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SHARING

SINCE 1992

The Global Jewish Assistance and Relief Network Newsletter Summer 2001

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Message from the Executive Director Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon

I was used to being up at 3:00 a.m. There were so many nights when I worked that late, or later, as deadlines loomed and projects needed attention.

However, in all those years of late nights, I had never envisioned being up at 3:00 a.m., cradling my infant son and walking softly back and forth through our apartment singing to him in a whisper so that I wouldn't wake his sleeping mother who so desperately needed rest. Yet this is exactly what I've been doing for several months now.

These nightly wanderings, when the rest of the world is asleep and it is just my son and me, have given me a lot of time to think.

I'm amazed by the way children change our lives so permanently and completely. They are totally dependent upon us, and it is our job to give them the best of everything – love, food, health care.

I've also thought a lot about how lucky my family is. We had excellent prenatal care. In the hospital, everything my wife and newborn needed was right at hand. The doctors and nurses were wonderful, the facilities immaculate, the whole atmosphere positive and encouraging. And now, our baby regularly sees a pediatrician in whom we have complete confidence, and whose knowledge and skills are second to none.

Unfortunately, that is not how it is for the many families GJARN serves in the Former Soviet Union. In fact, I am afraid that it is quite the opposite.

Hospitals in the FSU more often than not have no heat or even hot water. They are poorly equipped and what they do have is usually antiquated and in ill repair. Medications and other supplies are scarce. Doctors and other medical personnel are years behind in their training so that too many times judgment errors lead to tragedy.

Most people in the Former Soviet Union do not have access to the quality medical we take for granted in this country. And the results are unnecessary illness and even death.

In the few months that I have been a father, I have come to realize that the American Jewish Medical Center, which we are creating together, is even more important than I could possibly have understood before.

I have a new appreciation for the vulnerability of children and the medical needs – routine and otherwise – which we all encounter throughout our lives.

I feel a great urgency to complete the Medical Center even more quickly than is planned so we can open its doors to the many people throughout the Dnepropetrovsk area who so

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Three Babies and a Wedding!

GJARN family has been blessed with many simchas in the past few months. We want to share the nachas with you.

Mazel Tov to GJARN writer and editor Caroline Sheffey on the marriage of her son Aaron to Tamar David on February 25.

Mazel Tov to Executive Director, Eliezer and Sarah Avtzon on the birth of a son, Menachem Mendel on March 21.

Mazel Tov to GJARN's Bank Mazon Director in Israel, Shlomo and Pearl Glitzenshtein, on the birth of a daughter, Chaya Mushka on April 2.

Mazel Tov to GJARN Moscow Director Eli Lifshitz and his wife Leah on the birth of a son, Menachem Mendel on April 22.

Teamup2share.com

Now you can shop until you drop and support GJARN's work at the same time! An exciting new web site, www.teamup2share.com, enables you to purchase items from hundreds of online merchants, including Eddie Bauer, Tupperware, and Dell Computers, and to designate the charitable organization of your choice to receive a percentage of the total sale. Visit www.teamup2share.com for more information. Helping people has never been easier or more fun!

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desperately need its services.

In this issue of Sharing, you will find much of interest, including an update on the Medical Center's progress and a report on a special visit that we had to the site recently. I hope you enjoy all the articles, and urge you contact us at any time with questions, comments, or concerns.

Your support is the backbone of all that GJARN does, and we deeply appreciate your partnership with us.

It's now 3:00 a.m., and my precious son is calling for me. I'm tired, but I treasure every moment that he's in my arms—healthy and safe. Working together, we can give new parents in the FSU what I take for granted, the security of knowing that proper health care is available for their children.

US Ambassador to Ukraine Visits American Jewish Medical Center

A few short weeks ago, Mr. Carlos Pascual, the United States Ambassador to Ukraine, paid a visit to the construction site of the American Jewish Medical Center.

His responses and reactions as he toured the facility are an excellent barometer of the importance of this lifesaving project.

When asked for his impressions of the Medical Center, Mr. Pascual said:

"The American Jewish Medical Center is a fantastic project. It is going to bring world-class medical services to the people of Dnepropetrovsk.

"This project demonstrates how, by building partnerships between the United States and Ukraine, we can, in fact, improve peoples' lives. The Medical Center not only will bring new technology here, it will bring skills. These are skills that will be shared with counterparts here in Ukraine.

Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon (right), Executive Director of the Global Jewish Assistance and Relief Network, meeting with Mr. Carlos Pascual (left), the United States Ambassador to Ukraine, at the American Jewish Medical Center.

"I think the people who come here to establish the Medical Center [GJARN volunteers] will take a special spirit away with them because they will see the impact of their work. They will see that by sharing their skills, by sharing their resources, that in fact they can make peoples' lives better and have a better future for all of us."

The exterior of the American Jewish Medical Center, which is near completion.

He went on to say,

"GJARN's work seems to be absolutely professional — from developing the plans for this project — to doing everything possible to assure that the funds are used effectively — to trying to bring in a whole range of different partners in the project — to ensuring that all legal requirements are met — to making sure the project is a success — to thinking ahead to make certain that the right expertise is utilized to make the project work in every way. GJARN is doing a very professional job."

As Mr. Pascual's passionate remarks attest, the American Jewish Medical Center is a remarkable undertaking. We in GJARN should be proud of our efforts.

The American Jewish Medical Center Dedication Opportunities

Construction is progressing on the American Jewish Medical Center, but the sooner it is completed, the more lives we can save. The quality of health care in Ukraine continues to deteriorate at a far more rapid pace than we ever thought possible, and the number of families in urgent need of immediate medical attention grows daily. There are children suffering from illnesses that we in the western world no longer even think about. We must finish the Medical Center as quickly as possible. You can help make this dream a reality. By making a major dedication gift, you can honor or memorialize a loved one while making an incredible, lasting, real impact on countless lives.

Dedication of the hospital	$2,000,000
Dedication of two operating theaters	$360,000 each
The Dental Pavilion	$380,000
Dental Chairs (with accessories)	$26,000 each (10 chairs)
Pediatric Clinic	$250,000
Women's Obstetric/Gynecology Clinic	$300,000
Family Clinic	$250,000
The Eye Pavilion	$400,000
Eye Exam Rooms	$36,000 each (8 lanes)
Medical Laboratory	$100,000
Dental Lab	$75,000
Eyeglass Lab	$50,000
Social Services Department	$100,000
Medical Research Library	$100,000
Conference/Training Center	$75,000
Pharmacy	$75,000
Atrium	$100,000
Windows	$10,000 each (200 windows)
Mezuzahs	$3,600 each (120 available)

For further information, please call the GJARN office at

1-888-GJARN99

They are Patiently Waiting...

Every day a group of elderly Jews gather in front of a construction site. They watch and whisper to each other, poignant hope registering deep in their eyes and on their wrinkled, dignified faces.

Work in progress on the GJARN Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine.

They are going to be among the first 100 residents of Beit Baruch, GJARN's new assisted living facility for Jewish elderly in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine that is scheduled to open in November 2001.

This is a tremendous accomplishment. For the first time, elderly Jews in this area will have a proper and appropriate facility in which to live out their golden years in dignity and peace. It is our great hope that Beit Baruch will be just the first of many assisted living facilities and homes for the elderly that GJARN develops all across the Former Soviet Union.

With the ongoing support of our dear friends we can make this vision a reality. Your compassion and caring will make all the difference. Thank you.

$8,500 will ensure a lifetime room for a couple at Beit Baruch.

$5,000 will ensure a lifetime room at Beit Baruch for a person.

$1,800 will make certain that an elderly person is fully cared for, for an entire year.

$1,000 will furnish a two-person room with beds, dressers, a rocking chair, a small desk and linens.

$657 will ensure that a frail elderly person has three meals a day for a full year.

$120 will provide medicine for an entire year.

$54.75 will feed an elderly Jew nutritious meals for an entire month.

Should you have any questions about these giving opportunities or others, please call our office toll-free at

1-888-GJARN99

Special Update: USDA Food Distributions How a Near Disaster was Averted

During the year 2000, GJARN's USDA Food Distribution program increased from 25,761 Metric Tons to 35,220 Metric Tons. This enabled us to distribute larger packages of food to more needy people than ever before.

Of the eight organizations awarded grants by the USDA in 2000, GJARN is the largest recipient. Our professional experience and our competence in working throughout the vast terrain of the Russian Federation, along with our ability to troubleshoot and effectively overcome problems, has made us a leader in helping the hungry.

Recently, our expertise enabled us to avert a disaster that would have prevented vital food from reaching its destination.

Our contract called for the food commodities to be delivered in small individual size rations. Due to various situations well beyond our control, most products were shipped in large 50 kg bags.

