Dear Friends:

This issue of "Links" begins with a description of the ICJW "Open Door" project, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, and then goes on to describe some of our affiliates’ community service work around the world.

The National Council of Jewish Women of Canada is featured in its 110th year. Toronto, which was the first Section formed in 1897, will host NCJWC’s 33rd Triennial Convention in November 2007, and we congratulate NCJWC on its impressive record of service to the Canadian community.

We also showcase the community service work of LEA Jewish Women’s Organization of Georgia, an important organization in a small Jewish community, and share news of the activities of our affiliates in Mexico and Argentina – the latter celebrating its 70th year.

The wonderful community service work undertaken by these ICJW affiliates is inspiring to all of us. As ICJW Community Services Coordinator, I recommend that each affiliate considers whether some of these projects may be advantageous to its own Jewish community.

We heard recently that a successful screening program for genetic diseases commonly found in the Jewish community has been promoted by the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada and the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa. As an international organization with useful community "links", ICJW is ideally placed to spread such global campaigns and benefit the maximum number of people worldwide.

Please write and tell us about your affiliate’s activities, especially any projects which could be emulated elsewhere, so that we can include you in the next issue of Links.

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Jerusalem’s "Open Door"
Celebrates its 30th Anniversary
Judy Telman

"Open Door" in Jerusalem is unique within ICJW as the only community project that was established in the name of our international organization. How did this come about? Thirty years ago, Lily Menczel and Ruth Ben David, two retirees living in Jerusalem, decided that they wanted to remain active and involved and began investigating various possibilities. They discovered that there were many other seniors living in the Rechavia neighborhood of Jerusalem. Many of them were Holocaust survivors, retired professors, former writers and scientists, who had grown out of touch with their surroundings. Teddy Kollek, then Mayor of Jerusalem, suggested that they might want to reach out and involve these people in a program that would provide not only a social outlet but also intellectual stimulation.

Taking the challenge, Lily and Ruth rented and furnished a small apartment and began a door-to-door campaign, recruiting people to come through their “open door” to meet and involve these people in a program that would provide not only a social outlet but also intellectual stimulation.

Over the years, two more stories were added. A Culture Hall was named in honor of Rosita and Esteban de Herczeg, who also contributed generously to the project. The fourth-floor Gymnastics Hall was named in honor of one of the program participants who died and left her property to Open Door, as an expression of her appreciation for the friendship, concern, and volunteers, who she felt had been life new meaning.

Ruth Ben David has since retired, but Lily continues to give of her time and her expertise, utilizing her contacts to arrange speakers and programs (all pro bono) of interest to the men and women who come through the Open Door. She is helped by a dedicated cadre of volunteers led by the current President Miriam Cooperstock. Today the programs include ceramics, Bible, various language courses, painting, bridge, yoga and exercise classes, as well as special programs for the vision-impaired.

Building on the initial support of ICJW and contributions from individual donors, Open Door is self-sustaining. Participants, who come from all over the city, also pay a small monthly fee for the activities.

Leah Aharonov represented ICJW at the Open Door’s 30th Anniversary celebrations, sharing with the packed audience the pride that our organization takes in having been instrumental in establishing this important community service.

The Consejo Argentino de Mujeres Israelitas of Argentina (CAMI)

Our Argentinian affiliate celebrated its 70th Anniversary in August 2007. Special guests at their celebratory events included a member of the National Parliament, Mr. Telmo Languiller, and the Commissioner of Multicultural Events from the Australian State of Victoria, Mrs. Marcia Pinskier, and her husband Dr. Henry Pinskier. They were very interested in CAMI’s work on behalf of Jewish women, and the meeting was an opportunity to exchange information about activities in Argentina and Australia.

Anniversary Conferences and Meetings were held on various topics, including strengthening the family, anti-Semitism, and elder abuse.

CAMI remains active in community service activities on many levels, providing an ongoing distribution service for food and clothes to poor people; occupational therapy and human development services to physically handicapped people of all ages; and running projects to enrich the lives of the handicapped in many ways. They sponsor various workshops that serve as an entry point into the labor market, and they support various artistic activities in conjunction with other institutions.

