

SHARING

SINCE 1992

The Global Jewish Assistance and Relief Network Newsletter

Spring 2000

American Jewish Medical Center



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Message From the Executive Director



Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon, Founder and Executive Director of GJARN.

So much has happened since our last report to you. We are delighted to be able to share these developments with you.

We successfully opened twenty new offices with more than 100 new workers in Russia to manage the distribution of the USDA food that began arriving there since last October.

The distribution sites are all in place and the mechanism is established to get the food directly to the families in need. We have secured large numbers of volunteers to make the deliveries in a cost-efficient manner.

I wish you could be with us as we deliver these life-sustaining packages. The reactions of the people we visit are of such deep and profound gratitude. What we are finding is that we are becoming a true lifeline of hope for these families. What we bring to them is not only desperately needed food, but also the knowledge that they have a loving family around the world made up of people who care deeply about them and who do not want them to go hungry.

In many cases, the people we take packages to are elderly individuals and couples who are homebound and isolated. Our volunteers end up spending extra time with them because these frail elderly are so happy to have someone to talk to, even for a short while. During their visits, our volunteers do informal assessments to see what other types of services might be needed and then, when they

return to the distribution sites, they let us know so we can contact the right sources.

It is difficult to explain adequately how critically important these food distributions are and how much your help and support are vital to our ability to carry out this lifesaving work.

While working in Russia, we are not forgetting neighboring Ukraine, where, as I am sure you remember, we are establishing the American Jewish Medical Center and the Jewish Home for the Elderly. These are huge projects that also require very close oversight and supervision.

If you turn to pages 3 and 16 you will see full reports on both

I wish you could be with us as we deliver these life-sustaining packages.

of these life-saving projects which will literally change the face of

medical care and care for the elderly in this area when they are completed. We are working around the clock to ensure that we are ready to open the doors as quickly as possible because the health and wellbeing of so many people depend directly on these facilities.

It is the wonderful help of our good friends like you that is making all of these vitally important projects possible. With you as our ongoing partners, we are feeding the hungry, clothing those in need, and saving the lives of people.

I want you to know how deeply grateful we are to you for your compassion, your generosity, and your ability to reach out to those in need with love and dedication. The world is a better place because of you. Thank you... ❁

Eliezer Avtzon

Important Update on Construction of The American Jewish Medical Center

We are very happy to report to you that since our last issue of “Sharing”, a great deal has been accomplished in both the construction of the American Jewish Medical Center and its planning. We are seeing real, tangible progress that is putting us nearer our goal every day.

The new architectural/engineering firm that has taken on the project at cost, for which we are extremely grateful, has completed designing the exterior of the building, and is near completion for the interior and mechanical drawings.

The building itself is now 90% complete on the exterior. Because this facility is so urgently needed, we have continued working during the cold winter months despite the extreme cold and difficulty of working at this time of the year. Additionally the interior sections of the building — partitions, wiring, plumbing, heating — are being put in place as the plans come through and are approved,

although a great deal still needs to be done in this area.

A second building, which will house visiting American doctors who will work in the Medical Center on a part or full-time basis, both training doctors and seeing patients, is being built adjacent to the Medical Center itself. It will include ten suites, a kitchen and dining hall, and lounges so that the doctors, who are far from home, will have a comfortable place to stay during the duration of their service at the Medical Center.

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By introducing modern Western methods of teaching and practice with the most up-to-date technology, we will represent the finest in Jewish and American humanitarian efforts, while providing unprecedented medical benefits to the community, region and country.



Construction on American Jewish Medical Center continues, even in frigid weather.



Rabbi Avtzon reviewing plans with Boris Medgaus (local engineer) and Sasha Grossman (project foreman).

(Continued from page 3)

The total size of both of these two buildings combined – the Medical Center and the physicians' residence — is just under 5,800 square meters or the equivalent of 60,000 square feet.

The cost of construction and renovation for the American Jewish Medical Center is anticipated to be \$3,000,000. The lifesaving, state-of-the-art medical, surgical, dental and diagnostic equipment that is needed will cost another \$1.5 million, and initial supplies and medicines will be \$500,000.

Special training programs for physicians from Ukraine who are going to be working at the American Jewish Medical Center are already underway as you will read in the article on page eight about the first four physicians in the programs who are currently in Boston as well as three dentists who are in North Carolina.