The USDA did everything it could to rectify this problem. They offered to send close to 10,000,000 small plastic bags in which to repackage the food.

GJARN's USDA food distributions change the lives of countless people in ways that are often unimaginable.

USDA food distributions reaches those in need.

Continued on page 8

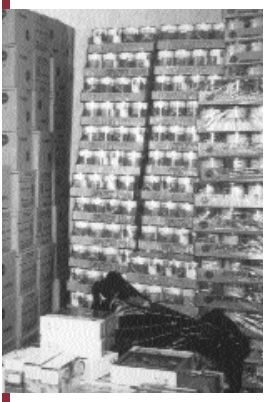
Breaking News: GJARN Receives Third Consecutive Grant including 13,000,000 Washington State Apples

GJARN has just been awarded our third consecutive grant from the USDA for food distribution in Russia. Although the overall program was scaled back this year, GJARN, as before, still received the largest allocation —12,010 metric tons of food, including 2,000 metric tons of fresh apples from Washington State.

Imagine 400,000 needy children in the Russian Far East munching on 13,000,000 crunchy, juicy, nutritious, delicious apples. Many of these children have never seen, let alone tasted, a fresh apple.

We are very excited about this new program and are looking forward to delivering these apples to the children. The delight on their faces will be absolutely wonderful and a joy for our volunteers to see.

But the logistics of doing this in 23 regions, spanning 11 time zones, and with seven different food commodities, was a disaster in the making. Particularly because in most places there were no mechanized and automated assembly lines available. The time lost, the astronomical costs involved, and the loss of perishable food would have been horrendous.



USDA food repackaged in Mukran, Germany

Working hand in hand with the USDA, shippers, and steamship lines, GJARN found a quick, efficient and viable solution to the problem.

En route to their final destination points in Russia, the goods were scheduled to stop in Germany. We discovered that in Hamburg there was a large repackaging plant capable of repacking the food into individual rations.

At the same time, we found a more efficient way to continue the transport. The repackaged food was moved from Hamburg to Mukran, Germany where it was placed onto Russian railcars. This saved time and money in clearing the goods within Russia, and helped ensure that the empty containers would be returned to the shipping companies in a timely manner.

Before long, needy families in Russia had the goods in their hands—and stomachs.

As we go to print with this issue of Sharing, more than 50% of all the food commodities received in fiscal year 2000 (for distribution in 2001) have been received by hungry families and individuals. Within the next three months we hope to distribute all of the remaining food.

GJARN's USDA food distributions change the lives of countless people in ways that are often unimaginable. The packages we deliver include nutritious foods such as buckwheat, lentils, green and yellow peas, dried milk, flour, rice, and vegetable oil – items that can save people from starvation and that are delivered because of your loving support.

Recently we received a letter from a young mother who had

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Would You Like to be a Pen Pal?

In Larissa's letter she talked about wanting to correspond with someone in the United States. GJARN can make such connections and build bridges of friendship across the ocean.

If you would like to become a pen pal with someone in the FSU like Larissa, please drop us a note that includes your name, address, age, e-mail address, and interests. We will match you up with someone with whom you can begin a very rewarding relationship.

Bank Mazon: Help for the Hungry in Israel

As reported in a previous issue of Sharing, GJARN has undertaken a brand new, innovative, lifesaving project in Israel. It comes in response to a shocking official report that detailed an unimaginable level of hunger and poverty in Israel, with children among the most severely affected.

The new GJARN Bank Mazon warehouse in Israel.

GJARN has established Israel's first and only food bank –Bank Mazon. In the first year, working from a small office, we made the connections with manufacturers, producers, importers, farmers, local charities, municipal social welfare offices, and government agencies that are necessary for operations.

In the past month, Bank Mazon moved from its original address to a large and spacious warehouse/ office located just outside Tel Aviv, in Ohr Yehudah. Food is being rapidly collected and packages are already on their way to be distributed to needy individuals, families and organizations.

Stay tuned for further details. ❁

Continued from page 8

received a food package from GJARN. Her thoughts demonstrate so well why GJARN's work is so critically important:

"My name is Larissa. I want to thank your organization for your humanitarian aid - a food parcel for me and my son.

I am rearing my son Alexander alone. I love my boy very much and want to give him all the best what I can. I am a teacher of music. Although I work from morning till evening, my wages are less than living wages for one person. My parents who are pensioners try to help me and my son.