The CAMI Silver Age Club has increased the number of its members by offering new activities, such as a “Thinking Workshop,” Study Groups, Literary Analysis, News Discussion, Story and Memory Stimulation Workshops.
CAMI volunteers help at the Hospital Israelitas (formerly Ezrah) Limited Work Cooperative Medical Centre, where CAMI pays for a professional worker, the maintenance of a small pharmacy, and provides clothes for needy patients.

CAMI is also looking to the future by developing leadership in tune with its ideals through its Training Scheme. Professional trainers provide theoretical and practical sessions on different topics, including Communication, Geriatrics and Gerontology, Human Resources, Disability, First Aid, and Volunteering and Leadership. They also offer courses to a wider audience on Neuro-linguistic Programming, Memory Stimulation, Mood Changes and Self-Esteem, and Special Physical Treatments. The organization’s social events’ calendar offers outings, games, meetings, and celebrations for the Jewish festivals.

CAMI hopes to introduce a new project – a Workshops Program that is designed to bring children and adolescents to the CAMI Club.

**National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC)**

Since its inception the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada has been a catalyst for change and a powerful pioneering force on behalf of children and families, the elderly and disabled, new Canadians, and the disadvantaged in both the general and Jewish communities. They actively support many national campaigns in these areas and are part of the Campaign 2000 coalition to end Child Poverty in Canada. Since 1973, NCJW Canada has sponsored the Israel Family Counselling Association (IFCA).

NCJWC’s ongoing “Jewish Genetic Diseases Awareness Project” continues to raise awareness of Jewish Genetic Diseases in the Ashkenazi Jewish population. In addition to screening for Tay-Sachs disease, Canavan disease, and Familial Dysautonomia, four additional diseases have been added to the panel: Bloom Syndrome, Fanconi Anemia Type C, Niemann-Pick Disease Type A, and Mucolipidosis Type IV.

With 29 branches across the Greater Toronto Area, NCJWC Toronto Section’s largest community service project is the “Passover Food Drive,” now in its 24th year. Over 1500 volunteers are involved in serving 10,000 needy Jewish people by delivering almost 3000 boxes of non-perishable Kosher for Passover food. Other projects include:

- Seniors’ Lunch and Learn programs twice a month.
- “Just for Me” Backpack Project providing backpacks filled with school supplies, toys, and toiletries for children leaving abusive situations.

NCJWC Vancouver Section’s community service projects include:

- “Operation Dress-up,” providing slightly used clothing to needy families.
- “Visions,” an after-school literacy program for children.
- Advocacy Letters to the B.C. Government to support the passing of a Child Care Bill.
- Funding for the Dental Hygiene Project at a local public school.

NCJWC Winnipeg Section’s major project is their “Just A Second Store,” which provides the poor in the community with clothing, household items and furnishings. The proceeds from the store support the other projects and programs of Winnipeg Section, including the Gwen Sector Creative Living Centre, a multi-purpose centre that promotes the physical, social, and spiritual well-being of older adults, including a kosher "Meals on Wheels" program. NCJWC Edmonton Section is a small group of dedicated members who continue to provide community services.

NCJWC Montreal Section’s community service work includes:

- Women and Health Phase VII symposium entitled “Unraveling the Mysteries of Hormones.”
- The Elsa and Joseph Hopmeyer Boys and Girls Library, now in its 61st year, gives neighborhood children and their parents access to resource materials that complement their academic studies.
- Centre Yeladim provides children with after-school activities.
- The Summer Travel Festival, a series of exciting day trips that gives the senior community an opportunity to enjoy theatre outings.
- “Auberge Shalom….Pour Femmes” is a kosher centre for women who feel controlled, abused, or manipulated by their partners; crisis intervention and counseling is available, and the centre is open to women of all nationalities and religions.
LEA Jewish Women’s Organization of Georgia

The ICJW affiliate in Georgia has more than 200 members and a working group of 30 volunteers, including 10 young women and girls. LEA’s founder and president, Marine Solomonishvili, organizes the volunteer work from her apartment, which also serves as the LEA office.

