



THE volunteer CONNECTION

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Volunteers for Israel Mission Statement

The mission of Volunteers for Israel is to connect Americans to Israel through volunteer service. We achieve this goal by partnering with military and civilian organizations that enable volunteers to work side-by-side with Israelis. We promote solidarity and good will among Israelis, American Jews, and other friends of Israel.

Israel's 60th Year Diamond Anniversary

The first Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzmaut) occurred on May 14, 1948, the day the British Mandate expired. This year the modern State of Israel celebrates its 60th year on May 8, 2008, a date based on the Hebrew calendar. Independence Day is accompanied by both world-wide and local celebrations.

This special day immediately follows the austere Memorial Day (Yom Ha'Zikaron). Volunteer bases will have memorial services before the volunteers leave for the long holiday weekend.

Sar-El anticipates a huge crowd of English speaking people for this special time, which begins April 27 and expects to utilize ten IDF bases for English speaking people alone. The French volunteers arrive the following week. Several "special pre-arranged" groups including the Philly group of 36 volunteers are scheduled to attend. This is in addition to the many individuals who will be placed into groups.

This anniversary's official theme is "Strengthening Israel's Children." The official symbol features a child holding a white and blue sheet of cloth swirling into the figure 60.

A conference of 2,000 international celebrities is participating in 60th anniversary festivities, including President Bush, Tony Blair, Mikhail Gorbachev, Barbra Streisand, and other top personalities from around the world. The festivities will open with a tribute to Israel's staunchest ally, the United States. "After 60 years we want to stand up and say 'thank you America'," Shimon Peres said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Peres said the conference, focusing on Jewish and Israeli contributions to humanity, will include subjects "as varied as one can think of...from arts and science and philosophy to medicine and ecology." Many acknowledge the State's outstanding achievements, pointing to the absorption of immigrants, its high-tech boom and Israel's very survival against unfavorable odds.

The actual festivities, from May 7 to 9, include a sound-and-light show to be staged simultaneously in eight locations, from Tiberias to Eilat, free-entry beach parties and a larger-than-usual air force and naval display.

There is also a somber note. About a month before Independence Day, Israelis were wrangling over how flamboyantly the country should celebrate its anniversary. There seems to be an uncharacteristically somber and reflective national mood, with many Israelis tired of threats, feeling uneasy with their leadership, how their country is being led, poverty, rockets, and more.

On a brighter note, residents of a small Palestinian village in the northern Galilee painted the dome of their mosque with the blue-and-white colors of the Israeli flag in order to show their support. Go figure.





VFI National President's Message

Vade's View

Friends, Shalom and warm regards from VFI. I hope you and your families are well.

Thanks for your contributions to VFI's just completed Mishloach Manot project. Your financial gifts made an amazing difference and is further explained in this newsletter. I know we have asked and almost pleaded with you to go back to Israel with VFI this year. Some of you have stepped up and have gone or are going. Thank you, we need many more.

Based on your comments we know the cost of airfare is a problem for most. The value of the US dollar in Israel adds to the expense of going. We are seeking some small ways to help reduce some of your overall expenses of volunteering. You will hear more on this. We acknowledge that it's a tough challenge.

We ask you to go to work at finding a better fare than what you read or are told. We offer some solid help on the VFI

web site under the "Getting to Israel" link. You may contact the VFI travel agent. You will also find a link that takes you to various airline search "engines." I recently did that and actually found a good fare out of Washington Dulles where I live. Don't give up...please...you are needed.

I really hope the *Volunteer Connection* keeps you in touch with VFI, volunteering, and also connected to Israel. I would like to hear from you on that. If this newsletter isn't important to you, tell us. We can send the newsletter via email also as an option if that would be better.

Everyday I think about when I can get back to Israel. I am going soon and hope you will join me.

You can reach us at 866.514.1948 or e-mail me directly at vadebolton@comcast.net.

