

ICJW – Promoting a Just Society Based on Human Rights and Jewish Values

Message from the ICJW President

By Robyn Lenn OAM



Dear ICJW members,

The International Council of Jewish Women is very proud of the community work undertaken by its dozens of affiliate organisations around the world.

In this first 2015 issue, ICJW LINKS Chair Judy Lever and Vice Chair Clarita Spitz have collected information about the community services run by several ICJW affiliate organisations around the world. There are also reports from two affiliates who received Isabelle Brown Funding for volunteer training programs.

I invite all ICJW affiliates to see their organisation's work displayed in our LINKS e-magazine, which will appear twice annually. Please send reports and photos to Judy or Clarita after your special event so they can include your organisation in the next LINKS.

Warmest wishes,
Robyn

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Introduction to e-Links

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to present you with our first edition of LINKS, which we hope you will distribute widely among the membership of your affiliate.

The reports represent a wide cross section of the amazing work undertaken by our members around the world. They work in the fields of social justice and social welfare – they educate, and raise awareness of important issues – they also do many simple tasks which make life more comfortable for the vulnerable members of our communities.

They all have something in common – they give their time unstintingly for the benefit of others.

Enjoy our e-magazine and be further inspired in all you do.

Warmest greetings to you all,
Judy Lever and Clarita Spitz

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN

ICJW Head Office, P.O. Box 157, Roseville, New South Wales 2069 AUSTRALIA
Tel: +61 2 9880 7577 Fax: +61 2 9880 7578 Email: president@icjw.org or office@icjw.org

www.icjw.org

Canada: 90th Birthday Celebrations in Vancouver

Vancouver was delighted to welcome Robyn Lenn, our International President, and Sharon Allentuck, Canada NCJW president, to its hugely successful 90th birthday bash on November 16th. Brilliant sunshine welcomed over 125 guests to the Van Dusen Garden site for a “farmers’ market” of brunch foods, bubbly wine, entertainment and music, interspersed with displays of our partner agencies.

All the groups that we are allied with –Vancouver Coastal Health nurses, BC Transplant Society, the Jewish Book Fair, Elizabeth Fry, HIPPY/Mosaic, Children of the Street, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Public Library – had displays alongside our signature projects – Books for Kids, Operation Dress-Up, and ALUMA of Israel.

We were thrilled to see so many of our members – some in their 90s themselves – meet old and new friends, discover the energy of our initiatives and enjoy a remarkably diverse menu of food and drink. It was a privilege to have Robyn Lenn and



*Sharon Allentuck
& Robyn Lenn*

*Deborah Altow
& Catherine Stoller*

Sharon Allentuck with us. Their remarks were brief and informative, while our President, Catherine Stoller, welcomed everyone to this happy celebration. Our staff person, Judy Stern, worked with a vigorous committee to make it all happen.

Our website www.ncjwvancouver.org shows items provided by international delegates to various meetings. Of particular note is the most recent announcement of the Sakharov prize, and the development of the halachic pre-nuptial agreement efforts; these are important events and we are fortunate to have women from ICJW able to share the news about them.

NCJW Canada Launches a New Star!

National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Winnipeg Section is thrilled to announce that Hilary Druxman, a well-known jewelry designer, has created a sterling silver necklace just for us! It is a beautiful chain with two overlapping, independently swinging triangles which fall together to form a gorgeous Magen David (pictured right). It can be adjusted to a 16" or 18" length (40.6 or 45.7 cm).

Net proceeds from the sale of each handcrafted sterling silver necklace helps National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Winnipeg Section, to fulfill its mission of service, education and social action in our community.

The necklace is available from the Hilary Druxman online store and can be delivered anywhere in the world. You can order your star at:

<https://www.hilarydruxman.com/product/53n1-ncjw/>

Wear this beautiful star with pride and help make a difference!



Czech Republic: After the Convention

You all know that for us the most important activity of last year was undoubtedly the realization of the **22nd ICJW Convention 2014 in Prague**. This event had a special meaning for us. First, you have to prove that even a small affiliate is able to organize such a big event, although at a much greater effort and a completely different way from a large and financially more secure affiliate. The event meant even more to us – we proved that our affiliate is not just a group of girls who meet for coffee, but a viable organization. **The convention helped us visualize and place ourselves in Czech society.** As a result, we have gained new and active members.