The LEA organization aims to raise Jewish awareness and provide services to the Jewish population of the city, with special emphasis on the needs of women and young people.

Within the Women’s Club, Jewish culture and traditions are celebrated, and creativity in the form of art-therapy is encouraged. Women’s leadership and the opportunity to reach intellectual and professional potential are emphasized. The role of women in migration and peace processes, the problems of refugees, along with human rights problems and intercultural dialogue are all areas of concern. The Family Club meetings emphasize generational connections and work to advance cultural development and charity programs.

The establishment of contacts with other organizations and with Jewish women around the world is important to LEA members. Marine has attended several ICJW conferences and is enthusiastic about the opportunities that ICJW provides to develop relationships between Jewish women the world over.

Consejo Mexicano de Mujeres Israelitas, Mexico

The CMMI continues to work with schools and kindergartens, supporting them in different projects with funding and volunteer assistance. The members help at a secondary school and home for the elderly (shown below), and the organization belongs to the Mexican Government’s Proteccion Civil program to help in cases of emergency. The Mexico City Jewish Committee recently hosted Mexican President Felipe Calderon, and CMMI was visited by the president’s wife.

Trafficking

This issue brought together women’s groups from around the world 100 years ago, leading to the establishment of ICJW, and it is still an issue today. The trafficking of women and children remains a plague and a source of shame to all of us. There are new and interesting initiatives in Scandinavia and Israel – read more about them on the ICJW website in “From the President’s Desk,” Leah Aharonov’s October Message.

Global Warming

It is cool to be green, and there are so many reasons to save the planet, but did you know that women around the world suffer most from the impact of global warming? June Zeitlin, Executive Director of the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO.org), spoke at the UN General Assembly this summer at the Informal Thematic Debate: Climate Change as a Global Challenge. You’ll find her speech in full in the Advocacy Issues section of the ICJW website under Health & Environmental Awareness. In the same section, you can read how ICJW co-sponsored a workshop on “Water Security and Climate Change” at the UN in New York.

October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and by now we should all know the benefits of early detection(http://www.nbcam.org). But pink is not the only color being used for women’s health awareness. The World Heart Federation has launched an international campaign called “Go Red for Women,” which aims to reduce Cardio-Vascular Disease (CVD) in women through improved prevention, early diagnosis and treatment.

Heart disease and stroke killed 17.5 million people in 2005, making it the world’s biggest killer. Roughly half the victims were women. Heart disease and stroke kills more women each year than cancer, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. Worldwide, an average of more than 16 women per minute die of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke.

Women can take action now to reduce the number of deaths and disability from heart disease and stroke. Go Red for Women builds global attention and commitment to prevent CVD in women. See http://www.world-heart-federation.org/what-we-do/go-red-for-women to find out more.
November 9 - International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism
With constant Holocaust Denial propaganda coming from Iran and elsewhere, it is more important than ever to mark the anniversary of Kristallnacht and remind the world about the dangers of Anti-Semitism and Fascism.

November 19 - World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse
ICJW has joined the WWSF Women’s World Summit Foundation’s International Coalition to Fight Child Abuse.

November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
Start of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, from November 25 to December 10 (International Human Rights Day)

November 29 - 60th Anniversary of UN Partition Vote on State of Israel
Another important opportunity for Israel-related programs.

December 1 - World AIDS Day

December 2 - United Nations International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

December 3 - International Day of Disabled Persons

December 10 - Human Rights Day

December 18 - International Migrants Day

Upcoming ICJW Events

March 16-18, 2008 - ICJW European Conference, Brussels, Belgium

May 24-28, 2008 - ICJW Latin American Conference, Barranquilla, Colombia

February 2009 - ICJW North American Conference, USA

May 17-21, 2009 - ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education

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