We are working continually to secure as many donations of equipment, supplies and medicine as possible and have had a good measure of success. We are

very grateful to, and inspired by, the many people and companies that have recognized the great urgency of establishing this important Medical Center and are joining with GJARN in this non-sectarian, humanitarian undertaking that will undoubtedly help, and even save the lives of people, many of whom are at great risk today from the lack of accessible, quality health care — most especially infants and the frail elderly.

By introducing modern Western methods of teaching and practice with the most up-to-date technology, we will represent the finest in Jewish and American humanitarian efforts, while providing unprecedented medical benefits to the community, region and country.

For those of you who would like to become partners with GJARN in this wonderful life-saving project, very special dedication opportunities, at all levels, are available. You can honor a loved one or memorialize a family member. We would be most happy to send you a special booklet that outlines the various opportunities. Just contact our office and ask for the American Jewish Medical Center brochure. It would also be our pleasure to meet with you directly to discuss significant gifts. Just call us and let us know.

Another special way of becoming involved is by dedicating a brick or bricks in the new Medical Center at \$100 per brick. This is a wonderful way to celebrate a special occasion in someone's life. A card will be sent out informing the person you are honoring that a brick or bricks in the new American Jewish Medical Center has/have been purchased in their honor. Just contact our office and we will be happy to take care of this for you. ❁

A Miraculous Story. . .

By Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon

The year was 1941 and the world was the darkest it had ever been.

In the midst of the horror, Hitler's Nazis turned on their loyal friends in the Kremlin and invaded the Soviet Empire.

My father's family was living in the city of Lughansk in Eastern Ukraine at the time. He had already been exiled to one of Stalin's colonies for "prisoners of the State." He ended up spending seven-and-one-half long, horrible years there for the "crime" of being a "Yeshiva Bachur" (student), otherwise known as a "counter-revolutionary."

Upon his release after the war, my father immediately began a desperate search for his family. He had no idea what had happened to them, but his deep faith and relentless optimism drove him ceaselessly to try every avenue possible to find them.

Ultimately he was told that there were no survivors at all from his town. The Nazis had surrounded and sealed off the city, finally rounding up all the Jews and then killing all survivors of the siege.

Bereft at the news, my father found himself with no choice but to accept the tragic news and mourn for his parents. Not knowing their actual date of death, he was instructed by his Rabbis to commemorate his parents "yahrzeit" on the same days as he said the Kaddish for my mother's parents who both died during the

war and hunger.

Shortly thereafter, my parents, together with my mother's two surviving sisters, escaped Russia by posing as Polish citizens who had been given permission by the Russian regime



Rabbi Meir Avtzon reads the letter received from his cousins with details of his long-lost family.

to return to their homeland after the war.

From Poland they made their way to France where they lived for almost five years, finally immigrating to the United States with the help of HIAS in 1957.

Through all the years, my father rarely spoke about his family. Any thought or mention of them brought with it such terrible pain and awful night-

mares about what they might have endured. He could not bear the thought that he had not been able to see them one more time or say good-bye to them.

What neither he nor any one else in our family knew all this time was that, in fact, his parents had actually escaped Lughansk

(Continued on page 6)

Any thought or mention of them brought with it such terrible pain and awful nightmares about what they might have endured.



Rabbi Avtzon, GJARN's Executive Director (standing, third from left), with his newly found family in Kharkiv, Ukraine. He is flanked by his first cousins, Grisha and Dusa.

(Continued from page 5)

one-and-one-half months before the Nazis sealed its borders.

In the chaos of the war years and their aftermath, so many people were lost that finding accurate information about what had happened to individuals was often impossible.

Now this story takes a leap forward to 1996. A granddaughter of my father's niece was working for the Jewish community in Kharkiv, Ukraine under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Moscovitz. She was the artist for his monthly magazine.

The editor of the magazine was a young college student known as Eli Nochum Livshitz.

In the course of one of their many discussions, this young woman happened to mention to Rabbi Moscovitz that her grandmother had once told her that she [the grandmother] had an uncle, Meir Avtzon. She said that they had not heard anything of him since the war and she wondered whether the Rabbi might have ever heard of the Avtzon family.