Vade Bolton, National President

Ask yourself if what you're doing today is getting you closer to where you want to be tomorrow.

Donations Received by VFI

(January 1 – March 31, 2008)

Mishloach Manot project — total amount collected and contributed is \$7,320.

Specific donations made to Volunteers for Israel®

<u>Contributor</u>	<u>In Honor of</u>
Michael Pecullan	Melissa Pecullan
Michael Pecullan	Joe Fielding

Jewish National Fund trees planted for the following:

<u>Contributor</u>	<u>In Memory of</u>
Dubin Family	Josephine Falzone
Marian & Shelly Sacks	Martin Blum
Eileen Perry	Chana Magun
Maria Bense	Sandra Miller
Robert Goldstein	Wife, Ruth Goldstein
Hanna Slome	Betty Lipton
Hanna Slome	Herman Cohen
Jonathan S. Follender	Julius Farber
Benn H. Legum	Warren Collmann MD
Benn H. Legum	Harry Parsons Sr
Maria G. Medina	Edward Kraft
L. Donofrio & J. Mathison	Ellen Rosenbaum
<u>Contributor</u>	<u>In Honor of</u>
Lynn Kenney	Dawn Kenney
Herb Biederman	State of Israel
Renee G. Bassell	Ashley F. Cohen Bat Mitzvah
<u>Contributor</u>	<u>In Celebration of</u>
James M. Eisdorfer	Jessie Eisdorfer & Jamie Ketten
Dr. & Mrs. J. Eisdorfer	Scott Cohen

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Officers:

- Vade Bolton, National President, VA,
703.860.0504, vadebolton@comcast.net
- Larry Feldman, Vice President, MD,
410.486.6876, lf730@aol.com
- Marian Sacks, Treasurer, MD,
301.603.9099, mbsacks@vfi-usa.org
- Ed Kohl, National Coordinator, MI,
248.788.0551, michigan@vfi-usa.org
- Beverly Cohen, Recording Secretary, PA,
610.584.0468, bevcohen@comcast.net

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Editor's Corner

Passing the Word

Surveys relate that half our volunteers learn of VFI from a friend. Use this newsletter to support your word of mouth efforts. Please see that it gets into the hands of a friend when you are finished with it.

We are seeking your personal story, one that will inspire countless others and will be read by others down through

the ages. The deadline for the next issue is July 1, 2008. *The Volunteer Connection* is now accepting paid color advertising and providing national exposure. If interested, please contact the editor for a rate card and details.

Steve Plotkin, Editor

steveplotkin@erols.com, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073, 610.358.5366, Fax 610.361.8896.

The Situation Room – The Iran Dilemma

Almost everyone agrees Iran is a time bomb. As an imperial police state with 66 million people, it has aspirations to lead its region. Iran propagates a very radical Shiite version of Islam and has a jihadist agenda to spread their views. Iran has committed to far reaching goals including President Ahmadinejad's frequent, genocidal threats toward Israel, with no internal opposition.

The effect of a nuclear Iran, like plaques of old, offers strikingly bad news:

- Threatens 80 percent of the world's energy supply
- Blocks all Western influence in the region
- Emboldens all regional radicals, including Islamists, Hezbollah, and Hamas
- Threatens a very large area extending to Europe, India, Turkey, and elsewhere
- Likely transfer of nuclear technology to other bad guys
- Increases Tehran's destructive meddling in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza.
- Largely eliminates forever the possibility of a stable Middle East.

Iran's strategy is simply to flim flam the gullible West using skills honed in the bazaars of Tehran and to buy time while

building bombs. The world merely counters with talk and weak recurring sanctions.

The United States administration is again focusing on the Iranian nuclear threat. They are now distancing themselves from the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, which concluded the Iranian arms program was shelved in 2003. This seemed to take the military option off the table. That was a big mistake. The United States now accepts the British, French, German, and Israeli estimates that Iran is pressing forward with dispatch for nuclear warheads and delivery missiles.