Any mother knows how it difficult it is to raise a child alone and how she wants that child to have the best childhood. My son is seven years old. He gets sick often and I would like to take him to the Black Sea for treatments before he starts school. But unfortunately it is not possible because I have not enough money even for food.

Your help was right to the point. We have been eating provisions from your parcel up to now. They are excellent. Thank you very much for thinking about us.

It is so wonderful that people from the distant USA become so dear for me and my son. I wish each of you good health and love. I pray for you and I would like to find pen friends among you very much. My English is not very good but I'll try to write better. With hope for the best, Larissa."

Two New Community Centers in the Global Jewish Network

In addition to the Kharkov Global Jewish Community Center (GJCC) (see page 11), we are very pleased to announce the opening of two additional GJCCs—one in Berdichev, Ukraine and the other in Samara, Russia.

Some of the elderly from the Jewish community in Samara, Russia enjoying a hot, nutritious kosher meal at the new Global Jewish Community Center in their community.

These two new facilities will function as the central address for Jewish life in these communities and will foster a new sense of Jewish identity and pride. They will offer a wide variety of services, including hot kosher meals, vocational classes, recreational and sports facilities, Jewish studies programs, holiday observances and much more.

Our next issue of Sharing will feature pictures and more information on the official openings of these GJCCs, as well as articles on the people who run the programs and those who participate in them. ❁

Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon and Rabbi Aryeh Spektor outside the new GJCC in Berdichev, Ukraine.

A Typical Trip? by Rabbi Avtzon

I've taken many trips to the Former Soviet Union to organize and oversee GJARN projects. I've learned that there's no such thing as a typical trip. Once I arrive, there's often more to see and do than what I planned for upon leaving the States. I would like to share with you my experiences from a recent trip. What began with a ten-day itinerary ended up lasting more than two and a half weeks.

I want you to know that wherever I travel, the people I visit always tell me to send you their deepest appreciation. Without you, they would struggle to survive. With your help, they can feed their children, find their way back to their Jewish legacy, care for their elderly and more.

DNEPROPETROVSK

In Dnepropetrovsk, I met with the Mayor, Uri Kulichenko, and Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetzki for an update on the progress of the American Jewish Medical Center and the Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility for the Elderly. I suggested that GJARN doctors and volunteers could share their knowledge with health care professionals and elder care administrators in the area. The Mayor accepted this offer, and we established a unique partnership between GJARN and the city.

I also visited the Jewish day school in Dnepropetrovsk that was celebrating the 10th anniversary of its building being returned to the Jewish community with GJARN's help.

KHARKOV

In Kharkov I visited the GJARN Jewish Community Center (GJCC) that we are sponsoring. It will have a dining hall, kosher kitchen, lecture hall, computer center, sports and exercise room, and a mikvah.
(Please see article about Rabbi and Mrs. Moshe Moskowitz of the Kharkov Jewish community on page 14.)

KHERSON

In Kherson I had the pleasure of meeting with a group of children in the school building which was returned to the Jewish community through the efforts of GJARN. I also visited the synagogue and Chesed Center that GJARN is helping to rebuild.

ODESSA

I participated in a special meeting in Odessa with the head of a children's rehabilitation center. We discussed a possible affiliation between the facility and the American Jewish Medical Center.

VYBORG

In Vyborg, I visited the Ben Friedlander "warm" house. It is, as the name implies, a warm, secure group home for senior adults who live there full time. This facility is jointly sponsored by GJARN with the support of Mr. Ben Friedlander.

KIEV

In Kiev, I joined with Jewish community leaders from throughout Ukraine to greet President Moshe Katzav of Israel and President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine at a state sponsored banquet.

I also visited the Kiev Great Synagogue and mikvah, which were recently renovated with support from GJARN.

BERDICHEV

The new GJCC that GJARN is sponsoring in Berdichev.

I visited the Learning Center in the GJCC in Berdichev.

ZHITOMIR

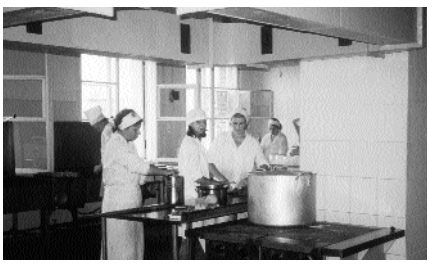
Working in close cooperation with the Jewish community of Zhitomir and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Western Ukraine, I took the opportunity to visit some of the institutions and beneficiaries of our programs and activities.

