Message from the President

Dear ICJW members,

ICJW LINKS Committee Chair Judy Lever and Vice-chair Clarita Spitz, have put together another LINKS e-magazine, full of interesting information about the community service work of ICJW affiliate organisations in their home countries.

As ICJW President I am very proud of the range and breadth of work that ICJW affiliates provide to their communities, often supporting their general community as well as their Jewish community.

One of the best possible outcomes from the distribution of this magazine to all affiliates would be the adoption of new projects and programmes suggested by fellow affiliates. Please let us know if this happens in your organisation.

Enjoy and be inspired by ICJW’s wonderful members and their voluntary work!

Best wishes

Robyn Lenn OAM
ICJW President
The Argen Jewish Women's Network was set up in 2010 and joined ICJW in 2015.

It has twelve full members who are all active volunteers in other institutions, so they are in contact with the rest of the Argentinian Jewish community. It is not a religious or political movement but they participate in the community as a Zionist and human rights organisation, especially dedicated to women’s needs and issues.

The organisation is self-funding with a monthly fee and uses its own human resources and materials, so as not to spend unnecessary money.

The Network’s goals are:
- Defending democracy and equality
- Working against discrimination, injustice, gender violence and anti-Semitism
- Promoting women’s health
- Defending Israel’s existence
- Combating fanaticism
- Working to prevent the disappearance of native peoples
- Perpetuating the memory of the first Jewish colonies in Argentina.

To achieve these goals, the Argentinian Jewish Women’s Network organises monthly events where journalists, writers, filmmakers, politicians, senators, scientists, philosophers are invited to deliver lectures. They also organise seminars to learn about the work of important musicians and painters, mainly those who are involved with Jewish life and women’s issues.

One of their priorities is the defence of women’s health, so the Network organises workshops and debates on subjects such as breast cancer. Every March they organise a major event for International Women’s Day – to date 3,000 people have participated in these events. They have taken part in interfaith events and demonstrations against femicide.

The Network publishes an online magazine which is distributed three times a month to 14,000 people, mainly in Argentina, Israel, Uruguay and Spain. It contains social, cultural, and Jewish articles on diverse topics such as the dignity of life in old people, sexuality, abortion, forgiveness, the growth of anti-Semitism in the world, phobias and depressions, assisted reproduction, bullying, the Shoah and the cruelty of Nazism.

In the pursuit of their goals, the Network works with other local institutions such as B’nai B’rith, AMIJAi, Hacoaj, DAIA, Hebraica, the Holocaust Museum, and the Mexican and Canadian Embassies.

Our Newest Affiliate: Red de Mujeres Judias Argentinas

Mirta Goldstein, president, and members of Red Argentina de Mujeres Judias
Culture and Community Work in Sweden

Dr. Harriet Maler, ICJW Vice President for Sweden, describes the work of Swedish affiliate JKK – the Judiska Kvinnoklubben.

JKK is a rather small society, but it is fairly active in the Swedish Jewish community. We participate in several kinds of voluntary work, especially at the Jewish Home for the Elderly in Stockholm. We pay regular visits there and arrange entertainments, from showing films to inviting outstanding singers and musicians.

JKK’s rules say that we shall encourage Jewish culture. To that end we arrange several events such as lectures and museum visits every year. These events attract a lot of people, and the fees that they generate help the JKK to finance their community work at the Home for the Elderly, and to give scholarships to students who study Jewish subjects, and to support other activities, such as the group caring for the Jews in Baltic countries.

We run a popular traditional Succot lunch, at which I spoke about the history of ICJW. People seemed interested and JKK gained some new members, perhaps partly due to this international connection.

JKK works mostly within the Jewish community, although we all take a strong interest in what is going on in Swedish society.

Sweden, like many other European countries, faces increasing anti-Semitism. This may be partly due to the many Muslim immigrants who have arrived recently in Sweden, but that is far from the whole truth as most of these immigrants are not fundamentalists and not anti-Jewish. We suspect that it is the old anti-Semitism which has been awakened, combined with strong anti-Israel opinions. Fortunately, the Swedish Jewish community has a very strong and active group against anti-Semitism, which JKK supports both financially and ideologically.

Doing Magic in Mexico

One of the most successful projects of the Voluntarias Judeo Mexicanas, A.C. is Project Magic – an innovative programme that uses magic as a form of therapy for people with physical, psychological and social disabilities.

Project Magic was developed by David Copperfield, the world-renowned magician. It brings together professionals in the entertainment field and those in the medical field to provide a quality of therapeutic training for patients far ahead of traditional rehabilitative programmes and techniques. Patients involved with this fun, stimulating activity experience enhanced motivation.
Marking Mandela Day 2015

Nelson Mandela International Day was launched in recognition of the South African President’s birthday on 18 July, 2009. As well as celebrating his legacy, it honours his life’s work by encouraging people to act to change the world for the better. Each branch of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa honoured Mandela Day 2015 with a special project:

1. **Durban UJW**, together with the Council of KwaZulu–Natal Jewry made 1,200 sandwiches in 67 minutes! Lexi was the youngest volunteer!