Although there is an international consensus that Iran is a menace and must be stopped, the real question is "How?" There are three options. One is a credible military threat to shut down Iran's covert nuclear program from someone believable to the Iranians. The second is direct military action by someone, perhaps Israel. The third involves Goldilocks and a diplomatic miracle.

Take an aspirin and call in the morning, this recurring nightmare is not going away soon.

Steve Plotkin

"Success is not final; failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts."

— SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

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—Steve Plotkin, Editor, steveplotkin@erols.com

—Barbara Abbott, Copy Editor

—Regina Stinger, Graphic Designer

My Volunteer Experience with Sar-El

Our volunteer group of twelve women and six men was assigned to an IDF base somewhat north of Gaza. Our contribution was to clean and recondition equipment and tools. We worked in teams on personnel carriers and other military support vehicles. We cleaned and helped update equipment and stored them in duffle bags, also we refurbished first aid kits. We also made signs for use by soldiers during missions.

We observed a lot of military equipment being moved about just before we departed the base. The night before we left, a large contingent of infantry soldiers moved into an adjacent area. They stayed for a few hours, rested, and then moved out again. We were informed they were bound for Gaza.

A lot of people are needed to support every soldier in the field. The VFI and Sar-El program is just what I was looking for. In Israel even an old, fat guy like me can make a difference.

During my tour we had a few rainy days and walked in a lot of mud. We had crowded and austere barracks and bath facilities. The Israeli army kosher mess hall food was a learning experience and there was plenty of food. Our work was especially gratifying, because we knew we were doing an important job and the soldiers personally expressed their appreciation.

Our weekends off base were a nice break. I went to the Sea of Galilee, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem and toured all the places I had on my list and more. In addition, our group took two 1-day trips during the work week to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. I made lots of new friends while taking in remarkable sights.

Before I left, I bought a bumper sticker at an army surplus store in Tel Aviv that summed up my reasons for volunteering with VFI. It shows American and Israeli flags and reads: **United Against Terrorism, United for Peace.**

VFI volunteers do make a huge contribution.

Our work was especially gratifying, because we knew we were doing an important job and the soldiers personally expressed their appreciation.

Wayne Dyer Groton, Vermont

PURIM'S MAGIC...

This tradition of Purim is magical! "That they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor."

- BOOK OF ESTHER 9:22

So VFI took portions from one to another and brought it all to Israel to hundreds of IDF soldiers and to the families of Sderot to celebrate Purim.

Josef Herz, past President of VFI, began a nationwide fundraiser for the Purim Project. I was enthused with this idea that the young women and men who everyday protect the only



Jewish nation in the world should know that we care about them in a very personal way.

I wanted to reach out and hug them! And so

I did. They loved the Purim bags filled with treats, but more than that they loved the letters, cards, and pictures that children drew. They smiled, had tears run down their faces and hugged like they didn't want to let go. We told them, "This is our land too; thank you for protecting it. We are with you."

To all of you who made donations this year, to make this possible...To all of you who wrote letters, notes, and drew cards and pictures...To the five wonderful volunteers, Beverly Kravitz, Max Sher, Mitchell Kloder, Michael Coplan, and Jeff Schimmel, who joined me on this exceptional trip to Israel, Toda Raba. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Shalom.

Carol Hananel

Purim '08 – Mishloach Manot Project Report

Thanks to the generosity of volunteers like you, VFI raised \$7,320 dollars to distribute Purim packages, along with hundreds of letters of encouragement, to IDF soldiers.

Working with the Brooklyn ZOA, VFI volunteers distributed about 2,500 packages to eight bases in the Jerusalem/Jordan Valley area and to bases in the Tel-Aviv and Beersheva area. Additional packages were distributed at Tel HaShomir hospital, Kook Yeshiva, and Sderot.

Thanks to all who contributed and/or wrote letters making this VFI project a success. As you can imagine, the packages were well received and appreciated by the young women and men of the IDF.



