

# DNEP digest

Spring 2008

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To learn more about the Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project, please visit the *Strengthening Community* focus area on the JCRC website at [www.jrcrboston.org/focus/strength](http://www.jrcrboston.org/focus/strength).

From the Chair

I am thrilled that we are re-launching publication of the Dnepdigest and again giving voice to the exciting stories of the Boston – Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project.

It was seventeen years ago that the first pioneers from Boston came to Dnepropetrovsk to learn of the awakening of a dormant and long suppressed Jewish Community and to stretch out their hands in friendship and unity. And from that moment, this extraordinary partnership began. Little by little, program by program, agencies and people in both cities teamed together as the reawakened Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community emerged and grew.

From medical doctor exchanges to a microenterprise loan initiative, we in both cities have worked hand-in-hand to build a vibrant Jewish community in Dnepropetrovsk with programs that serve, support and engage many people – Jews and non-Jews alike. In the course of our work together, deep and long lasting change has been made and deep and long lasting friendships have been created. Among the many Kehillah Project programs, English language instruction at the Jewish Day School has improved tremendously, special needs children have a bright and supportive place to learn and grow, the elderly have a safe and dignified place to live, and children at risk have big brothers and sisters in their community who reach out to them.

None of this would be possible, of course, without the encouragement and support the Kehillah Project has received from Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezky, whose warm friendship and wisdom have guided the Project from its very beginning.

While we have accomplished much, many more challenges remain. The need for the engagement of more people in both cities is great as the opportunities for growth are wide ranging.

This issue of the Dnep Digest will celebrate some of our partnership's recent successes. I hope they inspire you as they have inspired me and that you will join me and so many others in our two communities in dreaming of what can be and making it happen.

Thank you and good reading,  
Arthur Waldstein  
Chair, Committee for Post Soviet Jewry

# MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH FOR THE KAMINEZKY FAMILY

Yosef Yitzhak Kaminezky was born on December 2 at the Corky Ribakoff Women's Clinic in Dnepropetrovsk. Chany and the Rabbi chose to have their eighth child in Dnepropetrovsk rather than traveling to the US or Israel as they had previously done.

After the birth, Rabbi Kaminezky called Dr. David Link, a long time partner of the Kehillah project and the medical initiatives, to thank him and the Boston community for this Chanukah miracle. "Everything that could go wrong did, but thanks to the [Corky Ribakoff] Women's Clinic, the delivery was safe," said Rabbi Kaminezky. "Tens of thousands of women have been helped here, but at the end of the day, it felt like it was all for me. Everything that Boston did here medically was used – we needed everything. It was unbelievable."

The women's clinic and the pediatric clinic that helped save the Kaminezkys' son are the result of the Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project which has transformed health care in the former Soviet city. The health care initiatives are supported by Combined Jewish Philanthropies and millions of dollars in funding and equipment from Boston philanthropists and hospitals.



## DREIDELS & CHANUKIYOT THE MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH IS CELEBRATED BY ALL IN DNEPROPETROVSK

This year, Chanukah celebrations filled the community of Dnepropetrovsk, taking place around the city and engaging Jews and non-Jews alike!

A great Chanukah celebration for children was held on the fifth day of Chanukah at Golden Rose Synagogue. Children made their own chanukiyah and dreidel and ate latkes and sweet doughnuts as they celebrated this holiday of miracles. The synagogue was filled with children's laughter.

During all of the days of Chanukah, mitzvah-mobiles with chanukiyot on the roofs cruised throughout the city, bringing

Rabbi Kaminezky and his family welcomed their third son to the community at the Brit Milah on the sixth day of Chanukah at the Golden Rose Synagogue. Hundreds of people came to congratulate the Rabbi and his wife Channy with this very important event for their family and the whole Jewish community of the city and Ukraine. Many guests came from throughout Ukraine, Israel, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. The chief rabbi of Ukraine Azriel Khaikin and rabbis of other cities were also present.

