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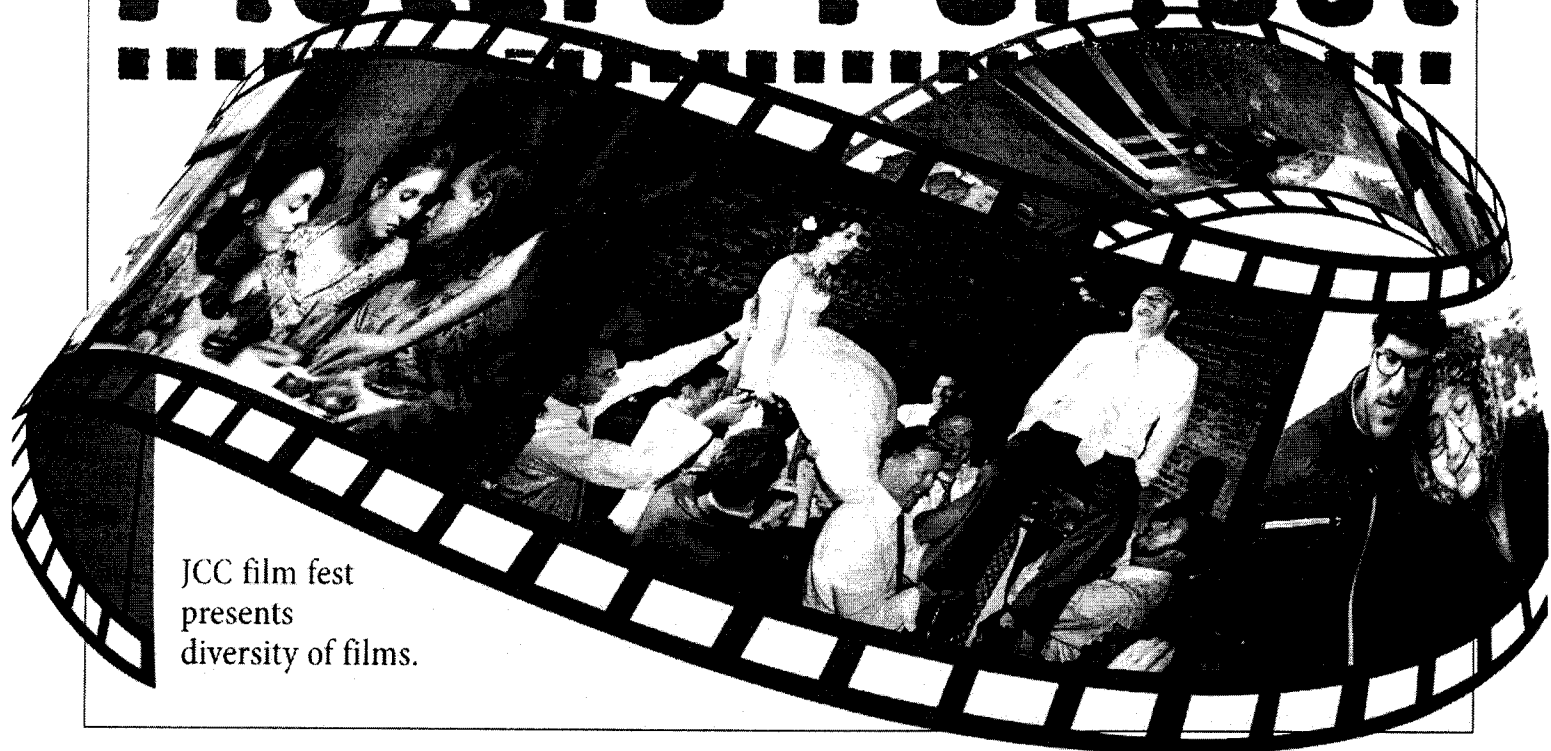
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» Obama In Israel The president and Prime Minister Netanyahu visit Yad Vashem. See pages 3, 45-47 and 81.

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Picture Perfect



JCC film fest presents diversity of films.

» Colors Of Kindness Artist asks community members to help paint a permanent mural for the Oak Park JCC. See page 18.

» Senate Strength Family values help shape Sen. Carl Levin's enduring impact. See page 26.

The Old Neighborhood

Temple Israel volunteers help Northwest Detroit stay strong.

Harry Kirsbaum | Contributing Writer

What started as a sermon has become a cause. On a clear, cold day in late February at the Northwest Activity Center on Meyers and Curtis in Detroit, a steady stream of people in need walk into the center's "hub," load bags of nutritious food into

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The Old Neighborhood

Temple Israel volunteers help Northwest Detroit stay strong.

Harry Kirsbaum | Contributing Writer

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shopping carts and take them back to their cars. "We'll need more carts next time," says Warren Crockett, a volunteer from the University Commons District.

He joins volunteers from Temple Israel, Hartford Baptist Church, Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan and several other local charitable organizations at a mobile pantry set up in the center as part of "Project Healthy Community: An Evolving Vision with Endless Opportunities" (PHC), a program that began at Temple Israel last fall.

This monthly "Mobile Pantry," a partnership with Gleaners, is just one spoke in the wheel, says Temple Israel's Rabbi Josh Bennett.

The next two programs will be "Blessings in a Backpack," which partners with Meijer to give food to students from low-income schools for the weekend; and building a food pantry similar to Yad Ezra in the NWAC basement.

"One of our challenges is to move slowly," Bennett says, looking over the scene of volunteers loading shopping carts with food. "We have so much to do. As we evolve, we'll add more."



