

executive message

"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch."

Isaiah 62, 1

No matter how many times I have been to Israel, no matter how many missions, delegations, congresses I've attended, none has had more meaning for me than my visit during the first week of September. I joined a group of 14 men and women from the United States, France, Russia, the U.K, Belgium, Mexico and Uruguay, who journeyed to Israel to demonstrate our support for her continuing struggles.

Perhaps others would share with you statistical information. Yes, the reallocation of municipal funding from education to secu-

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leadership matters

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rity has forced ORT Israel to reevaluate the programs it can offer to its students. (Programs like the Learning Skills Centers, which serve the needs of 17,000 children with learning difficulties, may need to be eliminated. The laptop computer classes at Ya'arat Ha'Emek may not continue.) But this is truly a very small part of the story.

A recent article in *The New York Times* by Clyde Haberman provides the background for my ORT story.

"He listens," it begins, "for the ambulances. The first siren captures his attention, but it is not enough to make him afraid. Not yet. Maybe the ambulance is on a routine call. People do have heart attacks and fall down stairs in this city after all. It is the second siren that causes this Israeli to stiffen. Then comes a third and a fourth and more, and he knows it has happened again. Somewhere, not too far away, another young Palestinian in search of martyrdom and paradise has blown himself to pieces in a crowd of Israelis.

"Now, the Israeli does what scores, hundreds, of others in

Jerusalem are doing at the same moment. He reaches for his cell phone to find out if his wife and son are safe, to make sure this was not the day that one of them paused at the wrong pizza restaurant or outdoor café."

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A pizza parlor, an outdoor café, a teenage disco...everyday places, places you and I, our children, our grandchildren visit all the time. Not long ago, Ronen Landau, a 16-year-old student at the ORT Ramot Comprehensive High School in Jerusalem, drove with a friend to a neighborhood movie theater. (He had only recently received his driver's license.) When the movie was over, he found that his car would-

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n't start, so he called home to tell his parents he and his friend would take the bus home, and pick up the car the next day. His father, fearing the dangers of bus travel, insisted on picking him up. Ronen was killed half a block from home, where a bullet from a sniper struck him.

On Sun., Sept. 2, the opening day of school, the members of our delegation attended a memorial service at Ramot, the school where Ronen's mother is a teacher, and where his brother, cousins, and friends attend. How many times have we routinely picked up our children from some activity? The majority of us are blessed – for we can send our children to the movies with free hearts. Most of us have never had to help our children grieve for a fallen classmate.

On Mon., Sept. 3, we again attended memorial services – for two young girls, recent Russian immigrants, who had come with their mothers to Israel, to live freely as Jews, to grow and enjoy a full and productive future. Maria and Raisa were students at ORT Lvovich in Netanya and had gone to a disco in Tel Aviv to celebrate the birthday of a classmate. They were two of the 18 youngsters killed in the terrorist attack. Only weeks before they died, a car bomb had been detonated at the bus stop right outside the school. Fortunately, it was during exams, and students had already left for the day, so no one was hurt. Only a few days later, another Lvovich student was

injured in an attack on the car in which he was going home from school. The driver was killed, but the boy was spared by pretending to be dead. This 14-year-old boy wept as he thanked us for being there, for demonstrating our support, for showing him and his schoolmates that Israel was not alone – that we, the Jews of the Diaspora, were part of his family.

As Haberman says in his article, "Where there was hope in the mid-90's that things could only get better, there is now despair that the shooting and bombs and blockades will only get worse...Reasons for gloom keep coming...yet, life, of course, goes on, as many Israelis are quick to say. They get married, have babies, go on drives, go shopping, and take in a movie. And they do go to school." While we were in Jerusalem, we met with Mayor Olmert. There were discussions about delaying the opening of schools (there are 8 ORT schools in Jerusalem), but most Israelis are determined to make life as normal as possible.

And each of you helps make that normality possible. In light of the horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that have killed an unbearable number of our fellow Americans and lifted the veil of invulnerability and security from our collective eyes, we have much to learn from Israel: how to persevere during uncertain and dangerous times and how to continue living full lives

undiminished by fear, hatred, chaos and death.

In the past, how many times have we alluded to the famous quotation, "If I am not for myself, who am I? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

Each moment is precious. If we do not use this particular moment meaningfully, its potential is lost and can never be retrieved. We must make the most of each moment allotted to us, and whether it's the best of times or the worst of times, it is the only time we have. I applaud each of you for standing up at this time. Your participation and support of ORT, and of ORT Israel in particular, is crucial.

*Judy Menikoff
First Vice President*

Reaching out

During the World ORT Solidarity Mission, First Vice President Judy Menikoff participated in a Solidarity Ceremony held at ORT Lvovich High School, which, as mentioned in the executive message, lost two of its students, Maria and Raisa, in the Tel Aviv bombing. The families of both girls were present at the ceremony. Classmates paid tribute to the girls with poems, monologues, and songs. ORT Israel Director-General Haim Ben-Ami stressed the importance of Jewish unity in order to resist

September 11, 2001

All of us at Women's American ORT are united in our anguish and outrage in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon that killed an unbearable number of our fellow human beings. We do not have an adequate vocabulary to express our feelings about the horrors we have witnessed, nor do we wish to acquire this unspeakable language.