Festive meals were served in the praying hall of the synagogue for seudat-mitsva. The ceremony for festive lighting of Chanuka candles was held by philanthropist Victor Pinchuk whose birthday is also during Chanukah days. The chief mohel of Ukraine assisted by a Dnepropetrovsk doctor Andrey Kirichenko, performed the Brit-Milah. The packed hall cheered when the name was first spoken – Yosef Yitzhak. Mazal Tov – we all look forward to meeting Yosef Yitzhak very soon! ✨

the light of Chanukah to everyone. The cars participated in a parade of the sixth day of Chanukah with loud speakers playing songs to warm the hearts of all citizens. Thousands of people greeted the parade, beeping in unison with the Jewish community of the city. A small Chanuka performance was held on Lenin square, the central square of the city.

At the Chanukah festival at the Jewish Day School, children made Chanukiyot for parents and friends and displayed them at the school tzedakah fair. Children purchased the Chanukiyot to collect tzedakah for the children with special needs at the ERC at Beit Chana.

"Chanuka is a festival of light, and all our kids took an active part in this campaign to give their warmth to special needs children," Anna Kaplunskaya, deputy director for junior classes, said. "They worked on the gifts and Chanukiyot with a special light in their faces."

Alexander Fridkis, the manager of the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish community, said, "The light of Chanukah is making our citizens happy, and we're happy to take part in this great mitzvah – the spreading and multiplying of spiritual light."

The whole city saw the symbolic light of the Chanukah candles. The members of Jewish community sang several negunim and lit the chanukiyah in the malls. Hundreds of visitors of the shopping malls joined the celebration, applauded and thanked the Jewish community for the chance to share the joy of Chanukah. ✨

It was cold, windy and snowing outside. Inside, an old Jewish woman leaning on a cane sang the Yiddish song “My Yiddeshe Mama” (my Jewish mother) in a strong, clear voice that sounded younger than her years. The woman reminded me of my grandmother, whose first language was Yiddish.

## A SPECIAL TRIP

### YOUNG LEADERS OF CJP ATTEND THE BEN GURION SOCIETY MISSION TO DNEPROPETROVSK

I was in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine on a group trip, organized by the Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) Young Leadership division and the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). We were visiting Beit Baruch, the assisted living home which had received great help from the Boston Jewish community, through CJP and the JCRC.

Before the trip, I hadn't thought much about Jews still in the FSU but now my head is full of details about them. There are hundreds of thousands of Jews in Ukraine alone and an estimated 50,000 in Dnep. I learned the story of the Dnep Jewish community's rebirth and its intimate connection to the late Lubavtische Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. The Rebbe grew up in Dnep. His father, Levi-Itshak was the city's chief Rabbi from 1907-1939. When the Soviet Union fell, Rebbe Schneerson was intent on the revival of the Jewish community in his hometown. He asked a young Chabad Rabbi, Shmuel Kaminezky and his wife Chana, to go to Dnep. Seventeen years later, the Rebbe's wish has become a reality due to the determined leadership of the Kaminezky's and assistance from CJP, JCRC, the Israeli government, other organizations, and the Dnep Jewish community itself which raised \$2.5 million last year.

On Shabbat, our group went to the synagogue where the women's section had a mix of women in tight pants and stylish high heel boots and others in long skirts and sheitels (wigs).



Other site visits included a kindergarten, where some of the classes are taught entirely in Hebrew, the Jewish Day School, and the homes for girls and boys for children whose families can't take care of them. We visited a women's teachers college, Beit Chana, the only school in the FSU which prepares Jewish studies teachers, and the Resource Center for children with special needs (located at Beit Chana). At the Old Synagogue, we saw the scribal arts center where sofers, people who write and repair Torah scrolls, work - the only such school for this skill in Europe. We were also guests at the Corky Ribakoff Women's Health Clinic, established by Charles and Patty Ribakoff, which serves Jewish and non-Jewish women. The clinic has the best equipment in Dnep, including ultrasound and mammogram machines delivered directly from Boston.