2. **East London Branch** decorated biscuits with children from East London’s Child & Youth Care and soft toys were handed out to the children.

3. **Johannesburg**’s “Bags for New Beginnings” were delivered to new mums at seven government hospitals and clinics. They also gave soft toys to children at Hillbrow’s HIV/AIDS Clinic.

4. In **Port Elizabeth**, Pam Leibowitz and her granddaughter Ariela ran “Toys 4 Joy”, arranging for masses of soft toys to be delivered to children who have experienced trauma or difficulties in their lives.

The Sisterhood of Congregation B’nei Israel in Costa Rica

Congregation B’nei Israel is a liberal community founded in 1987 in San Jose, Costa Rica. Its Sisterhood is one of the strongest and longest–existing arms of the congregation, led by president Florencia Gelman. It has its own by–laws and finances itself by means of fund–raising activities such as bingo, bazaars, dinners and parties. The funds go toward synagogue operations, purchase of materials for the school and scholarships to enable students to participate in overseas events, among other things.

The commitment and enthusiasm of the women make this group one of the motors of the congregation. Meetings are held once a month and focus on the planning of activities, as well as on study of subjects of interest for women.

The Sisterhood’s main project this year was the printing of a Shiron (song book) of Jewish music for synagogue use and for sale. The book was launched in May with a concert by the Congregation choir, together with the La Carpio Symphony Orchestra, which is made up of children from a marginal area. These are at–risk children whose lives are being changed through music. Besides launching the Shiron, the Sisterhood’s aim in organising the concert was also to raise funds for this orchestra.
Cuba – Coping with Challenges

ICJW’s Cuban affiliate, the Asociación Femenina Hebrea de Cuba, has four on-going community service projects. Women from all the synagogues meet every three months to update themselves with current news about Israel and to promote debates on important issues for women and for Jewish women.

Every month they organise a challah baking session so that every Jewish family can enjoy traditional challah bread on Shabbat at least once a month. Also each month, alternating between the synagogues, their mobile hair salon staffed by volunteers provides free hairdressing services to community members who do not have the means to pay for them.

Because the organisation does not have any income, they run a craft workshop to support their activities and to help women in need due to illness or low income. They teach knitting, sewing, arts and crafts to volunteers, who produce items for sale to raise money for those in need. The Association also visits the sick and attends to their needs.

The role of women in the Cuban Jewish community is extremely important. Five synagogue presidents and the president of the Jewish community in Cuba are women! The Sunday school teachers are women, and women run the religious services and chair social groups. Their most important commitment is bringing up Jewish families, but they face many difficulties because of Cuba’s economic problems and they cannot easily obtain kosher food, so they eat whatever they can. There is no anti-Semitism in Cuba, but there is a pro-Arab TV station, so they teach their children to love Israel.

The Association relies on the commitment of its volunteers and, since they do not have money, they depend on donations from overseas.

Uruguay Leads the Way

The Council of Jewish Women in Uruguay (Consejo Uruguayo de Mujeres Judías) runs programmes to help different institutions within and outside the Jewish community. They provide disabled people with clothes, toys and domestic appliances, and help public schools, local institutions and public hospitals. They organise cultural and recreational activities for their members and for the general public, among them lectures and movies on sensitive subjects such as the importance of preventing the transmission of Jewish genetic diseases.

Their younger women’s group, Dor Hemshej, works hard to raise awareness for the prevention of domestic violence.

Their newest project consists of several hasbara activities for public schools in the city and in rural areas, teaching Israeli dancing, and providing materials to improve the quality of their education.

Campaign posters to raise awareness of Jewish Genetic Diseases and of Domestic Violence
Update from Ecuador

The Sociedad Femenina Israelita de Quito was founded in 1939. Its main objective was to help the Jewish refugees that came to Ecuador after leaving Europe to escape the Nazi terror.

76 years later they are still active. Even though they keep on helping members of the Jewish community who are in need, most of their energy and funds are directed to provide financial and spiritual help to the following Ecuadorian organisations:

1. Children with Down Syndrome
2. Young girls who are victims of human trafficking
3. Children in nurseries in the poorest neighbourhoods of Quito
4. Residents of Old Age Homes
5. Orphans with HIV

They also donate funds to the NETA programme for underprivileged children in Israel.

The Society held an event on March 15, 2015, for International Day of Good Deeds, when they invited the girls from the Fundación Colibrí (Hummingbird Foundation for Victims of Human Trafficking) and the children of Fundación JUVILUS (orphans with HIV) to spend the day with them. They organised a special programme full of dance, songs, games and good food, which will be long remembered by their young guests.