MOSCOW

A special conference was scheduled in Moscow with a representative of the FAS-USDA and GJARN's local representatives. Meetings such as this enable us to streamline and enhance our food distributions so we can reach more people (see the USDA update on page 7).

Eli Lifshitz, GJARN's Moscow Director, speaking at the recent FAS-USDA/GJARN meeting in Moscow.
In Moscow I again met with President Moshe Katzav of Israel to discuss GJARN's work in this region.

ST. PETERSBURG

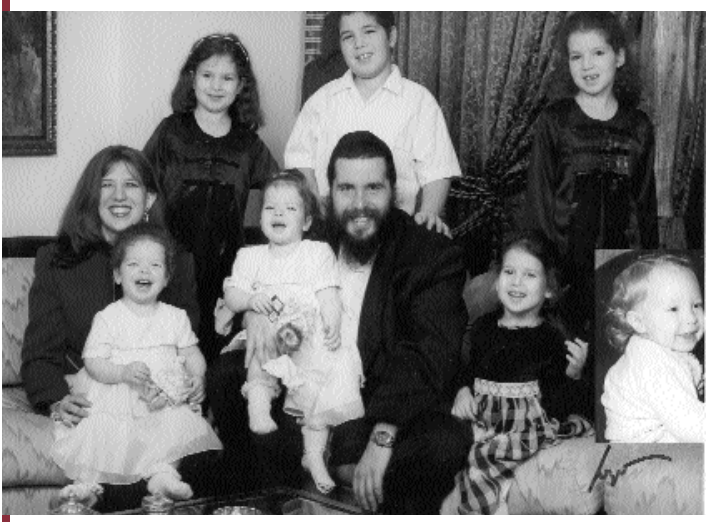


In St. Petersburg, I visited the new, state-of-the-art kitchen GJARN built. It already produces thousands of meals a day, including many that are specially packaged for longer shelf life, enabling us to bring kosher food to more isolated areas. I also visited the Great Choral Synagogue where GJARN is currently providing a new kitchen and dining hall for needy Jewish families.

SPOTLIGHT ON KHARKOV

"But where do we buy the candles?"

Rebbetzin Miriam Moskowitz was leading a class for women in Kharkov, Ukraine. She had been talking about the importance of lighting Shabbos candles when all of a sudden, a woman stood up with a very quizzical look on her face, and asked, "But Rebbetzin, where do we buy the candles?"



Rabbi and Rebbitzin Moskowitz with their children at home in Kharkov, Ukraine

Rebbetzin Moskowitz was stunned by the question. She hadn't thought about the fact that in the heart of Ukraine, you couldn't just buy Shabbos candles as you can in other parts of the world. In fact, the only candles produced in the area were made specifically for the church and had Christian religious symbols on them.

In order to enable these women to perform this important mitzvah, the Rebbetzin secured a shipment of donated candles from France and then began importing candles for the community.

This episode is symbolic of life for the Moskowitzs. According to the Rebbetzin, when they first arrived in the community in 1990 it was almost Yom Kippur. On the fast day, someone came up to her husband and said, "Rabbi, you don't look so well. Why don't you eat something?"

> From those earliest days, Rabbi Avtzon and GJARN were there for them.

That man did not know it was Yom Kippur and certainly did not understand that it was a fast day. But, it was not his fault. For the prior 70 years, the then Communist government had systematically tried to destroy all vestiges of Jewish life and religion in the region, so much so that for many Jewish families their heritage became nothing but a distant memory.

Eleven years later, it is a different story because of the dedication of these two extraordi-

nary individuals and the partnerships that they forged with GJARN and other organizations.

Today the Jewish community of Kharkov, the second largest city in Ukraine, stands at 50,000 people. When the Moskowitzes first arrived, Kharkov was a spiritual and physical desert with people knowing nothing about their Judaism and suffering from hunger, poverty, and privation.

The Moskowitzs had their work cut out for them. They knew not a word of Russian and the culture was completely foreign to them (He is originally from Venezuela and she from Australia.). With their then eight-month-old son, they lived in a hotel for five months until they could find an apartment that would ultimately house Shabbos tables filled with people—a prediction that has certainly come true.