In addition, we received cooperation from Czech organizations with aims similar to those of ICJW. We have intensified cooperation with the [Foundation for Holocaust Victims](#), [Jewish Museum of Prague](#), and our [Jewish Community](#). We have extended our cooperation with the Czech branch of the [International Christian Embassy Jerusalem](#), which, like ICJW, is supporting Israel and fighting against racial and ethnic intolerance. ICEJ is a nationally recognized organization in the country and we enjoy working with them.

We are working with the [School Information Channel](#), a company that educates on human rights in primary and secondary schools in the Czech Republic. We continue to work with Prix Irene, an organization of Helena Klimova, on the project Families after the Holocaust. We are co-organizing a three-day conference in Prague, this year.

We also have a newly launched collaboration with [Amnesty International – AI CZ](#). We have a joint program with them. Their volunteers and activists are monitoring the human rights situation, providing support to asylum seekers, promoting the protection of women, seeking to eliminate discrimination, and seeking systemic changes in law and practice.

Alice Veselá, ICJW Vice President, Czech Republic

Hungary Update

Dr. Katalin Pécsi–
Pollner, President
of Esthers' House
Association,
reports on their
activities between
June & October



1. Organizing a reading club on Jewish & women's & Jewish women's book for our members. Meeting once a month, the list of books for the academic year chosen together at the first meeting in September.
2. Giving a public lecture on the women's voices of Holocaust survivors at the "Open Forum" in Liberty Square.
3. Attending and giving lectures at a conference on the Holocaust in Hungary for the 70th Anniversary year.
4. Organizing the traveling exhibition "Sticking together" at the Chapel of Wesley College during the conference "From Kamanietzk–Podolsky to Auschwitz" and giving the opening speech.
5. Attending a radio program on Jewish women on the (only) independent radio channel: Klub Radio.
6. A talk on the fate of local Jewish people and families during the Holocaust, at the opening of an exhibition in the city museum, in Szombathely.
7. A round table discussion on the first woman rabbi, Regina Jonas with members of Esthers' House Association, with film director Diana Groó and Rabbi Katalin Kelemen, during a social-psychological program, in the city Pécs.
8. A lecture on the Zionist rescuing activities of Jewish women in 1944 –1945 in Budapest, at the memorial conference on the Holocaust in the city of Győr.
9. Preparing our training course for Jewish women in November – see page 7 below.

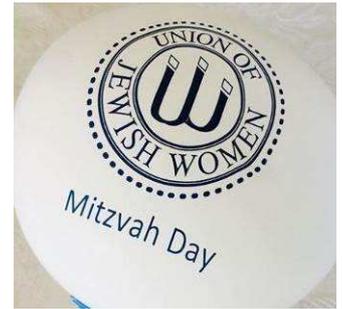
Mitzvah Day 2014 in South Africa

On 16 November 2014, the Union of Jewish Women of SA (www.ujw.co.za) joined 35,000 volunteers from 20 countries to spread a little cheer on International Mitzvah Day. International Mitzvah Day was started in the UK in 2005 and was introduced to UJW four years ago. On this 'Good Deed Day', people try to make the world a better place, by visiting the elderly, assisting the homeless, improving facilities, cleaning up the environment etc. It is a day of giving time rather than money, and a day on which other faith groups join hands with Jewish communities and undertake joint projects. All five main branches of UJW South Africa organised projects to celebrate International Mitzvah Day:

1. The **Cape Town branch** packed a mammoth 250 'Comfort Kits' for raped and abused women and children, which were distributed at various Rape Crisis Clinics.
2. **Durban UJW** provided a wonderful tea and entertainment to the residents of Beth Shalom, a Jewish Retirement Home, as well as to another home, and collected much-needed foodstuffs for the SPCA.
3. Magnificent hampers containing fresh as well as tinned foodstuffs were given to some very needy families by the **East London members of UJW**.
4. The **Johannesburg Branch** distributed Mitzvah Day gifts and provided entertainment to the residents at 5 Retirement Homes. The residents at a Shelter for Women in Distress and Bethany House for Abused Women, were provided with a wonderful lunch and gift packs, while the children at a township orphanage were treated to lunch, gift packs and books.
5. 'Sunshine to Seniors' was the focus in **Port Elizabeth**. A delicious tea was served to 50 elderly residents from two impoverished townships. Children from Theodor Herzl School sang, and then conducted a survey as part of a school project, giving young and old from different cultures a chance to interact with one another. The guests left with armfuls of gifts from UJW and the students.

An **Interfaith 'Come for Tea' Group**, which meets at UJW's Johannesburg offices once a month, arranged a Mitzvah Day Tea for their group, and for some prisoners involved in the horticultural programme at the Leeuwkop Prison. The students took great pride in showing off their vegetable gardens and explaining their gardening methods, and presented everyone with a bunch of vegetables. The prisoners wrote a beautiful note saying: *"The world needs more people of the kind that you brought to share the Mitzvah celebration with us. We were overwhelmed with confidence and hope after meeting everyone"*.