Rabbi Joshua Bennett

It was the rabbi's High Holiday "A Call to Action of Social Justice" sermon that sparked the movement.

After 18 years working with teenagers as the youth rabbi, Bennett moved on to social action, he says. "I had to re-envision the next stage of my career."

And with the help of Dr. Melvyn and

Diane Rubenfire, who heard the sermon, the movement began.

Back To Detroit

Rubenfire of West Bloomfield was brought up a half-mile from the NWAC, which in the 1950s was better known as the Jewish Community Center. Schooled at MacDowell Elementary, Mumford High and then Wayne State, he became a cardiologist, then chairman of the Department of Medicine at Sinai Hospital for 20 years.

Now a cardiologist for his second 20 years at the University of Michigan Health System and director of the Preventive Cardiology



Dr. Melvyn Rubenfire

Department, he and his wife, Diane, want to give back.

"We have been giving time and money to the Temple and the community," Rubenfire said. "We said, 'It's time to give back to more than the Jewish community.'"

On the Monday after the sermon, they took a trip to the old neighborhood.

"We didn't know what to expect, if it was in shambles or what," Rubenfire said. When he called the NWAC to ask for a tour of the facility, he got a call back from Ron Lockett, executive director and CEO.



Ron Lockett, executive director and CEO of the Northwest Activity Center; Lisa Corey of Birmingham; Warren Crockett of Detroit; Dr. Melvyn Rubenfire of West Bloomfield; Karen Sherblin of Farmington Hills; Rabbi Josh Bennett of Temple Israel; Andre Peterson of Gleaners



Ron Lockett

"I returned his call, and said how about a tour in two weeks?" Lockett said. "And he said, 'How about in 20 minutes?'"

During the tour, Rubenfire told Lockett that he grew up in the neighborhood, but he was also representing the Jewish community and Temple Israel, adding the rabbi said the NWAC would be a good target for the temple's social action programs. "It's not only us; it's 3,500 families and 10,000 members," Rubenfire said.

Lockett said, "You wouldn't believe what we discussed

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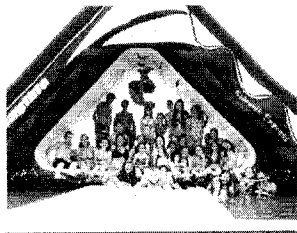
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metro

Rebuilding from page 8

this morning at a board meeting. We were talking about the financial difficulties in supporting the center. We asked ourselves would the Jewish community be interested in helping us out.

"We called it Divine providence," Lockett said of the unexpected meeting.

"We call it *besht*," said Karen Sherbin of Farmington Hills, Rubenfire's daughter.

More Than A Food Pantry

A medical social worker and Project Healthy Community (PHC) program coordinator, Sherbin wants the mobile pantry to be more than just a food warehouse.

"The whole idea is teaching healthy eating and nutrition," she said. "People get free food, but they don't necessarily know how to cook it."

Along with nutrition education and food delivery to homebound seniors, the plan is to add interactive cooking lessons, an urban garden and grocery shopping lessons for neighborhood students.

Added to the mobile pantry, the Blessings in a Backpack program and the pantry downstairs, PHC will hold future health education lectures and disease management programs, senior programs, a financial support program, a free summer camp for 50 K-5 students and afterschool programming for K-8 students.

"When we were kids, when the bell rang at school and you got out, that was the most exciting time of the day," Rubenfire said. "You ran home; you knew you were going to have a good dinner with the folks; you're gonna play baseball that afternoon. These kids get frightened. There's not necessarily going to be anybody home when they get home; they might get hurt on the way home; and there's no mentoring after school. We're creating afterschool programs and partnering with the Wayne State University Honors College."

But that's all part of the future.

Looking Forward

"We have a limited number of resources and a limited number of volunteers, and we don't want to make promises we can't get to," Rubenfire said. "The concept was to take professionals that were working or retired and help them work together to help set up this process and keep it going."

"This is a concept that we think can work anywhere where there's a stable community with the resources like this," he said.

The NWAC is the hub of social activity in northwest Detroit, said Lockett. "We have a theater, health club, a computer clubhouse, which is an internationally renowned after-school program."

"We are the executive offices of the City of Detroit Recreation and the General Services Department. We have a mini-police station," he said. "We've always been a beacon of hope to the people of northwest Detroit."

And Lockett appreciates Temple Israel's commitment.

"They said they are willing to help. They didn't say they wanted to control or that their way is the right way," he said, addressing past attempts from the Jewish community to help out. "We've had open lines of communication. We've asked for ideas, approaches, and that's what's been so important. Rabbi Josh has been so open, and a lot of that is because he's done a lot of projects in the city of Detroit and he hasn't come as an outsider. He has a whole different mentality when it comes to that."

And Temple Israel is working in full partnership with the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit.



Dr. Charles G. Adams

Dr. Charles G. Adams, the church's pastor, noted a 25-year relationship with Temple Israel.

"We're both interested in the same type of things — development of the community, education in the community, good health

in the community, taking blight and turning it into something beneficial," he said. "That's what we're about, and we're very excited."

"We have a tree planted on the campus of Temple Israel, and we have a tree at our church that was planted by Rabbi Robert Syme in years past," he continued. "This will benefit children, raise property values, clean up blight and make living here beautiful again, and we were very grateful and pledge our full support. We certainly want to be the first volunteers when there's something cooking."

Emails have been going out to Temple Israel members asking for seven volunteers a month to man the mobile pantry until December.

But Rubenfire wants to make one thing clear.

"This is not a suburban community coming in to help the urban community," he said. "It's a partnership to make our community in southeast Michigan strong." □