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See page 14

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INSIDE

Israel leaders hanging on – P. 3
 Hamas 'Mickey Mouse' on air – P. 8
 Jewish competition for Cotler – P. 10
 NCSY urges sexual abstinence – P. 11
 Quebec's top young curler – P. 15

JMA Note: The following news section in the formal edition was in page 11.

www.jewishtribune.ca

The Jewish Tribune - May 17, 2007 - 11

NEWS

Bikers hit New York to ride in Salute to Israel Parade



The ride to New York was the third annual Ride to Remember for the Jewish Motorcycle Alliance.

By Andy Réti
Tribune Correspondent

NEW YORK – The people of this city had never seen anything quite like it. About 150 Jewish bikers rode six abreast on Fifth Avenue as part of the Salute to Israel Parade.

The ride to New York was the third annual Ride to Remember (R2R), commemorating the liberation of the camps. The purpose of the ride is to show the world that, in the words of one biker, "we will Never Again allow another Holocaust."

This year's ride was called the '6 and 6 R2R' remembering the six million lost and honouring the six million living in Israel. The registration included a donation to Magen David Adom raising US\$15,000.

The participants came from as far away as Israel, Australia, Florida, Texas, Atlanta, Montreal and Toronto, which once again had the largest delegation. The names of the clubs were exotic: Hillel's Angels, Jews that Cruise, Chais of Texas, Montreal Maccabees, King David Bikers, YOWies (Yidden on Wheels) and the host club, Chai Riders of New

York. New York City's finest closed down the entire route starting with the George Washington Bridge and gave an escort to and from the parade. The parade route had a number of stations with loudspeakers announcing which club was going by. This year there were 19 clubs, which is an incredible growth from the original five who rode to Washington in 2005. The bikers were roaring, honking, rumbling (actually crawling) with most bikes having the Israeli flag attached to them. The entire route was lined with cheering spectators some of whom went wild.

To organize an event of this magnitude is a large undertaking, requiring time, energy and personal sacrifice. Mark Olsen president of the Sabra Riders from Atlanta spent nearly 400 hours, while Lauren Secular from the Chai Riders of New York spent about 100 hours with Mel Morris, the president of the Jewish Motorcycle Alliance (JMA) having lost count.

The three of them were leading the parade with two motorcycling rabbis, Zachary Betesh from Flori-

da and Sam Hirsch from Brooklyn.

To get to New York City on a motorcycle in early May can be an adventure by itself. For most participants getting there was half the fun. To ride up a hill and zoom down the other side, to do the twisties, to lean into a curve and be thrilled is why people ride motorcycles. Mark Lillenstein and his wife Heinke from Buffalo were participating in their third R2R. He is a retired judge who rode for 40 years and just converted his bike to a trike (three-wheeler) because he is not willing to give up riding just because of a sore back. For Heinke who used to have her own bike, participation meant to "honour our Jewish heritage."

Another participant was Ziona Rubinstein Fink, who is not a "biker babe" but flew up from Palm Springs just to walk in the parade and connect with her biker friends. She just wanted to show the world that "Israel will always



Jewish motorcycle clubs from Israel, Australia, Florida, Texas, Atlanta, Montreal and Toronto descended upon New York City recently to join the Salute to Israel Parade and raise money for Magen David Adom (US\$15,000).

be in our hearts."

The JMA is showing another face of Judaism to the world. Jews dressed in leather, riding chrome is not an everyday sight. They are drawn together by the passion to

ride motorcycles bound by their heritage of Jewish faith, regardless of the degree and manner of observance. The growth in the number of clubs worldwide is incredible. The Israel Motorcycle

Club was formed less than a year ago and has more than 740 members; England has one and Sweden is in the process of getting one.

For information see info@jewishbikers.com.

NCSY aims sex abstinence program at teens

TORONTO – Parents concerned about the atmosphere of sexual freedom in today's world will be happy to know about the new initiative by a professional youth organization to combat this issue.

NCSY, the youth program of the Orthodox Union (OU) in North America, has launched a new web site, www.negiah.org, to educate teens about the lasting consequences of sexual promiscuity.

"I'm proud that NCSY is the first organization to address this issue specifically as it pertains to Jewish teenagers," said Rabbi Steven Burg, NCSY national director.

Asked whether our local region is in sync with the program, Rabbi Glenn Black, director of the Canadian Region (which reaches more than 3,000 teens throughout Ontario and Quebec), said: "Absolutely. It's really a bold move. Most people shy away from this subject, but the national office of NCSY and its director know what's going on out there.

"I can also tell you from my experience that this is the number one subject among kids," he added. "The issue of sexual experimentation is consistent with society today demanding immediate gratification for every emotional desire. It's indicative of a much broader issue."

According to a statement by the OU, the web site's abstinence program is an effort "to convince teenagers that sexual activity before marriage should be avoided in the interests of their physical, emotional and religious well-being."

The word 'negiah' is Hebrew for touching; the term 'shomer negiah' – observing the laws regarding touching – refers to the orthodox prohibition against physical contact with the opposite sex as a way of demonstrating affection except with immediate family members.

Rabbi Jack Abramowitz, NCSY director of programs, researched the subject in-depth for several months before writing the text

for the site together with Rabbi Burg. Rabbi Abramowitz stated in a news release that "sexual activity among teens is harmful in four ways: physical dangers, mental and emotional hazards, the way it impacts on one's life, and the way it impacts on one's soul."

The site includes graphic and frank language – crucial in order to get the message across – although, according to Rabbi Hershel Schachter, talmudic dean at Yeshiva University and halachic consultant for OU Kosher, not to the extent to make it unsuitable for orthodox teens.

Many renowned experts in psychology and adolescent development have validated the site, including Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, a clinical psychologist, who believes "it is fair to say that they know what is really happening among our teens at least as well, if not better, than many parents, rabbis and educators.... I endorse this effort because it is necessary."