

## Community news

### Students teach parents at bar/bat mitzvah classes windup

(Cont. from page 1.)

ism and their families.

The second group raised the same amount for the Children's Make-A-Wish Foundation, which helps children with serious illnesses.

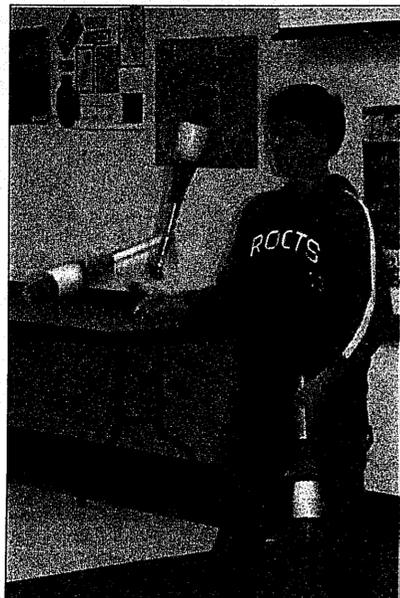
Each made cheque presentations to officials representing the two different charities at the February 28 "learning/presentation evening".

Shaul Wachstock, Gray Academy's director of Judaic studies, said the school focused on the importance of giving in the bar/bat mitzvah classes, coordinated by teachers Judi Shuster and Sheppy Coodin, because synagogues already teach children the ritual side of bar and bat mitzvah preparation.

"We take another perspective - the responsibility of becoming bar and bat mitzvah. We try to give them the ethical teachings - how to be a mentsh."

Sheldon Mindell, the Jewish

RUSS BOOK demonstrates his skill on the diablo for parents and fellow bar/bat mitzvah classes students during a mini-show, with some students demonstrating skills teacher Sheppy Coodin taught them.



YAVNIEL FIELD juggles pins after juggling balls - two skills he also learned from teacher Sheppy Coodin.

Foundation of Manitoba's director of endowment development, and Randee Pollock and Robin Liebermann, co-chairs of the foundation's bar/bat mitzvah program, told parents and students at last week's gathering about the program.

It allows youths to make endowments as part of their bar and bat mitzvah experience, and once it reaches a certain minimum, decide where some of that money should go.

Several kids in the Gray Academy bar and bat mitzvah class capped off the evening, demonstrating skills they learned from Sheppy Coodin, who also teaches science and some Judaic studies at the school.

A series of boys demonstrated everything from juggling to riding unicycles to handling a "diablo" - a plastic wheel rolling on an elasticized rope.

As for the value of the lessons about giving their children taught them earlier that evening, parent Orna Stoller said: "I found out my child learns more and knows more than I thought he did."

Parent Linda Rabkin added: "We're proud of our children teaching us about the gift of giving. It's a very hopeful feeling." Student Brandon Blank said that for



ALEX MINUK and Jonah Brown on unicycles after demonstrating their skill on each, thanks to teacher Sheppy Coodin, after circling the room.



SHELDON BLANK and his son, Brandon: Teaching and learning from his father is nothing new, Brandon said.

him and his dad, lawyer Sheldon Blank, the idea of the child teaching the parent is nothing new.

"I teach my dad about video games," Brandon explained. "He's taught me about law, about safety. Basically, your parent always loves you."

**It pays to be a paid-up subscriber**

The Jewish Post & News will hold a draw May 31, and all subscribers paid up before that date are automatically entered

Prize: \$1000, tax-free

Call 694-3332 to subscribe or pay for overdue subscriptions

## Community news

Winnipeg lawyer learning disabilities expert Yude Henteleff:

### Israel lags behind Canada in integrating special needs youths into regular classrooms

By MATT BELLAN

Winnipeg Jewish lawyer Yude Henteleff has won international renown over the years for his work on behalf of people with learning disabilities.

A longtime member of the board of governors of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he's also a passionate Zionist.

But Henteleff has a message he thinks more Canadian Jews should be aware of: When it comes to teaching children with special needs in regular classrooms, Israeli schools are far behind their Canadian counterparts.

"Special needs" is a broad term, applying to children and adults with a wide variety of physical and mental handicaps. Henteleff uses it most often when referring to children with "generalized mental dysfunction". Years ago, they were referred to here as "mentally retarded" - a term now out of favor here, but still commonly used for such youngsters in Israel, he notes.

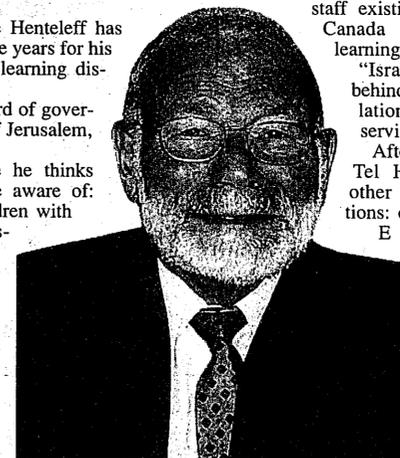
Henteleff also spoke on that topic at a Rady Jewish Community Centre "Music 'N Mavens" lecture this week.

He focused on a visit he made to Israel last June for a meeting of the board of governors of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

During that visit, Henteleff, a co-founder of the Manitoba and Canadian associations for Children with Learning Disabilities, was also invited to speak at Tel Hai College in northern Israel.