Rabbi Moscovitz didn't have to look very far.

He and I had been classmates

and close friends and, at that time, in 1996, we were working together.

GJARN had opened an office in Kharkiv in 1992 and Rabbi Moscovitz and I were often in contact with one another.

He immediately called me and I confirmed to him that my father's name is indeed Meir.

When I called my father, he couldn't comprehend what I was telling him. He had been convinced for so many years that his entire family was killed by the Nazis, that the shock of this news was more than he could accept on the spot.

Several more transatlantic phone calls were made, and after hearing all the names of his brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles, my father, with trembling hands, finally took the phone and spoke to his niece.

It was the first time he had spoken to any member of his family in nearly fifty years.

One-and-one-half months later, on a routine visit to the Kharkiv office, I went to visit my new relatives and bring them presents from America.

Before I left to go there, my

father sat down with a tape recorder and told his family everything that had happened to him since they lost contact with each other. He filled a 90-minute tape and could probably have filled many more.

Besides the miracle of this reunion after so many years, two more interesting follow-ups to this story have taken place.

During that trip when I first met my family, I learned all the exact dates of death of almost everyone, except for my father's father for whom we only had the month and the year since he died running from the Nazis. My father's mother, on the other hand, lived to be well over 90 years old. She never knew that her son had survived, immigrated to America, and had a family of fifteen children and dozens of grand and great grandchildren, KIYH.

Her Yahrzeit falls on the 9th day of Av, the day all Jewish people mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. The first time my father would have been able to commemorate her true Yahrzeit, he was unfortunately hospitalized for severe pneumonia, so a Minyan was brought to his hospital room, where he led the services from his bed. Thank G-d, he recovered and is doing well, and we take this opportunity to extend him our best wishes for many more years of good health and Nachas from all his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The second interesting follow-up is that Eli Nochum Livshitz, who worked with my father's niece's granddaughter, now works full-time in GJARN's New York office as our Systems Manager and Coordinator for several of the Russian programs.

I've told you this personal story because it illustrates, better than anything I can think of, that we are indeed all one Jewish family around the world – in the United States, in Ukraine, in Israel, everywhere — and that we are truly linked to each other more solidly and strongly than any of us might ever imagine.

By helping each other – by caring and sharing — we carry



Grisha and Dusa listening to their uncle's taped message in which he recounts his life story.

out our responsibility to one another as compassionate human beings, and, at the same time, we sometimes end up helping ourselves as well, as happened to me when, through GJARN, I found family that we thought had been lost. **Giving of ourselves to aid the poor and hungry – whether it is through volunteering to help or donating money — is a tremendous mitzvah that will only bring with it good for our families and ourselves.** ❁

Four Doctors from Ukraine Currently Training in the United States



(from left to right) Dr. David Eisenberg, Milana Dunayeva, Alex Srybniuk Helena Kubay and Vadim Tokhtarov at the Massachusetts Eye & Ear recovery room.

Four doctors from Ukraine, who are going to be serving on the staff of the American Jewish Medical Center, are currently in the United States for six months of intensive training in their areas of specialty with the assistance of Dr. David Eisenberg, an ophthalmologist in Boston who has volunteered his time to GJARN to guide these

ning meeting for the facility, which was held in his home.

The four doctors under Dr. Eisenberg's supervision are Drs. Helena Kubay and Milana Dunayeva who are ophthalmologists, and Drs. Vadim Tokhtarov and Alexander Srybniuk who are anesthesiologists. All four arrived in the United States on October 7. They had received special training in English and, in fact, their interviews were conducted in English by a panel consisting of Dr. Eisenberg, Rabbi Avtzon, and two dentists, Drs. Steve Mackler and Robert Kriegsman as well as Mr. Hal Brooks, all three of North Carolina.

Dr. John Loewenstein, Associate Chief of Ophthalmology at Massachusetts Eye and Ear and Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School, is the person who coordinated this program with all of the other department heads of the various disciplines. He began by securing approval

“The knowledge I’ve acquired [in the GJARN program] considerably changed my perception on the abilities of modern anesthesiology and on the role of the doctor in modern society.”
—Dr. Vadim Tokhtarov

physicians through this unique program.