What To Do on the Weekends in Jerusalem

- ✓ You must see the new and expanded Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. Plan your visit for Thursday evening or Friday morning.
- ✓ The Hasmonean Tunnel in front of the Western Wall is another must see, but requires a reservation by calling 02-6271333.
- ✓ The Israel Museum is open on Shabbat and is well worth your time.
- ✓ Another Shabbat activity is the free morning walking tour in Jerusalem.
- ✓ The Tourist Office near the Jaffa Gate has lots of information about tours.

Some sites offer a Sar-El discount.



What Are Your Grandkids Doing This Summer?

Keep the Connection Strong: Dor L'Dor

The highly rated International Youth Program (IYP) is organized for English speaking young adults ages 17 to 25. During the 3-week program, the groups are placed in special locations. In the first week they experience a brief "Gadna" (a taste of basic training) component complete with some physical training experiences. Participants have a grand time and make friends for a lifetime.

This is where you come in. Please spread the word for two sessions this year: June 29-July 17 and July 20-August 7, 2008.

Improving VFI's E-Mail Lists

To improve our communications using e-mail, we need to continually update your e-mail addresses. Many thanks to the volunteers who have already sent in volunteer lists from prior service.

We request you mail us a copy of the list of volunteers showing e-mail addresses that you received at the end of your program. This will help us remain current. Please mail them to Steve Plotkin, Editor, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073.

Facebook.com and VFI

Help VFI by joining the "Volunteers for Israel®/Sar-El Program Alumni & Friends Group" on Facebook by clicking on this link:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6461698750>

Facebook is an important social networking site with millions of members. We aim to engage current volunteers and reach others who may want to join our volunteer program. You can help by pointing your friends to us and encouraging them to browse our group.

Shop the VFI Amazon Store and Support VFI

When you shop the VFI Amazon Store, you can get some neat stuff while supporting VFI. The VFI Amazon Store carries an interesting assortment of travel, Israeli, and other Jewish products.

Check it out at www.vfi-usa.org/vfiamazonstore.html

Seeking a Few Good Volunteers

Volunteers needed with expertise in grant writing, fund raising, and marketing, to assist VFI at the national level. Contact vadebolton@comcast.net.

Volunteer Program Schedule for 2008

Programs start only on the Sunday and/or Monday shown below. Volunteers can join for 1, 2, 3, or more weeks. Classes in Hebrew for beginners (Ulpan option) are designated.

2008 SCHEDULE — 26th Anniversary Year

May 8 — Yom HaAtzmaut, 60th Independence Day	Aug. 31/Sept. 1-Sept. 11, 2-week Program, *Ulpan*
May 18-22, 1-week program	Sept. 14/15-Sept. 25, 2-week Program, *Ulpan*
May 18/19-June 5, *Ulpan*	Oct. 5/6-Oct. 23, Bases closed during the holidays
June 10-June 26, begins Tues., *Ulpan*	Oct. 26-30, 1-week program
June 29/30-July 17, *Ulpan*	Oct. 26/27-Nov. 13, *Ulpan*
June 29-July 17, International Youth Program	Nov. 16/17-Dec. 4, *Ulpan*
July 20/21-Aug. 7, *Ulpan*	Dec. 7/8-Dec. 25, *Ulpan*
July 20-Aug. 7, International Youth Program	Dec. 28/29-Jan. 15, 2009, *Ulpan*
Aug. 10/11-Aug. 28, *Ulpan*	

Please visit our web site at www.vfi-usa.org for frequent special programs.

The Ulpan Beginning Hebrew Option

Ulpan is a beginner's practical Hebrew class (Aleph level) offered in conjunction with volunteer service. Classes are held 2 nights per week on the base in the evenings and feature a language immersion environment.

Taught by experienced professionals, the one-time fee of \$50 covers up to 3 weeks of classes. Ulpan requires a minimum of 10 participants and a maximum of 15, so bring a friend. Sign up at the time of your volunteer registration.