By happenstance, none of us lost family members, but we know of – and mourn – many friends and acquaintances that perished in the towers. Forever will we carry their precious memories in our hearts. We offer our condolences to all the families and friends of those missing and presumed dead.

The courage and selflessness displayed by the firefighters, police and rescue workers and the out-

pouring of support and donations from around the world are eloquent testaments to one of the best traits humanity has to offer: the spirit of altruism. It is certainly alive and thriving in the United States. Despite the death and chaos that this network of terrorists has inflicted upon our country and people, we are all the more resolute in our conviction that ORT's global mission is more vital than ever in countering the ignorance, hatred and violence that fuel these utterly inhumane and unconscionable acts.

We have the tools and the means to erase the educational and economical disparity between the 'haves' and 'have nots' that disenfranchise, marginalize and radicalize so many people throughout the world. The educational, technological and vocational training offered by ORT schools and programs in 60 countries are an antidote to the conditions that

spawn such horrific evil. Thousands of people, from all races, backgrounds and nationalities – citizens of the world, if you will – died in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and on those four airplanes. And the terror is, sadly, rooted in many countries around the world where poverty and ignorance is pandemic. The appropriate response to correct these unjust circumstances must be global in scope – and we endeavor to do our part in this worthy struggle.

ORT heals, empowers and unites people throughout the world. And we ask that you continue your support of our most vital work. Even if you can only afford a couple of dollars, your contribution, combined with the donations of the rest of our membership family, will be a significant and fitting memorial to the people from over 60 nations who died on September 11.

Deadline for next FOCUS! is Thurs., October 4.

assignment update

As of August 31, our year-to-date assignment income is \$984,446, which is 14 percent of the 2001-02 annual assignment of \$7,269,500.

Last year at this time, our total fulfillment was \$549,626, which was 7 percent of the 2000-01 annual assignment of \$7,377,500.

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attack. Judy presented an album containing letters of support to ORT Israel students, penned by our members for the Reach Out to Israel Campaign, to Haim, and then read excerpts from the album.

Following the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to contribute. The 14-year-old student who had been injured in the car attack spoke of his fears stemming from the Conference on Racism in Durban. He confided that he and his friends felt that Israel was all alone in the world.

But after listening to the letters being read aloud and seeing the mission delegates, he realized that this is not so – Israel is not alone. He then expressed his wish that all the children in ORT Israel schools be made aware of the support from friends around the world, because knowing this will give them the strength to carry on.

WOMEN'S AMERICAN ORT

FOCUS! leadership matters

Distributed to: Board of Directors, ADCs, Resource Teams, Major Gifts, Young Leadership & Financial Management Specialists, Presidents of Chapters and Coordinating Bodies, Chairs of Bulletin, Marketing/PR, ORT Education, Community Action, PYLC 1-7, Protégée Classes 1-3, Past National Presidents, Honorary Vice Presidents, Past Executive Committee Members, Professional Staff, Region offices, American ORT, ORT Resale Shops.

convention corner

A final word on Convention

The following is a letter from Susa Navon, mother of Sofia Safirsztein. Sofia is one of the students who attended Convention.

It has been an overwhelming experience for Sofia to represent the Argentina Technical School in America. She came back with words of praise for all of you – for the affectionate way you treated her. She only complained that she would have liked to stay more than one day at each house, for by the time she got to know the family, she was taken elsewhere.

ORT is part of our family by now, as we have sent four of our children there. The staff of Argentina ORT is wonderful. They are doing a very good job here and have expanded the school. I know that the economic problem in Argentina is affecting the Jewish community, but they have not dropped their efforts and are helping children to finish their educations.

On behalf of all my family, we would like to wish you all a Rosh Hashanah greeting. May you all have a lovely new year celebration. Please extend this salutation to all ORT members who have been involved in

such kindness to Sofia during her stay.

The Safirszteins

November Solidarity Mission to Israel

November 5-6, 2001 (Optional: may extend visit to 5 days). To receive rate information and the itinerary, please RSVP by Oct. 15 to Jan Kovacs at 800.51.WAORT, ext. 256.

good & welfare

condolences to...

ADC **Judy Horowitz** on the loss of her husband, **Marty**.

Esther Gruber of The Fountains Chapter in Florida on the loss of her husband, **Alexander**.

The family of **Ros Halpern**, who was a member of the National Executive Committee in the 1960s and 70s.

WAO web wanderings

This issue we are highlighting only one new web site, in recognition of the tremendous efforts being made country-wide to help the country heal after the Sept. 11 tragedy.

www.libertyunites.org — the official online community listing charities you can contribute to for aiding disaster relief efforts.