FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shanah Tovah Umetukah! All of us at Action for Post-Soviet Jewry want to take this opportunity to wish you and all your loved ones a happy, healthy, safe, sweet, and peaceful 5782. May your year be filled with blessings, joy, and fulfillment.

As this newsletter demonstrates, your guidance and generosity has made this a very busy year for Action-PSJ. It has been a year filled with trauma and challenges. We have all experienced unprecedented loss, pain, and difficulties. The global uncertainty in public health demands that we be able to pivot, adapt, and respond. Just when we find some balance and stability, something shifts, and again we need to adjust. This ongoing period of trauma and transition is both exhausting and challenging. Yet it is also an opportunity for constructive transformation and to build from traumatic stress to growth, to do more, to develop deeper connections, and to implement even more creative responses.

COMING THIS FALL

Action-PSJ’s fall events are not to be missed. They’ll be offered both virtually and hybrid so you can participate from anywhere in the way that feels most comfortable to you.

Sunday, October 3rd: Working with Center Makor and The Center Communities of Brookline, Hebrew SeniorLife to plan the 80th anniversary of Babi Yar.

Save the Date: October 24th and November 14th
Action-PSJ’s Annual Meeting with guest speaker Joshua Rubenstein and the Shtetl Kitchen, in partnership with The Gefilteria.

This newsletter is full of inspiring updates on the work and impact of Action-PSJ. We hope you take great pride in what your support has made possible. Thank you for your generosity.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

In providing vital humanitarian support, Action-PSJ creates connections between people, communities, and history. I was reminded of this many times over the past year as the board and I worked to envision the role of Action-PSJ in the future. We are the bridge that connects people to essential support and humanitarian aid that others cannot provide. This is what makes the work of Action-PSJ unique. We are small, nimble, able to swiftly respond and ensure no one is left behind. Connecting people to the help they need is at the core of the work. We did this during the refusenik years, continued to support Jews during the post-Soviet years, and now, during this global health crisis, Action-PSJ’s work continues to evolve.

With much gratitude,
Debbie Kardon
Executive Director, Action for Post-Soviet Jewry
OUR PEOPLE IN ACTION

Meet Ella Goncharova, Action-PSJ’s new Director of Programs in Ukraine. Thanks to her initiative, we’ve created our newest project: vaccinating homebound elderly and their caretakers, in partnership with the Jewish Medical Center of Dnipro and the Jewish Distribution Committee’s Chessed program.

A lifelong resident of Dnipro, Ella is a graduate of Dnepropetrovsk State University. She is a mother of two children (son and daughter) and a proud grandmother of four. For more than 35 years, Ella contributed to the cultural and Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine through her work with the Shinnik Cultural and Sports Complex of Dneproshina OJSC (Dnipro), the All-Ukrainian Women’s Jewish Organization Project Kesher, and as Director of the Sunday Jewish School at the Israeli Cultural Center (Embassy of the State of Israel in Ukraine).

NEWS FROM DNIPRO

“I started working with Action for Post-Soviet Jewry in May. For me, taking care of elderly people who need financial and moral support is a very honorable mission. Caring for older people requires special knowledge and skills, especially in such a challenging time. To make sure we are meeting the needs of the elderly, we implemented a personal survey of everyone supported by Action-PSJ to understand their needs, feelings, and desired services.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, when there is no opportunity to freely visit with friends and family, when Jewish community centers are closed and when problems arise even to visit a family doctor, elderly people live in a constant state of tension. To reduce their level of anxiety, Action-PSJ carried out a campaign to help vaccinate those who find it difficult to get to the medical center. Also, everyone supported by Action-PSJ received parcels with masks, gloves, antiseptics, and medicines, which are very helpful during the Covid-19 quarantine. Soon, we will be organizing telephone communication between project participants with doctors of various fields.