VFI HAPPENINGS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Atlanta Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Alan Mintz at agmintz@mindspring.com.

Chicago Midwest Region — We are seeking volunteers for the metro Chicago 60th birthday parties for Israel on May 8 and 15. We need volunteers to help tell our story and distribute VFI literature.

On Sunday, June 15, the Jewish Folk Festival will be held. VFI's table is set up from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. We need multiple volunteers to help educate the hundreds of attendees. This is a great way to spread the word in the Chicago area. Call 888.246.3037 and sign up!

Great Lakes Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Ed Kohl at 248.788.0551 or eskohl@comcast.net.

Las Vegas News — For further information and schedule update, please contact Fran and Jerry Gardberg at 702.914.6863.

Long Island Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Eric Steinberg, Regional Ambassador at esteinb173@aol.com or 631.588.7438.

Los Angeles Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Carol and Isaac Hananel at 866.345.3352.

Metro New York — Save Sunday, June 1, 2008, for the Israel Day Parade in New York City. Join us and march with your fellow VFI volunteers and the Jewish Agency to show your support for Israel on this the 60th Anniversary of Israel Independence. Additional details will be at the VFI web site.

To help VFI organize this event, contact us at parade@vfi-usa.org or call 212.643.4848. If you can not join us in New York, we hope

that you can find a local venue to help celebrate Israel's 60th Anniversary. Now is the time — YOU are the difference.

For further information and schedule update, please contact Jaclyn Mishal at the VFI NYC office at 212.643.4848 or e-mail jaclynm@jafi.org.

Mid-Atlantic Region — The Howard County Jewish Federation Israel @ 60 event is held on June 22 and VFI has a booth. Volunteers are needed for booth duty from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We already have one volunteer but a few more are needed; it is important to have a presence at this event. Please contact Marian Sacks at mbsacks31@hotmail.com.

There is an Israel @ 60 Event on the Mall in Washington, DC on June 1.

We are forming a volunteer group for the Greater Washington D.C. area for VFI, and are seeking someone willing to take on the startup leadership role. If you are interested and for further information and schedule update, please contact Marian Sacks at 301.603.9099, mbsacks31@hotmail.com, or Vade Bolton at 703.860.0504, vadebolton@comcast.net.

Philadelphia — For our March meeting, Beverly Cohen discussed the Machal, the volunteers from outside the land who fought in 1948 War of Independence. She used Zipporah Porath's book *Letters from Jerusalem, 1947-1948*.

On April 27, the Philly Group of 36 volunteers (from 5 states and Canada) under the leadership of Beverly Cohen, began their volunteer service in Israel for up to 3 weeks.

Sunday, May 18, VFI will have a booth at the city-wide Israel Independence Day Celebration. Our next meeting takes place on Wednesday, May 21, and features reports from returning volunteers on their experiences.

Meetings are held at the Klein Branch JCC,

Red Lion Rd. and Jamison Ave. in Philadelphia starting at 7:00 p.m. Call Jeanne Schachter at 610.617.4048 for more schedule details.

San Francisco Region — The "Salute to Israel" march will be held on Sunday, May 11. Walk with us in the Walk-a-Thon around the Capitol building in Sacramento as thousands gather to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Israel. Drop by and/or help out at our table at the Festival, following the parade.

Sunday, June 1, is Le'hitraot at "Israel in the Gardens." Join us as we again staff an information table at Northern California's largest Jewish community cultural event of the year. Celebrate Israel's 60th Anniversary with food, live music, arts, and activities for all ages. Presented by the Israel Center of the Jewish Community Federation at Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco.

Many thanks to the generous donors who attended our January Reunion at Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco.

For more information and to help out at these events, call Kay Warren at 510.339.0183 or e-mail vfi-5000@hotmail.com.

Ambassadors and Regional Directors — Many have joined the VFI ambassador's team and are having success working with their regional directors interviewing applicants, making presentations and promoting VFI in their neighborhoods.