"They have a very unique centre there for persons with learning disabilities. I spent one and a half days there, briefing staff on what's being achieved in Canada for people with learning disabilities, at all levels."

Henteleff also discussed with Tel Hai College



YUDE HENTELEFF: Israel is "far behind" Canada "in terms of legislation, and providing services" for children with special needs.

staff existing legislation in Canada for people with learning disabilities.

"Israel is also far behind in terms of legislation, and providing services, too."

After that session at Tel Hai, he received other speaking invitations: one was from the Education

Committee of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Another came from "Bizchut", the "central organization" in Israel for organizations serving people with a whole range of disabilities.

Still another invitation came from the "legal clinic" of the Faculty of Law at Bar Ilan University, in the greater Tel Aviv area, specializing in "human rights issues for people with disabilities."

From data he gathered on previous visits to Israel and sessions with the above groups last June, Henteleff learned that "one area significantly lagging in Israel is education for children with special needs."

He discovered that of 1.5 million children and youths in Israeli educational institutions at all levels, "10 per cent" are "children with special needs".

"VAST MAJORITY SEGREGATED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS"

The vast majority of those 10 per cent are "segregated" in "special education schools". It's only in those schools that they're entitled to receive services under a "general education law" the Knesset passed in 1988.

"Many of those children should be in general classrooms" and could operate successfully in that environment, Henteleff said, based on data he received from the Israeli institutions and committees he visited. As in Manitoba and other Canadian provinces where special needs youngsters have been integrated for years into regular classrooms, non-special needs children in Israel would benefit from learning alongside them.

The Israeli state comptroller also reported, in 2002, that of "160,000" special needs children in Israel that year, "50,000", or almost one-third, received "no services whatsoever". That's because "many parents don't want to send their children to segregated schools, because they feel that's not the place for them."

In 2002, thanks to pressure from Bizchut, the Knesset enacted a "special education law". But the Israeli government still failed to allocate funds that would ensure Israeli schools that accepted special needs children would get the services they needed.

So Bizchut appealed to Israel's High Court, and as a result, in the 2005/06 school year, for the first time, Israeli schools have been "ordered" to provide those services.

But there's still a "terrible gap" between services such children can get in "segregated schools" and "general schools", Henteleff learned.

Bizchut has also established a "special com-

mittee" to work with Israeli Arabs. In Israeli Arab schools, the situation for special needs children is "even worse", because of a "total lack of awareness in the Arab community of their rights."

"DEEPLY-ENTRENCHED ATTITUDES" Asked why Israel is so much further behind Canada, in integrating special needs students into regular classrooms, Henteleff said it's partly because of "deeply entrenched attitudes".

"A lot of those attitudes are still prevalent in Canada," he admits. "There's a continuous battle going on here."

But Canada has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that Israel lacks, and ensures that people with special needs here are granted services as a "right".

In Israel, in contrast, they're often treated with "pity", and there's a widespread attitude that they deserve only "charity".

In fact, the situation there is so much worse than here, that a huge network of organizations have been set up there over the decades, to battle for the rights of people with "generalized mental dysfunction" and other special physical and mental needs.

Bar Ilan University's Faculty of Law has, on the other hand, set a world precedent in championing the human rights of people with disabilities. It now requires all its third year law students to take a course on the human rights of Israelis with disabilities and laws that apply to them.

That faculty has invited Henteleff to return there, next fall, to spend a few weeks helping it develop more programs in the special needs area.

Henteleff said he's fully aware of Israel's financial and military burdens.

But "it's important" for Canadian Jews not only to be aware of Israel's relative backwardness, compared to this country, in providing services for people with special needs, but to "be of assistance."

Social workers, psychologists, teachers and others specializing in those areas should consider volunteering their time for a few weeks, next time they're planning a vacation, helping Israeli institutions working in those fields.

"Such Canadians, when they next go to Israel" should contact some of the organizations Henteleff was in touch with there, "not only to give your money - and I hope you will - but to see what assistance you can provide them as a professional."

### Next week in The Jewish Post & News...



• Harold Micay, born and raised here, now living in Vancouver, demonstrates his mastery of classical guitar at Winnipeg concert to raise funds for memorial scholarship for one of his students

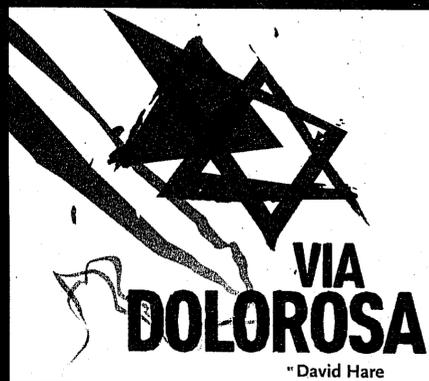
• Brent Sasley analyzes what Russian officials' meetings with Hamas leaders will mean for Israel

• Chana Thau profiles another family of recent Jewish immigrants to Winnipeg

Call 694-3332, e-mail us at [jewishp@mts.net](mailto:jewishp@mts.net) or visit our website, [www.jewishpostandnews.com](http://www.jewishpostandnews.com) to subscribe

Start a new 2-year subscription to THE JEWISH POST & NEWS or renew your existing subscription for \$99 (including G.S.T. & P.S.T.) and we will send you 2 tickets to see

WJT's production of



Call our office at 694-3332 and order your subscription today!