We were greeted warmly at every site and it was clear that Boston's contributions to Dnep are greatly appreciated. When we left Dnep, it felt like a beginning rather than a goodbye. The Dnep Jewish community has ambitious plans for the future and many ideas about how to further develop the partnership with Boston, such as creating stronger ties between the young leaders in the two cities. The optimism and dedication of the people we met was energizing. It truly was a very special trip. ✧

*contributed by Alexandra Moller*

“Seeing all of this really drove home how with the right people, the right planning and of course the funding, it really is possible to impact a community.”

-Alexandra Moller, after her trip to Dnepropetrovsk

## SHOE SUCCESS

### Single mom starts and maintains successful shoe business in City Center.

Yana Polushkina has had much success in the shoe business, thanks to the guidance and support of the microenterprise development loan fund of the Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project. A single mom and caretaker for her sick father, she has successfully opened and managed shoe stores. She pursued the shoe industry after graduating from the Metallurgical Institute in 1993, and closed her private business after giving birth to her daughter. She returned to the business after a couple of years, and has opened a new footwear department in a department store at the center of the city—*Detskiy Mir*—Children’s World. With two assistants and working alone on Sundays—the store’s busiest day—she has developed a consumer base who impatiently await the store’s sales.

“I am grateful to the Boston and Dnepropetrovsk Jewish communities,” Yana said. “They have given me a chance, and this is a great honor and privilege for me.”

Yana has paid back her first loan in full, and received a second loan to continue this business. “She is very successful and a model participant in this program,” Natasha Riyer, director of the Microenterprise Loan program in Dnepropetrovsk. ✨



## DNEP VISITS BOSTON

The Jewish Community Relations Council has teamed up with Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) professionals from Bentley College, Simmons College, Northeastern University, and Harvard University on the Kehillah Project’s English Language Committee, working with the administrators and teachers at the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Day School to upgrade the school’s English Language Program.

This past summer, Alla Lytvynenko, department chair of the English Language Program at the Day School, traveled to Boston to attend a three-day curriculum development workshop. TESOL professors and teachers Judy DeFilippo and Ruth Spack, Curriculum Subcommittee Co-chairs, Paul Abraham, Marlyn Katz Levenson, Anlee Schaye, Linda Hasenfus, Amy Flick, and Louise Lipsitz, English Language Committee Chair, volunteered their time to give these workshops.

During the workshops, the group used a curriculum model that Paul Abraham had developed for part of a textbook that the Day School was considering purchasing. An important principle of the curriculum development is student interaction to speak and listen to English. Throughout the workshops, the ESL professionals worked with Alla to develop a repertoire of interactive student activities that could be used across the grades. The professionals and Alla also discussed ways for Alla to teach, support, and supervise the school’s English teachers in



*From left to right: Paul Abraham, Ruth Spack, Marlyn Katz Levenson, Judy DeFilippo, and Alla Lytvynenko*

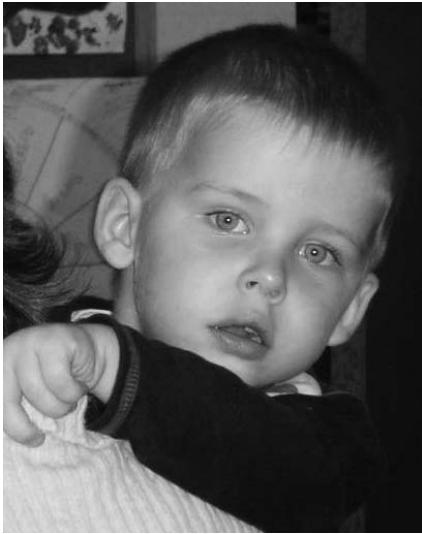
*Other professionals in the workshops included: Anlee Schaye, Linda Hasenfus, Amy Flick, and English Language Committee Chair Louise Lipsitz*

the adoption of the new books and methods.