Dr. Eisenberg serves on the staff of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, one of the key participating facilities in this training program. Dr. Eisenberg's involvement in the American Jewish Medical Center began with the first plan-

of the concept from Dr. Frederic Jakobiec, Chief of Ophthalmology at Massachusetts Eye and Ear and Professor at Harvard Medical School. Among the teaching staff for the program is Dr. Claes Dohlman, who is a world-famous cornea specialist and the head of Cornea Service at Mass.

Eye and Ear. The anesthesiology portion of the program was reviewed by Dr. John Donlon III, while Dr. Ilya Mallikin assisted in the association of this part of the program with Massachusetts General Hospital.

The physicians from Ukraine are working very hard during their time here, often using their evening and weekend time to make use of the excellent libraries in the Boston area or to observe procedures they might not otherwise have time to view.

Drs. Tokhtarov and Srybniuk, the anesthesiologists, have attended conferences at Massachusetts General Hospital and have viewed surgeries with the staff of Mass. Eye and Ear and Mass. General. In particular they have concentrated on regional and eye anesthesia. They are learning American

learning about new instrumentation and methods that they will implement at the American Jewish Medical Center.

Plans are also underway for the ophthalmologists to make a weeklong trip in March to El Salvador, under Dr. Eisenberg's supervision, where they will be donating their services to perform surgeries for people who are otherwise unable to afford this kind of medical care, and at the same time, take advantage of the hands-on training they have not been able to do while learning in the States.

Following this initial six-month period there is also the

They are learning about new instrumentation and methods that they will implement at the American Jewish Medical Center

“Studying modern equipment and medications lets me look forward toward the direction of future health care development in my country.”

—Dr. Alexander Srybniuk

techniques for monitoring pediatric and adult surgeries in a number of sub-specialties, which require special skills.

Drs. Kubay and Dunayeva, the ophthalmologists, have been rotating through various services at Mass. Eye and Ear including cornea, plastics, retina, and glaucoma. They have been attending numerous conferences in these areas and others and have spent a great deal of time in the operating room studying procedures including laser surgery.

Dr. Eisenberg indicated that all four of the physicians from Ukraine are very studious and they are greatly enjoying the work that they are accomplishing here. They will be bringing back to Ukraine both teaching and clinical skills. They are

possibility of more intense fellowships for hands-on training in facilities in India for the two ophthalmologists. This particular part of the program is still in the planning stages.

In addition, three dentists from Ukraine are currently studying at the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry (photo page 8).

All of this important training will enable these physicians to practice state-of-the-art skills at the American Jewish Medical Center, skills that are urgently needed to save the lives of people currently at risk. All of us at GJARN are deeply grateful for the wonderful partnership of people like Dr. Eisenberg who has volunteered his time, expertise, and commitment to this life-saving undertaking. ❁

Update: USDA Distribution

In several of our recent letters to you, we have been telling you about GJARN's USDA food distribution program. We

(2,200,000 pounds) be distributed through United States P.V.O.'s (private voluntary organizations) with proven track records.

The selection process was very thorough. More than 50 proposals were submitted. GJARN was one of only five organizations selected by the USDA to distribute these life-sustaining goods. The five P.V.O.'s selected by the USDA were: GJARN, American Red Cross, IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities), Feed the Children, Project Aid to Siberia.

Of the five, GJARN received the largest allocation: 25,720 metric

tons. This is due to the fact that GJARN has repeatedly and consistently proven its exceptional efficiency in ensuring that food and other necessities will reach those most in need and that this will happen in the most effective and swiftest fashion possible. GJARN signed a special grant agreement with the Foreign Agricultural Department of the United States Department of Agriculture FAS/USDA for the



Checking the condition of food products received at the Vladivostok warehouse.

would like to give you some additional background on this urgently needed feeding program, as well as an update on what you have helped GJARN accomplish so far.

With the collapse of the Russian economy in late 1998, and the need to help U.S. farmers who suffered terrible losses as a result of the breakdown of both the Asian and Russian economies, the President of the United States authorized USDA to undertake an extensive assistance program for Russia for Fiscal Year 1999. This program consists of the sale and donation of 3,000,000 tons of assorted commodities as a government-to-government program.