Community Service Projects of Kol Shearith Israel in Panama

Because pictures are worth thousands of words, here are some images that show what our Panama affiliate, Kol Shearith Israel, is doing for their local community.

Providing mattresses and food...

Preparing lunches for the blind...

Bringing hope and donations to the elderly and to women in jail...
Leadership Training Workshop in Australia

Di Hirsh OAM, outgoing National President of NCJW Australia, reports on their Leadership Training Workshop.

At the NCJW Australia National Conference in Sydney in May/June, we held a workshop for the current and future leaders within our organisation to allow them to plan our future direction.

NCJWA National Conferences are only held once every four years, with a Plenary for the leadership held midway through the term. As a result, the national leadership only comes together once every two years, so it is vitally important that we take the opportunity to brainstorm together and discuss issues of concern, what works within each section and what doesn’t, and where we want the organisation to be a few years from now.

The ICJW Isabelle G. Brown Memorial Fund grant enabled us to have an experienced facilitator run the workshop and provide the incoming administration with a comprehensive report on the outcomes of the workshop. The facilitator encouraged both current and future leaders to contribute and actively take part. In this way all had a sense of ownership of the direction the organisation will take over the next few years.

First Aid Courses for the UK League of Jewish Women

Accidents do happen, and how we respond can make the difference between life and death. Jackie Baines explains how a generous training grant from the Isabelle G. Brown Memorial Fund enabled the League of Jewish Women to offer a series of first aid courses to its members.

More than 80 people participated in the eight First Aid sessions organised so far at four London locations. The sessions were organised in local synagogue halls, with Magen David Adom arranging trainers from the British Red Cross. Each session lasted three and half hours.

The courses included learning how to help someone who is breathing but unconscious, helping someone who is choking, assisting someone who is bleeding, and knowing how to put someone in the recovery position. The courses also included a session on how to treat babies and toddlers.

The courses include a lot of floor work and participants were asked to bring an exercise mat or a towel to lie on. Those people who were unable to get on the floor observed the procedures, and they said they feel confident that, should they be in a situation where first aid is needed, they could talk someone else through the process which could also save lives.

Feedback from the courses has been good with many saying the standard of training was excellent and others saying it was good or very good. The League is now organising courses in other locations, and there is also talk of doing refresher courses. We hope that our members will never have to use this information, but we believe that those who have participated could save someone’s life in an emergency.
A Visit to Colegio Golda Meir, Sponsored by the Jewish Women of Barranquilla, Colombia

Madeleine Brecher, ICJW UN Representative in New York, spent two exciting weeks in early 2015 touring Colombia, South America. She ended her vacation with a visit to meet the women of the Fundacion Amigos de la Comunidad Golda Meir – Friends of the Golda Meir Community Foundation – ICJW’s affiliate in Barranquilla.

Colegio Golda Meir is the incredibly impressive school that the Hebrew Women’s Federation, Las Damas Hebreas de Barranquilla, established in 1978. It is there to assist and educate children of very low income families through preschool, grammar and high school, with no distinction of creed, race or politics. It currently accommodates close to 900 children.

Founded as an elementary school with five classrooms, it was named Golda Meir with the approval of the Archdiocese of Barranquilla and the Barranquilla city government. A high school was added in 1984 and the first 37 students graduated in 1994. Since then, graduates have continued their education pursuing careers in medicine, nursing, chemical and industrial engineering, military careers, technical fields and many other career choices.

The school has an impressive library, an excellent chemistry lab, a bakery, a children’s park and, in the last few years, a generous donor donated 600 computers for the children’s use. In addition, money was raised for new windows, doors and air conditioning which, sadly, is too expensive to run, but there are fans in every classroom.

Due to space limitations, Colegio Golda Meir runs in two shifts of 450 students per shift and during our visit many kids were at recess, where they were receiving a hot cooked healthy snack. I loved seeing these lovely, immaculate children in their Golda Meir uniforms with the Star of David blazoned across their chest. We were greeted enthusiastically in English by the teachers and the kids.

Since 2002, the Federation of Jewish Women of Barranquilla has signed various agreements with the district of Barranquilla to ensure a quality education and personalized attention for students of the school, who are under the care of 28 excellent and dedicated teachers. The school continues to rely on the generosity of the private sector.

We should all take great pride in the extraordinary Golda Meir School that the Jewish women of Barranquilla have established in their city!

Calendar of ICJW Events

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<td>May 17-19, 2016</td>
<td>ICJW Executive Meeting in Nashville, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 13-17, 2016</td>
<td>ICJW Executive Meeting &amp; European Regional Conference, Madrid</td>
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<td>May 2017</td>
<td>ICJW Executive Meeting &amp; Herczeg Educational Seminar in Israel</td>
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