Louise Lipsitz shared that “these workshops enabled Alla to acquire many teaching strategies from the professionals in Boston, to share her plan for implementation, and to effectively improve the English Language Program from a planning perspective.”

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“The ERC professionals make much effort, share the warmth of their souls and do their best to help our children. The main thing is to believe that one day our dreams will come true.”



## A MOTHER'S PRIDE

The story of our life can be similar to other life stories. We really wanted this child. He was born on time, with typical level of physical development. The doctors said he was healthy when we were leaving the maternity hospital...

...a month later, we noticed that Kostya could not lift his head, and saw other changes in his conditions, so we decided to consult a physician in a local hospital. She told us that we were expecting too much from the child and each child had his or her own pace of development.

When Kostya was 3, the doctors recognized there was something wrong with him, and we started getting medical treatment. Of course, I didn't want to believe that my son had a serious problem. We attended the rehabilitation center every day, massage sessions, other procedures – we did everything to let Kostya be like other children.

Eventually, Kostya gained what he had missed in physical development, but his mental and speech development lags far behind that of his peers. We work with him, read books, and attend the ERC. However, Kostya keeps silent and does not understand everything. He gets very irritated when the others do not understand him.

The ERC helps him to learn to communicate with people and be socially adjusted in the community. The ERC professionals make much effort, share the warmth of their souls and do their best to help our children. We rejoice every time we see the progress our children are making. We do not set enormous goals, but every small step forward in physical and psychological development is a huge victory for us. The main thing is to believe that one day our dreams will come true. ✧

*contributed by Tatiana Vyacheslavovna Bondar, Mother of Kostya, a student at the Educational Resource Center*



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*DNEP visits Boston, continued from previous page*

Upon Alla's return to Dnepropetrovsk, JCRC and an individual contributor funded the purchase of the new English textbooks. For the first time, all grades are using the same book series, which allows for a clear sequence of learning English through the grades.

Thanks to advocacy by the curriculum subcommittee, Alla's teaching responsibilities have been decreased this year so that she has more time for curriculum development, observing and

consulting with individual teachers, and leading teacher meetings.

“Our school has been very fortunate to have the help of the English Language Committee and the JCRC in purchasing the texts and developing curriculum. I have been very happy to work with the English Language Committee, and I am looking forward to continuing to work with them to improve the English Language Program at the Day School.” ✧



## LIFESAVING DELIVERY TO BEIT BARUCH

Upon returning from an annual working trip to Dnepropetrovsk, Francine Godfrey shared the urgent need for pneumonia vaccines for the residents of Beit Baruch. Administered ten years ago with Boston's assistance, the residents needed another dose to prevent this potentially deadly disease.

With quick coordination, Dr. Lewis Lipsitz at Hebrew Senior Life, a longtime partner in the Kehillah project, arranged for the order of 80 Pneumococcal vaccines to be brought with the CJP Ben Gurion Society mission.

Jenna Toplin, JCRC program coordinator and mission staff, received approval from the airline to bring the vaccines on board, as they needed to be kept refrigerated for the duration of the journey to Dnepropetrovsk.

Upon arriving at Beit Baruch, the eyes of the residents and staff at Beit Baruch lit up knowing that this group from Boston was bringing doses of life to their community. This was a proud moment for the Kehillah project. ✨

## STAY TUNED!

Visit the website to learn more about the Dnepropetrovsk Kehilla Project programs.

Stay tuned for our next *Dnepdigest* and these stories:

- Action for Post Soviet Jewry's Physician Seminar in Dnepropetrovsk
- Havayah 13 – bringing together teens from Boston, Haifa and Dnepropetrovsk
- Dnepropetrovsk Film screening in Boston this spring
- Doctors visit Boston this spring for pediatric and geriatric care training