According to Rabbi Moskowitz, from those earliest days, Rabbi Avtzon and GJARN were there for them. Learning of the great need in Kharkov, Rabbi Avtzon began distributing food to the community shortly after the Moskowitzes arrived. This was the beginning of a dedicated and committed partnership that extends to this day. According to Rabbi Moskowitz, "GJARN cares deeply about the people here."

Interestingly, when the Moskowitzes arrived it had been only two weeks since the community was given back the synagogue that had been taken from them in the 1920s. Built in 1913, the Kharkov Choral Synagogue was used by the Communists as a sports complex. Over time, the community became committed to the future of its shul. For years there was no heat in the building, yet people came, even when the outside temperature was 20 degrees below zero.

Rabbi Eliezer Avtzon, Executive Director of GJARN (top right) with Mrs. Miriam Moskowitz (third from the left) in Kharkov distributing toys to children.

Renovations of this all-important building are now underway, and GJARN is playing a major role in the project. We are building the new kitchen in the Shul that will prepare 1500 kosher meals a day, and we are also establishing a Global Jewish Community Center (GJCC) in the synagogue, which will help to bring a central address for Jewish life to Kharkov.

> In this part of the world, it is the unusual that makes the usual possible...

Almost since the day they moved in, the Moskowitzes have been conducting classes for the community. There is now the Ohr Avner day school and kindergarten, a Yeshiva, and many adult education classes. Students from the United States and Israel come to study at the Yeshiva, which enriches daily Jewish life in Kharkov.

Rabbi Moskowitz talks about how every Shabbos he and his family host up to 70 people for lunch. As you can clearly imagine, they did not have enough tables for all those people, most of whom are youngsters. It was GJARN that supplied the tables for them.

Many people have been touched by the Moskowitzes. There was the famous chess champion who began coming to their home for Shabbos. He approached Judaism on a very intellectual and remote basis in the beginning but, over time, he absorbed the warmth and spirituality of the Moskowitz home and is now living as a practicing Jew.

There was the little girl in their daughter's first grade class (the Moskowitzes are now the proud, loving parents of seven children) who every day after lunch would collect everyone's leftover crumbs and put them in her lunch bag to take home. The Moskowitzes looked into the situation and discovered that this sweet, quiet child and her brother were living in extreme poverty with an abusive father and a helpless mother. The little bags of food she brought home were often all they had to eat. The Moskowitzes and GJARN are

> For many Jewish families their heritage became nothing but a distant memory.

GJARN in Kharkov

by Grigorij Kraynovich, Director of GJARN office in Kharkov, Ukraine and Valentina Drobotko, Executive Director of the Kharkov Regional Association of Non-profit and Charity Organizations

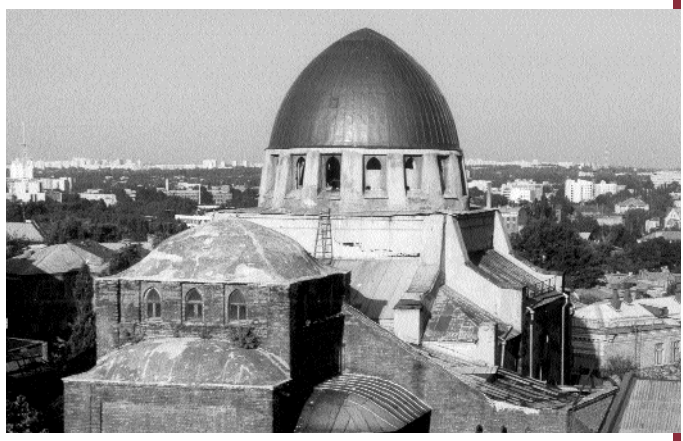
In less than a decade, GJARN has helped transform Kharkov from a region dependent on outside assistance into a community where needy people can get the help they need. GJARN's relationship with Kharkov began in 1992 with the establishment of a soup kitchen and the distribution of relief goods. Then in 1993, GJARN's first major delivery of humanitarian aid arrived in Ukraine. Struggling to overcome the ravages of poverty, the people received the goods with palpable relief and joy. In Kharkov alone, the local GJARN office received 1,400 tons – or 3,080,000 pounds – of butter. For the grateful recipients, who were people with severe dis-

A GJARN seminar on democracy held in Kharkov. Its purpose is to encourage and foster self-sufficiency.

now providing food and working with the family to try to better the situation. The little girl often comes to the Moskowitz home for Shabbos.