To ensure that at least a significant portion of the donated food reaches those in greatest need, Congress mandated that at least 100,000 metric tons

GLOBAL JEWISH ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF RUSSIAN FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM





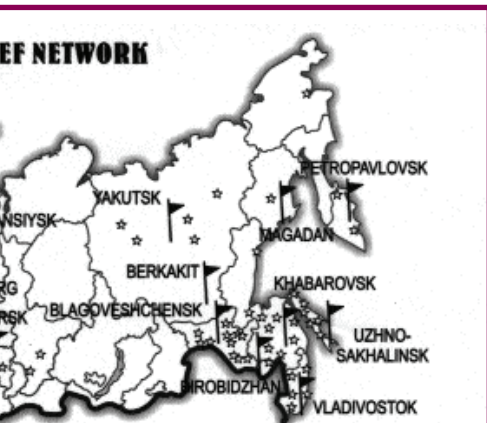
This hungry mother and child await their GJARN food package.

distribution of these 25,720 metric tons of food throughout the Russian Federation.

GJARN has established 20 new offices in Russia for the implementation and distribution of this food allocation. This food is arriving in three separate shipments, each representing a different area of Russia. The first shipment was to the Russian Far East (RFE) where GJARN established eight offices in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Birobidzhan, Blagoveshensk, Yakutia, Magadan, Petropavlovsk Kamchatka and Uzhno Sachalinsk.

The first shipment of food began arriving in early September and continued through October. It cleared Customs and then was forward-

Locations of GJARN food distribution sites in Russia.



ed to warehouses in each of the regions by November. In December we began the first phase of distribution which includes all institutional feeding programs such as schools, orphanages, hospitals, homes for the elderly and invalids, etc.

The second phase, which consists of individual distributions, began in mid January. Packages were assembled for 750,000 individuals in the RFE alone (50% of the entire RFE program). As of this writing, just over 3,000,000 kg has been distributed on an institutional level with the remaining 10,000 metric ton of Tranche I (shipment I) to be completely distributed by the end of April. The second shipment of food was for specific cities in Siberia, Ural and the Volga regions where GJARN established four additional offices in Novosibirsk, Hanty Mansisky, Ekaterinburg and Kazan. Food for this distribution began arriving in Moscow for Customs clearance in late November and continued to come in through the end of January.

This food is arriving in three separate shipments, each representing a different area of Russia.

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The third shipment of goods left U.S. ports before the end of the year for arrival in Russia for Customs clearance by early February. This food will be distributed in the North, Central, West and Southern Russian cities where GJARN established seven additional distribution sites in addition to its Moscow Headquarters office. These seven sites are in St. Petersburg, Yaroslavl, Tula, Voronezh, Volgograd, Rostov on Don, and Stavropol.

In all, GJARN is distributing food in some 250 communities throughout the Russian Federation. These distributions are taking place in 67 of the 89 independent Russian republics and will target some 2.5 million people, each one receiving



Unloading one of the 1,800 truckloads of food delivered this year to Russia.

press, we received the wonderful news that GJARN was once again selected as one of eight organizations to work in Russia for the next year, and was again granted the largest allocation based on our excellent performance.

On the previous page there is a map pinpointing the location of food distribution sites throughout Russia.

It is important to remember that you are a critically important partner in this lifesaving work. Your support of GJARN enables us to ship and distribute this food to hungry people. Without you – and other caring, compassionate people like you – we would not be able to carry out this urgently needed program.

Our gratitude to you – but even more importantly, that of the people you are helping – is difficult to express adequately in words. We want you to know that we are so deeply, deeply appreciative of your wonderful, caring help. ❁

P.S. Please check our Web Site – www.globaljewish.org – for continual updates on the distribution program.

Today and Tomorrow



Please consider remembering the Global Jewish Assistance and Relief Network in your will. It will enable GJARN to

continue to feed the hungry and clothe those in need and will carry your legacy of good works and love well into the future.

As well, gifts to GJARN of appreciated securities and other instruments can provide you with important tax savings now while helping those in need at the same time.

Please call our office at: 212-868-3636 or 888-GJARN99 if you need assistance in any of these matters.

approximately 10 kg of assorted food items consisting of flour, rice, oil, dry milk, lentils, peas and canned salmon.

As we were ready to go to

A Special Gift

There are many occasions in our lives when we want to find just the right way to honor someone or memorialize a loved one. GJARN has beautiful, specially designed cards that we will be most happy to send out on your behalf for special occasions.

