

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Jessica Fishman

Shalom! Is a simple word that unites the Jewish community all over the world. It amazes me how one word can connect so many different people, from so many different places. On the UJFC mission to Budapest and Bucharest, we said this simple greeting and it was an automatic connection between us, and the community. This simple word symbolizes the intimate connection between the

Jewish community and illustrates the importance in helping fellow Jews in need. Because we have a close knit community, we are capable of organizing our money and our time in order to help others in need. On this trip it was apparent that our joint efforts are tremendously appreciated and are an immense help. However, it became

even more apparent that more funding, more time and more effort is needed in these downtrodden communities.

One of our first activities when we reached Bucharest was to visit Mrs. Roitman, an elderly woman who lived alone in a broken down, two-

room apartment. Her toilet is outside, shared with the rest of her neighbors. Her living condition seemed unbearable. The two rooms are small and musty, however, she stunned us even more when she told us her income. She received a pension of \$18 per month. Her biggest concern for the year was buying firewood for the winter, which costs \$400. She relies on the Joint Distribution Committee to

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help her survive; without the JDC Mrs. Roitman would perish. This is just one person whose life depends upon the help received from the United Jewish Fund and Council's annual campaign. Many other elderly people who are able to survive because of all of us. The JDC supplies food, through Meals-on-Wheels, clothing and medical care to help the community.

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The director of the Jewish polyclinic in Bucharest, right, accepted graciously and emotionally the contents of 2 duffel bags of medication that the St. Paul mission brought with them and delivered personally. The compassionate care given to the elderly Jews of Romania by the excellent staff at the polyclinic has been curtailed by their lack of medication for prescriptions as well as over the counter drugs. The mission members who helped carry the duffels are (l-r) Sid Makiesky, Susie and Jessica Fishman.

culture their whole lives and are elated with every chance they receive to learn. The education of the youth is aimed to prepare them for Aliyah to Israel. These youth helped to show us hope for the future. However, we are still in the present and hope can only be maintained through people willing to give. Budgets are stretched and the community is suffering. These are people, not numbers, they are survivors of the Holocaust and they are the hope for the future. We are the ones that make the future.

This trip provoked many feelings for many people. For me, it made

me realize how isolated the United States is from the Holocaust. We always say "never forget" but Jewish communities in these countries can not forget, because the Holocaust still affects them. It affects the countries, the community, the economy and many other elements. Even people not alive during the Holocaust suffer because of what happened. The tragedy of the Holocaust is still here and we are the ones that can help our community rise above the suffering; it is our duty. One of the

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most touching moments, for me, was when we gave medical supplies to the director of the Jewish polyclinic and he began to cry. Our donations to the community may seem small, but they are great mitzvahs that help so many people. Among the feelings provoked, were tremendous acts of generosity. For instance, Mrs. Roitman now has firewood for the winter, and the Meals-on-Wheels program has a new van thanks to specific donations by members of our mission, and the youth received help to go to England to perform Israeli dancing. This trip gave us the opportunity to see how our donations help the community work towards self-sufficiency. However, most importantly, this trip showed the importance of giving and

helping Jewish communities around the world. Franca Aronovich, who worked for the Joint Distribution Committee, was amazed at the generosity of people in the United States. She said, "You don't even know us, yet you give so much." But there is so much more we can do and so much more we can give. Make the effort and set aside some money. For the future of the Jewish community is in our hands.

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