The Union of Jewish Women SA hopes that more organisations and other faith groups will join International Mitzvah Day, working together to help make our world a better place.



Fair Trade Chocolate – LJW takes up the Fight!



Yvonne Brent, National President of the UK's [League of Jewish Women](#), is urging League groups and individual members to join the fight against people trafficking, following the powerful talk by Ruth Dearnley of STOP THE TRAFFIK, arranged to mark Human Rights Day in December.

[STOP THE TRAFFIK](#) was founded 10 years ago and exists to equip individuals and communities all over the world to take action. Ruth spoke of people bought and sold for sexual exploitation, forced labour, street crime and domestic servitude. She said trafficking was the fastest growing crime in the world today. She spoke of children disappearing and others working in terrible conditions in the chocolate industry. She also talked of bus-loads of young girls being taken to cotton spinning mills in India. "When it comes to forced labour, we are all in those supply chains and we all have a bit of blood on our clothes." In addition to the successful Chocolate Campaign, STT are also working to prevent trafficking in the Tea and Cotton industries.

LJW groups and individual League members are going to be asked to support the "Good Chocolate Guide" campaign. It is believed that major companies do take notice of these campaigns and need to make their supply chains more accountable. For League members it means buying only chocolate products that have the Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance stamp.

League groups will be asked to organise their own events to create awareness of the campaign which will include the very popular Chocolate Fondue Parties using only approved chocolate.



(l-r) Gillian Gold, Penelope Conway, Ruth Dearnley, Addrianne Sherman and Yvonne Brent at the LJW Human Rights Day event.

The League marks Mitzvah Day

In November, members of the League of Jewish Women organised a series of events to mark Mitzvah Day. This was the third year that LJW members joined with the Association of Jewish Ex- Servicemen (AJEX) in their march to the London War Memorial, to remember all the Jewish servicemen and women who have given their lives for their country. This year 35 members marched behind the LJW Banner. Yvonne Brent led the LJW contingent and those taking part were encouraged to wear their forefathers' medals.

Many LJW groups from all over **London and Manchester, Surrey, Leicester and Bournemouth**, participated in Mitzvah Day Projects in November. They organised Mitzvah Day teas and social events at non-Jewish and Jewish residential homes. One group collected items for a local children's hospice, another distributed leaflets for their local hospice, and one collected non-perishable items for the homeless, housebound and less well-off members of our society.



LJW on the Move

The League of Jewish Women has moved their offices to ORT House in Camden, close to Central London, owned by the World ORT Trust.

Yvonne Brent said, "Our move into new offices has meant we had to make major changes with regard to our administration. We are finding that many volunteers prefer our one-off projects, as they are fitting their voluntary work around other duties of caring for elderly relatives and grandchildren. However, there is still a hardcore of volunteers who give selflessly and commit weekly to ongoing projects.

The League is now working towards involvement with a new project – Silverline – which addresses problems such as loneliness amongst older people. We plan to train our volunteers to offer a telephone befriending service in 2015. Watch this space!

Update from Uruguay

The Council of Jewish Women in Uruguay continues with its usual projects. We visit the Jewish Home for the Elderly and bring them recreation and entertainment, together with kosher food. They have a very joyful afternoon. Every Tuesday, we organize activities for senior women, with well-known speakers to update them on different subjects of interest, whether political, world or local issues, and general information.

We donate clothes to three public hospitals, as well as to the Jewish Community Center. This last winter we donated 50 quilts to the Jewish community for people in need. We were also asked for donations by Avodati, a group formed by disabled Jewish people in the community, which they needed to continue with their activities.

In order to help Jewish kids living in far-away areas, we cooperate with their transportation to the community centers to attend and share youth groups activities.

Our **Dor EmShej** group of younger women continues to work on the issue of domestic violence. They organize different workshops to publicize the problem, especially among the young people. They also organized a campaign to prevent violence when dating, with brochures and workshops.

Another issue at hand is genetic diseases in the Jewish populations. They have organized several workshops on diseases that affect Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish populations. Another round of workshops is planned for next year with younger Jewish kids.

They also help to satisfy the needs of public schools, not only in Montevideo but also in other areas. Once a year they take kids from these schools on an educational trip to the Holocaust Museum to listen to a well-qualified speaker on the Shoah. The kids learn about the Shoah during the year, and it is very exciting to listen to their questions and watch their reactions. Afterwards they are taken out for lunch at McDonalds.