Israel's 60th celebrations all across our country should have a VFI presence. Contact your local Jewish Federation, and ask how VFI can participate.

When you need help with an event, promotional materials, presentation ideas, etc., please contact Ed Kohl, Ambassador Coordinator, at eskohl@comcast.net or 248.788.0551.



VFI MEMBERSHIP, DONATIONS, AND ORDER FORM

Join VFI As a Full Member

VFI membership at the Chai level of \$18 includes a free, 1-year subscription to *Moment Magazine*, personalized VFI business cards, a membership card, this newsletter, and other benefits.

- The Meir level membership at \$50 also includes VFI luggage tags.
- At the Sharon level of \$100, you also receive a tee shirt.
- The Dayan level is at \$250 and adds a duffle bag to the Chai-level benefits.
- For \$500 and above, the Ben-Gurion level provides you with a jacket.

Join our growing VFI chaverim community and become a VFI Member now!

Plant Trees in Israel

VFI is your direct link to the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) trees for Israel.

Memorialize your life-cycle events with a present to Israel's future. Use the coupon below with your check for \$18.00 per tree, and we will take care of the rest. We need to know your name and to whom the donation certificates should be sent.

Mail to:

Marian Sacks
 VFI Treasurer
 13801 Bonsal Lane
 Silver Spring, MD 20906
 with your donation
 check payable to
 "Volunteers for Israel."



VFI MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS			
DESCRIPTION	DONATION	TOTAL	
VFI MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION			
Ben-Gurion (\$500 and above)	\$___		
Dayan (\$250)	\$250		
Sharon (\$100)	\$100		
Meir (\$50)	\$ 50		
Chai (\$18)	\$ 18		
VFI DONATION			
Contribution to VFI			
Contribution for VFI project			
DESCRIPTION	DONATION	QUANTITY	TOTAL
PLANT TREES IN ISRAEL			
JNF Trees (Include your name and to whom certificates be sent. Includes tax and shipping)	\$18		
THE VFI STORE			
VFI Travel Journal (an easy-to-carry 40-page spiral bound information book for travelers to Israel. It is filled with useful information and maps.)	\$15		
VFI Army green baseball cap with VFI logo	\$20		
VFI Green fleece vest, sleeveless, with two zipper pockets and black collar	\$50		
VFI Small carry-on bag (duffle) with shoulder straps	\$60		
TOTAL DONATION (All prices include tax and shipping)			\$
E-MAIL		TELEPHONE	
FIRST NAME		LAST NAME	
MAIL ADDRESS			
CITY		STATE	ZIP
<p>Please check your desired membership level, order items, and quantities. <i>VFI Respects Your Privacy and will not share your information with others.</i></p>			

Our Volunteer Stripes

We received our volunteer stripes: two pieces of blue ribbon with the word Volunteer written in Hebrew. BUT, these are not just stripes. They symbolize our connection to Israel in body and spirit. Working side by side with the beautiful youth of Israel reinforces our connection with the ties of the past and our hopes and dreams for the future.

We were part of an elite group for a small period of time. Israel and the IDF would love to greet you, too! For the cost of an airline ticket, you too can become a link in the chain that connects us to the land we love.

While visiting Yad Vashem, we saw, as part of an exhibition, recipes written down by women, women I have chosen to call "WOMEN OF HOPE."

For the cost of an airline ticket, you too can become a link in the chain that connects us to the land we love.



Caught in the midst of the worst crimes against humanity, these women wrote down their recipes...either to make again when they were free, or to have them preserved when the camps were liberated. This year my seder table will include at least one dish from "IN MEMORY'S KITCHEN," a Legacy from the Women of Terezin."

As our final contribution for this journey, we made a donation to Volunteers for Israel to send Purim packages to the soldiers.

Fran and Michael Satran

"Worry looks around; Sorry looks back; Faith looks up."

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SPRING 2008**