About 200 people received a stipend to help offset whatever extra costs they incurred by being homebound for so long. In addition, we are developing logistics for targeted delivery of grocery baskets so that elderly Jewish families can joyfully celebrate Jewish holidays and Shabbat.

The Action for Post-Soviet Jewry project is beginning to build active relationships with Jewish communities and their leaders in 14 cities across Ukraine. By identifying the neediest Jewish residents in these cities, we will expand the possibilities of helping more people. We are planning a series of virtual training seminars to provide more support for the community coordinators and so that they can more effectively develop our programs.

There is much work to do and especially now with COVID, the needs are even greater. Thank you! It is amazing to have such support from all the way from Boston to do this important work.”

“ Asking the question are we doing enough? regularly and repeatedly is critical.”

–Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead, World Health Organization and infectious disease epidemiologist
With so many opportunities to do more and so many innovative ideas, our small team needed to develop more people power. The idea to establish an intern program to take on some of this work certainly made sense. The challenge: our team is so small, we do not have experts in the areas in which we need interns. To have a successful intern experience, the interns need support to both do the work and increase their skills. The internship program piloted this summer by Action-PSJ addresses this by engaging professional consultants to mentor and coach them.

This past summer, two teens worked diligently to preserve aspects of Jewish history so that present and future generations can continue to learn about it. Both created strong foundations for ambitious projects that will be continued and completed by others.

Ethan came to Action-PSJ through a referral. His interest in history and caring for those often neglected and forgotten was a perfect match for Action-PSJ’s project to create a portal that captured the often overlooked Jewish history of Eastern Europe. Working remotely, Ethan researched and curated resources for a soon-to-be developed web page on Action-PSJ’s website. He was coached by Yoni Kaddin, History Department Chair at Gann Academy. The finished project will create a website with a user-friendly, evergreen portal with links to pages about the Jewish history of Eastern Europe and a timeline of important events.

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In partnership with The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at New England Historic Genealogical Society, Senior Archivist, Lindsay Sprechman Murphy was available to Action-PSJ’s intern, Ari. Coming to Action-PSJ through the Teen JUST-US summer internship program, Ari took on the arduous task of getting Action-PSJ’s 3000+ files ready to be donated to the archive. Ari organized the system and trained volunteers who came in to help. Single-handedly, he sifted, cleaned out, logged in the spreadsheet, and packed over 1500 files. Ari’s efforts were chronicled in a feature article on JewishBoston.com.
NEW: MOBILE VACCINE CLINIC

Across Ukraine, the country’s vaccine rate is hovering at about 8%. Mobility is one obstacle for many of the people Action-PSJ supports. Unable to safely leave their apartments, they cannot travel to the Jewish Medical Center to get their vaccines. After meetings with the JMC and the JDC-Chessed program, (Joint Distribution Committees home care program) it seemed the obstacle to providing in-home vaccines was providing transportation and coordination. Action-PSJ committed to arranging for a driver and car and coordinating the logistics to create the mobile vaccine clinic. This pilot project will provide 45 people with two doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

ADOPT-A-BUBBE/ZAYDE AND WARM HOUSES UPDATE

To meet emergency and unexpected needs brought on by this unprecedented time, in partnership with the Jewish Community of Dnipro, Action-PSJ sent stipends directly to our Community Care Coordinators and the most at-risk pensioners to pay for heat, food, and medicine. With the creation of the NGO in Ukraine and Ella’s collaboration with each Community Care Coordinator, Action-PSJ is planning to increase support this coming year. In the fall, a virtual meeting will be held for the Community Care Coordinators. A system of regular food baskets coordinated in partnership with a local large grocery chain is being developed. We hope to resume in-person Warm Houses in the Spring of 2022.

CHARITABLE FOUNDATION IN UKRAINE

After 30 years of service in the region, Action-PJS has taken the significant step to establish a Ukraine Charitable Foundation. This much-needed development will strengthen our presence in the area and enable us to respond quicker and with more efficiency to emergent needs.

YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

This summer, we sifted through all the files in the office and literally held Action-PSJ’s history in our hands. It is inspiring to see both the number of people involved in the work and all those we’ve helped. The bridge between the work of Action for Soviet Jewry and Action for Post-Soviet Jewry represents an important transition of services from the refusenik era to the rebuilding of the Jewish community. Today, with your support this core work of creating bridges is continuing through the development of innovative programs and partnerships. With thanks to all of you, the work of Action-PSJ carries forward - building stronger communities and serving more individuals.

Some of you have been supporting Action-PSJ for decades while others have joined us more recently. Together you are making a real difference in THOUSANDS of people’s lives and their once-thriving Jewish communities. Everything you read in this newsletter is made possible with your support.

THANK YOU

Through your financial support and the generosity of businesses who donated materials and goods, shipments of over-the-counter medicines, personal hygiene items, masks and gloves were distributed to all the communities Action-PSJ supports as well as other programs in Dnipro that are part of the Boston-Dnipro partnership.

Thank you to all the volunteers who came safely to help clean out the office, pack boxes to ship to Ukraine, and go through draws upon draws of files to get ready for the archives. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer and intern. Interested in helping pack up the files, or an internship at Action-PSJ? Reach out to actionpsj@gmail.com.
80TH ANNIVERSARY OF BABI YAR

Sunday, October 3rd
2:00-4:00 pm
Hybrid event:
Virtual – Open to all
Virtual & in-person:
@ Center Makor - 384 Harvard St
(Open to the community)
@ Hebrew Senior Life
(for residents and staff only)
Please join in the way it feels comfortable and safe for you.

While Babi Yar in Kyiv is the most famous symbol of this international tragedy, the Holocaust by bullets occurred across Ukraine and Eastern Europe. The Soviet regime erased the memory of the victims of the Nazis for half a century. Together we will learn and remember as we memorialize and honor the victims of the Holocaust by bullets.

MEMORIAL COMMEMORATION
Daniel Agranov, Deputy Consul General of Israel to New England
Anna Shternshis, Ph.D., Al and Malka Green Professor of Yiddish studies and director of the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto
Concert learning: The history shared through music and poetry. VIRTUAL
Igor Shchupak, Ph.D., director of "Tkuma" Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies, Museum "Jewish Memory and Holocaust in Ukraine" (Dnipro), Honored Educator of Ukraine
Direct from Ukraine VIRTUAL
Rabbi Lior Nevo, Rabbi Jim Morgan, Giulia Fleishman
Prayers of Remembrance VIRTUAL & IN PERSON @ HSL

ARTISTIC COMMEMORATION
VIRTUAL & IN PERSON @ 384 Harvard St., Brookline
Mark Ludwig, Violin, Terezin Music Foundation
Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 13, “Babi Yar” Fragment
Liliana Glik, Vocalist, Yiddish Songs
Brad Rothschild, Producer, "My Holocaust: Memory for Ages" Documentary.

SPONSORED BY

ACTION FOR POST-SECONDARY JEWISH EDUCATION
CENTER MAKOR
Center Communities of Brookline
Hebrew Senior Life
As we celebrate the High Holy Days with our families and communities, I invite you to invest in the work of Action-PSJ. With your generous support, we can continue to care for and nurture some of the most at-risk Jews and Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. On the cusp of many innovative programs and partnerships, your financial support will ensure their continued success.

Especially needed in this coming year are sponsors to expand the following innovative pilots:

1. Mobile Vaccine Clinic
2. COVID-19 Supplies
3. Preserving Action-PSJ’s History
4. Internships with coaching for teens and young adults
5. Amplifying the Jewish history of Eastern Europe through education and resources

Every donation is meaningful and adds to what is possible. If you are able to give more generously than previously, now is the time.

Mail: Use the enclosed envelope to send in your check
Online: Go to www.actionpsj/donate
Phone: Call the office at (781) 893-2331

THIS IS A TIME OF TZEDAKAH

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