*Raquel Lissman, President,
Council of Jewish Women in Uruguay*

News from Slovakia



During 2014, Association Ester welcomed ICJW President Robyn Lenn to Kosice, where she was introduced to civic leaders and leading members of the Slovakian Jewish community (pictured above). She also visited the historical and cultural sights of the city.

10th December was Human Rights Day, and our organisation prepared interesting activities to mark this important date. We participated in the Evening of National Minorities, where Jewish culture was represented, and we arranged a very good poetry evening of Jewish authors from Slovakia, in co-operation with the Public Library of Bocatio in Kosice. The program was entitled 'Limpid Thirst' and was accompanied by music and songs in Yiddish. It was really a perfect emotional and artistic experience for all attendees. The recording was also broadcast on Slovak television in January 2015.

ISABELLE G. BROWN MEMORIAL FUND TRAINING PROJECTS

Leadership Training Program in Hungary

Dr. Katalin Pécsi-Pollner, president of the [Esther's House Association](#) for the Jewish Culture and Feminist Values, reports on their Jewish Women's Leadership Training Program which took place from November 19-21st, 2014, at the Jewish Community Center – Bálint House – in Budapest, Hungary.



The purpose of the seminar was to encourage women to step up and participate in leadership functions. We wanted to reach professional women and students from three generations and bring them closer to Jewish tradition, values and community life. We also aimed to unite the female leadership from isolated communities (secular/cultural, educational, Zionist, traditionalist, modern orthodox, neolog or reform) to share knowledge and daily challenges which are common to all participants.

Most of the participants were professional women who were interested in Jewish topics and/or active in Hungary's Jewish communities. We were happy to include "new people" in our training: our outreach campaign enabled us to include people who have never taken part in our programs but became enthusiastic members of our Jewish Feminist group as a result.

We accepted registration from 75 people for the 3 days and we turned away more; we had to limit the numbers to ensure that the interactive group elements would work well. We ran parallel workshops/seminars, with small groups of people to encourage communication. We added some psycho-dramatic and creative exercises, which helped us to understand more deeply the problems under discussion. With the help of these "informal learning" methods, everyone had the opportunity to take part in a very active way.

Having seen how many Jewish women are attracted to a well-organized program which can support their individual interests and commitments, we hope to organize another similar training seminar in 2016. We are glad to know that there is a bigger circle of Jewish women around us, supporting or joining us. We thank ICJW for their generous financial support, without which it would be difficult to organize educational programs such as this."



ISABELLE G. BROWN MEMORIAL FUND TRAINING PROJECTS

Domestic Violence Awareness Training in Georgia

Our Georgian affiliate, the LEA International Foundation, received a training grant from the Isabelle G. Brown Memorial Fund. Marina Solomonishvili, head of LEA, reports that the training was aimed at raising awareness of the incidence, causes and need for support for victims of domestic violence.

40 women aged 18-70 years participated in the training. More than half were from LEA and there were representatives of other Jewish organisations, as well as many Georgians and women from ethnic minorities.

It was recognised that domestic violence exists across all communities, and that although there are some shelters/refuges in Georgia, there are insufficient state resources directed towards the problem. There are laws to protect and support victims, but it is felt to be ineffective. It was also believed that at some levels of the administration there was resistance to implementation of the legislation. The participants learned also that there is a need for shelters aimed at individual communities such as Jewish or ethnic minority women.

As in other countries, many women accept the situation and do not come forward. There is much gender stereotyping, and unemployment and drunkenness exacerbate the problem. Difficulties can arise when women become the family breadwinner, and it is necessary for women to learn new skills to deal with a new life.

Marina expressed concern that it is difficult to raise funds to fight this problem and hopes that ICJW may be able to direct them to donors who are willing to support them.



Calendar of ICJW Events

March 9 – 20, 2015	UN Commission on the Status of Women - CSW59
May 11, 12 (13), 2015	ICJW Executive Meeting, Antwerp, Belgium
October 25 – 28, 2015	Latin American Regional Conference, Mexico City
October 28 – 29, 2015	ICJW Executive Meeting, Mexico City
May 2016	ICJW Executive Meeting in Nashville, USA
November 2016	ICJW Executive Meeting & European Regional Conference, Madrid
May 2017	ICJW Executive Meeting & Herczeg Educational Seminar in Israel
November 2017	ICJW Executive Meeting in London, UK
May 2018	ICJW Quadrennial Convention, Sydney, Australia