



## FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

### JEWISH FEDERATION MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia is to identify and prioritize the important issues and needs of our local and global community, then organize and mobilize human and financial resources to successfully impact them. Federation focuses on Jewish education, human services, family, and economic needs, and provides support for Israel and for Jews at risk elsewhere in the world.

# To the Foot Soldiers of the Soviet Jewry Movement

CONNIE AND JOE SMUKLER  
Jewish Federation Feature

On December 6, 1987 a most remarkable event occurred, 250,000 people marched in Washington, D.C., in a demonstration on behalf of Soviet Jews, during the U.S.-Soviet meetings between President Regan and Secretary Gorbachev.

Forty years ago, inspired by Israeli victory in the 1967 Six Day War, the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement was galvanized into action.

These two watershed events are now being commemorated throughout the free world. Presidents, prime ministers, legislatures and organizations are being lauded for their actions, and rightly so. But little is said or written about the true heroes of the mass movement for freedom on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

It was you, the foot soldiers, whose names are not recorded in the books, articles or films, who made the movement. It was you, one of the thousands of people, in dozens of communities around the world, with a passion for human rights and with a determination to prove that the lessons of the Holocaust had not been forgotten, who achieved the victory.

Take a moment to reflect on what you did. Remember with me the Simhat Torah marches down the Parkway, up the Art Museum steps, carrying torches and banners. You were the ones who bore the signs and handed out the leaflets in the snow in front of the Academy of Music when the Moiseyev Dance Company and



the Bolshoi Ballet performed. You gave out the pre addressed greeting cards to far off refusniks. Remember how we were told in that phone call from Moscow to keep writing since as they had been told by the KGB, "when those letters and cards stop, you are dead."

Remember when the Panovs, Valery and Galina, principal ballet dancers, formerly of the Russian Kirov Ballet Company performed at the Spectrum. They had applied to emigrate to Israel and had been dismissed from the Kirov. For that, Valery had been imprisoned, threatened

with having his legs broken and kept from his profession. Now, we celebrated together at the beauty of their premiere western performance.

You were the ones who carried the signs and hung the banners when the Soviet Central Army Ice Hockey Team came to play the Philadelphia Flyers. And when the Soviet team refused to play until the displays were removed, you took them down, ever so slowly, while the television cameras were transmitting back to the Soviet Union signs stating, "Help get the Soviet Jews out of the penalty box."

When the Moscow Circus came to town you hoisted the banner, "Life is no circus for Soviet Jews."

Your children were twinned at their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs with Soviet Jewish children who were called to the Torah, in absentia, and you left a chair on the bimah empty, with only the Soviet child's name.

You adopted a refusnik family and wore bracelets bearing their name, made telephone calls, sent packages, wrote to American and Soviet officials in their behalf and even sometimes visited with them in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev, bringing not only material gifts but messages of hope and support.

Then there was that thrilling, unforgettable culmination, twenty years ago when you boarded buses, planes, trains and cars to march in Washington. Two-hundred and fifty thousand of you, carrying banners and wearing pins bearing the words, "I went to the Summit for Soviet Jews."

You were not among the Jews who failed to protest on behalf of their brethren behind the iron curtain, about whom Elie Wiesel wrote in his "Jews of Silence."

You were among those about whom Natan Sharansky wrote, "For in the end the army of students and housewives turned out to be mightier than the KGB."

For you, the foot soldiers, there is no monument. Your monument can be seen in the hundreds of thousands of free men and women walking the streets of Tel Aviv, New York and Philadelphia. ♦

## Super Sunday: It's a Family Affair!

The 2008 Super Sunday Committee has worked hard to provide a varied line-up of youth-oriented music, dance, arts and craft programs to keep children of volunteers engaged and entertained during the Sunday, Jan. 27 day-long phone-a-thon at Federation's Radnor Campus in Bryn Mawr.

Committee member Sharon Taffet believes that the programming will "add to the festive atmosphere of this special day when the whole community is mobilized in one central location to make calls on behalf of their fellow Jews in need."

Taffet stated that the programming kicks off with a performance by Larry the Hat Man from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

From noon to 1 p.m., children's entertainer Karen Sheintoch will present a musical program called "The Fun One Way" targeted at children ages 4 through 7. "Karen encourages children to be all that they can be in this uplifting program that emphasizes respect for oneself and others and performing good deeds," Taffet explained. Musician Harold Messinger will perform from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. followed by Israeli dancing led by Don Schillinger.

Arts and craft activities will include such mitzvah-driven projects as creating cards for Israeli soldiers as well as area senior adults. Other special family-themed events will include Yiddish sto-

rytelling. Super Sunday volunteer Andrea Gottlieb said that volunteers from the Jewish Outreach Partnership, a project of Federation led by Rabbi Phillip Warmflash, will read to children from Yiddish picture books.

Gottlieb explained that the storytelling is one of a series of projects to be presented to the Greater Philadelphia Jewish community throughout the year as part of the One Book, One Jewish Community initiative, designed to bring the Greater Philadelphia Jewish Community together through shared conversations, discussions and events stimulated by the 2007-2008 selection, *Outwitting History* by Aaron Lansky.



DON SCHILLINGER

Synagogues, agencies and other Jewish institutions will adopt the selected book as a vehicle for conversation, sharing and celebrating not only the book it-

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