Then there is the mikvah. An influential community member was trying to close it down, and as a result there was no running water for over two years. When someone needed to use it, the Moskowitzes arranged for the fire department to come and fill it. Unusual, but it worked. In this part of the world, it is sometimes the unusual that makes the usual possible.

After eleven years of serving the Jewish community of Kharkov, the Moskowitzes have seen enormous progress and many changes. They say that it is now possible to live a Jewish life in this city, in large part thanks to GJARN. ❁



GJCC Global Jewish Community Center in the Kharkov synagogue

abilities, mothers with large families, war veterans, and those affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, this was an undreamed of gift from heaven.

In January 1994, GJARN began the weekly delivery of urgently needed, life-sustaining, food packages to over 200 people in Kharkov, among them the disabled, orphans and the elderly. Over the years our food delivery programs have grown to accommodate more and more needy people in this area.

Despite these early successes, it was not yet time to congratulate ourselves. In Kharkov, as in all communities in which we work, GJARN's goal was far greater than simply providing relief. As part of our mandate, we strive to establish independence and self-sufficiency so that communities do not need to rely on outside aid indefinitely. As the first step in this process, GJARN began training programs for NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in Kharkov.

As more and more NGOs became involved, we, working with the Soros Foundation, were

> Struggling to overcome the ravages of poverty, the people received the goods with palpable relief and joy

Grigorij Kraynovich, Director of GJARN office in Kharkov, Ukraine

able to organize an International Conference on Fundraising in Kharkov in April 1994. Its success was unprecedented and truly beyond our greatest hopes. More than 100 leaders of

NGOs from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova participated. International foundations were represented at the conference as well, including the International Renaissance Foundation, Eurasia Foundation, and Counterpart International. What an important event for the city of Kharkov!

> More than 100 leaders of NGOs from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova participated.

GJARN's work and successes did not go unnoticed. In the fall 1994, the Academy for Educational Development, funded by USAID, asked GJARN to select Ukrainian NGO leaders

for a special program of study in the United States conducted by World Learning. In the same time frame, GJARN's efforts bore even greater fruits when the Kharkov Regional Association of Non-Profits and Charitable Organizations, which was founded by 32 NGOs in May 1994, received state certification. An entirely new entity, the Association was created to help the region achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

The Association's activities include:

- Improving the knowledge and organizational skills necessary for the successful establishment of local NGOs.
- Bringing together authorities, NGOs, scholars, entrepreneurs, and mass media to develop an effective infrastructure for voluntary public organizations.
- Creating a network and database of NGOs.
- Holding workshops, courses, conferences, and meetings.
- Arranging for legal assistance and technical advice for NGOs.
- Publishing periodicals and bulletins.

As wonderful as the Association was, we knew it still needed our support. In the fall of 1995, together with the Soros Foundation and the Rule of Law Consortium, we funded the establishment of a Service Center for the Association. Its purpose is to provide free services for all the NGOs of the Kharkov region, including training, seminars, and the publication of a newsletter. Over the years more than 130 seminars and conferences have been run for these NGOs. Topics include:

- Tax laws
- NGO legislation
- Health care and in-home nursing facilities
- Computer literacy
- Accounting courses
- English language courses

Today the Association consists of 151 NGOs representing more than 450,000 people. It does a great deal of work in the areas of social protection, youth and family services, and Chernobyl problems. It also takes an active role in the Regional State Administration Coordinating Council, which dictates social policy. Five members of the Association are members of the Council.

A prime example of how the Association works to help the communities is the October 1999 round table to address the many serious health

issues surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion. Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Health Protection and the Ministry of Social Protection for Ukraine. Based on the suggestions made during the meeting, a framework has been developed for protecting the people of Ukraine from the devastating consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

The Association in Kharkov evolved from a small group of NGOs brought together by

GJARN. It is now an influential body that works effectively on behalf of the people in Kharkov. Without the training in democracy that GJARN provided, this would not have been possible.

> GJARN has – and is continuing to make – a big difference in the lives of the people living in Kharkov

GJARN has – and is continuing to make – a big difference in the lives of the people living in Kharkov –from feeding the hungry to ensuring that they have appropriate and effective representation through their own NGOs. It is impossible to quantify our impact, but it is sufficient to say that the lives of countless people in Kharkov have been bettered, and in some cases, even saved by the efforts of GJARN.

In the accompanying article about the Moskowitz family in Kharkov you will get a picture of some of the other ways in which GJARN is contributing to the welfare of this community. ❁

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