This is a unique opportunity for you to celebrate a milestone like a Bar Mitzvah or wedding in a dear one's life, or honor the memory of a friend or relative, while making a gift of life to those in need at the same time.

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a special envelope with spaces to fill in all the necessary information. If you would like additional envelopes to have on hand, please include a note with this gift and we will be most happy to send you extras. ❁

Mothers and their disabled children who your generous, compassionate gift to GJARN will help.



This little girl's life will be changed with your help.

Purim – A Special Time of Giving

In the story of Purim, the evil Haman set out to destroy the Jews of Persia. His plans were thankfully thwarted with the help of Esther and Mordechai. To celebrate being saved from destruction, the Jews of Persia sent gifts of food to friends and gave money to help the poor.

These beautiful customs have been continued to this day when we send Mishloach Manos, gift of food, and we give Matanos L'evyonim, money to help the poverty-stricken, during Purim.

This is a particularly appropriate time of the year to consider making a special gift of life to GJARN in honor of Purim. With your generous, compassionate help, GJARN feeds the hungry and provides help for those in need. Your Purim gift to GJARN at this time will help us to carry out the important mitzvah of caring for those who need us. ❁

Rabbi Avtzon Receives Award On Behalf of GJARN

On September 15, 1999, the Jewish Community of Dnepropetrovsk, where many of GJARN's programs are located, celebrated the first anniversary since the establishment of its formal Board of Directors.

This has been a big step toward helping the community to organize itself and ultimately become more self-sufficient. Prior to this, all of the various programs of the Jewish community, while under the auspices of Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki, were essentially independent of each other. There was no

umbrella structure in place to oversee finances and activities and help the community grow and expand.

With the establishment of a Board of Directors, comprised of businessmen from the Jewish community, the programs began to come together. The original Board consisted of some forty businessmen, who elected Gennady Bogolubov, President of Privatbank, as its

President.

Guests of Honor at the anniversary dinner included Mr. Levi Levayev, President of the United Federations of Jewish Communities of Russia and the



Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon receiving a plaque on behalf of GJARN at the First Anniversary Celebration of the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community's Board of Directors. On the left is Minister Natan Sharansky with Rabbi Avtzon (middle) and Mr. Levi Levayev.

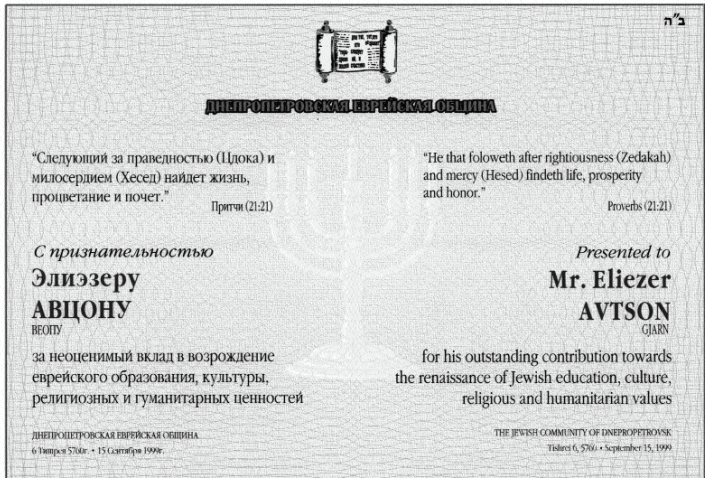
CIS and Minister Natan Sharansky, Minister of the Interior of Israel and Leader of Yisroel B'Aliyah, a Russian immigrant movement.

All of the original members of the Board received special plaques of recognition for the tremendous amount of time and effort they have put in and all new members, who had been elected to the Board for the upcoming year, were warmly welcomed.

In addition to the Board members, two additional plaques were presented to Honorary Board members. The first was to Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon, Executive Director of GJARN. The second was to Mr. Yitzchak Averbuch, Director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee — Eastern Ukraine and Armenia Divisions.

These awards were given in recognition and appreciation of the tremendous contributions made by both organizations

These awards were given in recognition and appreciation of the tremendous contributions made by both organizations towards the renaissance of Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk.



The Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community Board of Director's Award presented to Rabbi Eliezer Avtson and GJARN.

towards the renaissance of Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk. This included assistance by GJARN and the JDC in the areas of Jewish education and culture as well as the promotion of both religious and humanitarian values. The plaques were presented by Mr. Levi Levayev and

Minister Sharansky.

Rabbi Avtson accepted this wonderful award on behalf of all of you — GJARN's wonderful, caring supporters — who make it possible for GJARN to carry out its lifesaving and life-affirming work. ❀

Taleisim and Tefillin Gratefully Received

With characteristic warmth and generosity many of you have been responding to GJARN's special campaign to secure taleisim and tefillin for the Jews of the Former Soviet Union.

More than 50 pairs of tefillin have already been donated. They are tested to make certain the parchments and containers are kosher. Those that are, are shipped to the FSU for distribution as quickly as possible.

More than 500 taleisim have also been received and shipped and distributed in the FSU.

We are so grateful to you for sending these important religious items that are in such short supply in the FSU. In case you have not seen it, we have included with this article a copy of the ad that appeared in "The



Jewish Week" regarding the taleisim and tefillin.

For further information on this very important GJARN program, please contact our office by phone: 212-868-3636, fax: 212-868-7878, e-mail: gjarn@igc.org, or by mail at GJARN, 666 Fifth Avenue, Suite 246, New York, New York 10103. ❀

GJARN Establishes First Home for The Jewish Elderly in Ukraine



With such a large elderly population in the Former Soviet Union living in extreme poverty and isolation, GJARN has made the decision that our responsibility to these senior citizens must be met if they are to live in anything that resembles a modicum of comfort – defined as food to eat, warm clothing to wear, and a decent, heated living space — during their golden years..

To that end, GJARN is negotiating the purchase of a new 2,200 square meter (25,000 square foot) facility in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. It is situated on a property that is close to 9,500 square meters (over 100,000 square feet).

This facility will accommodate 80 Jewish elderly — individuals and couples — who are currently living in what can only be described as miserable, sub-human conditions.

It will be in close proximity to the Beit Chana Teachers Seminary. Part of the curriculum of the Seminary will be to involve the young women in

coming to the Home to visit with the elderly and to learn geriatric volunteer work.

Dnepropetrovsk, where the Home is to be located, is the first city in which GJARN opened programs in early 1992. Thanks in large measure to GJARN, local leaders and you, the Jewish community of Dnepropetrovsk has grown to become one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in all of the Former Soviet Union.

Until early 1990, Dnepropetrovsk had been a closed city, off limits to foreign visitors because of its production of Scud missiles and Sputniks. In less than ten years, Dnepropetrovsk now has the largest Jewish day school in the FSU with over 850 children attending. In addition there are several kindergartens, a cheder, a regular boys Yeshiva, a training center for young men to become Hebrew teachers, religious leaders and scribes, a women's Seminary licensed by both the Ministry of Education in Israel and the government of Ukraine,

and even two Jewish orphanages for boys and girls.

In a meeting with community leaders, the idea of opening a home for the Jewish elderly was discussed. The experience of

Until early 1990, Dnepropetrovsk had been a closed city, off limits to foreign visitors because of its production of Scud missiles and Sputniks.

establishing similar institutions in other cities and countries in the past, warns of the high risks and potential for failure of such programs. What starts as a home for the elderly can become a geriatric center after just a few years, and the medical treatment needed is tremendous.

But because of the establishment of the American Jewish Medical Center, and the cooperative efforts of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the local Chesed committee which provide ongoing homecare programs for such individuals, it was decided to proceed with the establishment of this very important and urgently-needed new program that will provide even more help for the needy Jews of Dnepropetrovsk whom GJARN already assists in so many ways.

With the addition of this new facility, the Jewish community of Dnepropetrovsk can now put their entire focus into programs to serve the people, rather than infrastructure.

The cost of purchase and renovation is estimated at \$500,000. As with all of GJARN's lifesaving programming, the success of the Home for the Jewish Elderly in Ukraine depends upon our partnership with compassionate, caring people like you who believe, as we do, that when others are in need, we cannot just stand by – that we must offer all the help we can.



Future site of GJARN Jewish Home for the Elderly library.

