with Allied forces

fighting the Nazis, Ma'ariv reported Wednesday. According to the newspaper, the rabbi, Yaacov Lifschitz-Gil, found the shofar during postwar searches of Munich beer cellars that had been frequented by Hitler.

The shofar has been donated to Yad Vashem. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Ukrainian leader to visit Israel

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushenko will visit Israel in early November. Yushenko, who is expected to arrive Nov. 7, said his country is ready to assist Israel in developing satellites and missiles.

"We were among the developers of the Sputnik in the days of the former Soviet Union, and we have a long-range missile industry and much knowledge that we can share with Israel," Yushenko said this week in Berlin where he and Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres were awarded a prestigious prize.

"I am a great believer in relations with Israel," Yushenko said. Yushenko said he had not yet decided whether to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during his trip.

Israeli Embassy at center of British probe

Britain's police launched an investigation after a Muslim officer was relieved of duties at the Israeli Embassy in London.

The probe was announced Thursday after the Sun newspaper reported the removal of the officer, a member of the diplomatic security corps, from the guard rotation at the embassy.

According to the report, the officer objected to the job, given his opposition to Israel's war in Lebanon.

But a lobby representing Muslim officers in the British police said he felt "uncomfortable and unsafe." Some police veterans warned of a mutiny on religious or political grounds, while others said the case was being overblown and that officers are frequently reassigned for personal reasons.

Tombstones desecrated in Russia

Jewish and Muslim tombstones were vandalized in a cemetery in central Russia.

Vandals damaged some 150 Jewish and Tatar gravestones in Tver in what is believed to be the largest act of cemetery vandalism in post-Communist Russia.

On Wednesday, Russian television showed the Dmitrovo-Cherkasskoye Cemetery in Tver, about 100 miles northwest of Moscow, with several damaged headstones, many of them with painted swastikas, as well as paper leaflets with swastikas scattered about the cemetery.

A local police official said the act is believed to have been carried out by neo-Nazi skinheads.

London mayor's suspension to be overturned

The suspension of London's mayor for comments seen as anti-Semitic will be overturned, a British judge said.

Justice Andrew Collins made his comments regarding Ken Livingstone on Thursday after a two-day hearing at the High Court of London.

Earlier this year, Livingstone was suspended from office for four weeks by the Adjudication Panel of England for "bringing his office into disrepute" by comparing a Jewish journalist to a concentration camp guard. The suspension was stayed pending the outcome of this hearing.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel kills Palestinian gunmen

An Israeli airstrike killed two Palestinian gunmen in the southern Gaza Strip.

The two died when the air force fired two missiles at their car near Khan Younis late Wednesday. Security sources said they were planning attacks on Israel.

On Thursday morning, Israeli troops stationed outside central Gaza shot dead an Islamic Jihad member who tried to plant a bomb near the border patrol road.

Israeli arrested for mosque threat

An Israeli was arrested for allegedly threatening to attack a major Muslim shrine in Jerusalem.

Police said the suspect, described in media reports as a 51-year-old rabbi, was taken into custody Wednesday after announcing in the lobby of a Tel Aviv hotel that he would carry out an attack in the Temple Mount, an apparent reference to the Al-Aksa Mosque located there. He has no history of political or criminal violence and was sent for psychiatric evaluation.

Police said he would be arraigned at Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court on Thursday.

NORTH AMERICA

Lieberman attacks Lamont on Israel

Sen. Joe Lieberman said Ned Lamont, his opponent in the Connecticut Senate race, is not committed to supporting Israel. Speaking Wednesday at a fund-raiser in New York, Lieberman said Lamont has been "surrounded by people who are either naive or are isolationists, or, frankly, some more explicitly against Israel," The New York Times reported.

The paper said that Lieberman specifically mentioned Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who opposed a resolution condemning Hezbollah this summer. At the time, Waters and others said the resolution should include mention of all civilians affected.

A spokesman for Lamont was quoted in the Times as saying Lieberman is "playing on people's fear and attempting to divide and conquer."

Lamont defeated Lieberman in the Democratic primary earlier this year, but Lieberman is running in November's general election as an independent.

Group helps survivors in northern Israel

A Holocaust reparations organization is making payments to Holocaust survivors affected by the Hezbollah attacks in northern Israel over the summer.

The Claims Conference is making some 12,000 payments of approximately \$250 each to needy Holocaust victims living in areas affected by the war.

More information is available at www.claimscon.org.

Poles cancel 'Israel lobby' lecture

Polish diplomats in New York canceled a speech by a prominent Jewish critic of Israel.

The speech by historian and author Tony Judt on the Israel lobby was canceled just hours before it was to take place at the Polish consulate in New York.

Consulate spokesmen told the New York Sun they canceled the talk because it was inconsistent with their warm relations with Israel.

Sukkot items allowed on planes

The U.S. Transport Security Administration instructed officials to allow observant Jews to board planes with the four species of Sukkot.

Officials of Agudath Israel of America contacted the agency because Orthodox Jews had heard from airport officials that palm fronds, citrons, myrtle and willow branches would raise suspicions. Agudah commended the agency for "being so sensitive to this religious issue and to the concerns of observant Jews."