Special dedication opportunities are available in the new Home for the Jewish Elderly. This is a wonderful opportunity to honor or memorialize a loved one. Please contact the GJARN office for further details. ❁

You Can Help

Together we can enable elderly Jews in the Former Soviet Union to live out their golden years in dignity, safety and comfort. With any one of the following special gifts for GJARN's Home for the Jewish Elderly, you can make all the difference in the life of an elderly Jew who today lives in terrible, life-threatening poverty.

- \$54.75 will feed a person nutritious meals for a month.
- \$120 will provide medicine for a year.

- \$657 will feed one person for a year.
- \$1,000 will provide two beds, two dressers, a rocking chair, a small desk, and linens for a two-person room.
- \$1,800 will cover the full cost of caring for a person completely for one year.
- \$5,000 will ensure a permanent space in the Home for a person.

You can use the enclosed reply card to forward any one of these gifts which will be so deeply appreciated and which will change the life of an elderly Jew.

34,000 Mishloach Manos Packages Being Distributed

Masks and costumes...laughter and fun...all of these mark Purim, the holiday that, in many ways, we associate with children and the wonderful time they have dressing up and having a good time.

We are delivering to them Mishloach Manos packages filled with special, delicious treats, something these children of poverty never receive.

Purim means all of that but it also means much more. Purim marks a moment in our history when we were saved from destruction at the hands of the evil Haman. With the courage and determination of Mordechai and Esther, Haman's wicked plans to kill the Jews were

destroyed and he ended up shamed and ultimately punished for his terrible desire to destroy the Jewish people.



Mishloach Manos treat package.

To celebrate this joyous occasion, the Jews of ancient Persia began the custom of bringing gifts of delicious food they had prepared to friends as well as making sure that the poor

received gifts of money.

This lovely custom has come down to our day as well. Unfortunately, however, in the Former Soviet Union where the wrecked economy has caused such terrible poverty and need, people do not have the means to participate in this unique and beautiful celebration.

GJARN, in partnership with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, is bringing the joy of Purim back into the lives of tens of thousands of Jewish children throughout Ukraine and in Riga, Latvia. We are delivering to them Mishloach Manos packages filled with special, delicious treats, something these children of poverty never receive. In addition, these packages will also go to 10,000 of the neediest Jews in some of the most remote areas.

We want to take this special opportunity, at this most appropriate time of the year when we are reminded of the importance of helping those less fortunate than ourselves, to thank you for all you do to help GJARN care for the needy.

It is because of you that these Mishloach Manos packages are going to these children. Your ongoing support of GJARN's lifesaving programs is the backbone behind all of our work. You are truly both our partners and our friends and we want you to know how deeply grateful we are to you. ❁



A Purim treat package in good hands.

GJARN's Worldwide Humanitarian Assistance Programs

Food Programs

- Meals on Wheels
- Soup Kitchens
- Bread and Milk Programs
- Monthly Food Packages
- Distribution of USDA Surplus Food

Medical/Clothing Programs

- American Jewish Medical Center - Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine
- Medical Missions
- Distribution of Donated Medical Equipment and Pharmaceuticals
- Training of CIS Physicians
- Toys for Hospitalized Children
- Clothing Distribution Centers

Cultural Programs

- National Holiday Programs – Distribution of Matzoh, Mishloach Manos, Tishrei Packets, Books
- Sponsorship of Wedding and Bar Mitzvah Celebrations
- Bris Milah Supplies to Jewish Centers
- Reclaiming of Jewish Communal Buildings
- Special Grants to Community Rabbis on Need Basis

Self-Sufficiency Programs

- Training of Non-Profit Organizations (NGOs) in Law and Democracy
- Service Center for NGOs to Obtain Global Access to Aid
- National Legal and Lobbying Association for the Poor and Disabled

New York Programs

- Transportation of Patients and Volunteers to Hospitals
- Research and Medical References
- Special Fund for Needy Cases
- Toys and Entertainment for Sick and Hospitalized Children
- Distribution of Clothing and Furniture

Elderly Care Programs

- Home for the Jewish Elderly - Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine
- Organized volunteer visits by local children

Can you or your business donate:

Food/Clothes
Office Equipment
Medical Supplies
Automobiles

• • •

Call us at:

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888-GJARN99
Fax: 212.868.7878



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