

Volunteer Newsletter



A Message from Carol Hart, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Inside this issue:

6 Million + Exhibition	2
Trustee Interview: Frank Harding	3
Staff Interview: Viviana Markstein	4
Rita Rosenbaum's visit to House of Commons	5
Interview with Ellen Singer	6

Welcome to this very belated edition of our newsletter. The past few months have been very hectic.

The format of the newsletter remains unchanged. I am yet again very fortunate to have a superb intern, from Clark University in the States, who is working with me for 3 months. More about Nora in this edition. She has also interviewed Ellen Singer, one of our longest serving volunteer, Vivi Markstein, who works at the AJR as the membership secretary, and Frank Harding, who is a Trustee of the AJR Charitable Trust.

There will be quite a few

changes here at AJR as 5 members of staff are retiring between now and the end of the year. They include Norah Gittins, a member of the Social Work Team, and Marcia Goodman, who is Head of the Social Services Department. Marcia has been a tremendous support to me since I joined the AJR some 5 years ago and I will really miss her wise council.

I have continued my involvement with AJ6 (Association of Jewish 6th formers) and JLGB (Jewish Lads' & Girls' Brigade) via the Jewish secondary schools, who are helping us to recruit younger volunteers and to spread the word about the AJR.

The AJR has also been asked to help man an exhibition at Brent Cross Shopping Centre, which will coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day in January. (More details on page 2.)

The Board of Deputies have created a central volunteer web site, where all those interested in volunteering can search across the community for volunteering opportunities. We have now listed all our volunteering opportunities on their web-site.

Thanking you for your ongoing support.

Carol Hart

Upcoming Events

- Thursday December 13: Volunteer Training Session at the Holocaust Survivor Center in Hendon

Welcome and thanks to our new volunteers

Ellen Lengzel, Jude Gattica, Frankie Buckman, Jackie Spiro, Nicole Kyper, Harold Rentor, Liza Gutina, Jasna Crack-Lloyd, Ralph Fraser, Sheila Vogel, Julia Goschalk & Ruth Brill

"The exhibition comprises over 6 million buttons collected by schools, colleges and local people"

We have been asked to find volunteers to assist Barnet Council, which is organising and funding an exhibition entitled *6 million +*. The exhibition commemorates the enormous scale of the Holocaust and of recent genocides in the Balkans and Africa.

The exhibition comprises over 6 million buttons collected by schools, colleges and local people in West Yorkshire and beyond. It also focuses on individual stories of Holocaust survivors and of recent refugees in the moving film *Double Portraits*. The + refers to those who were not counted and the millions who have died in genocides since the Second World War.

Presentations and ceremonies remember

6 Million +

the victims of the Holocaust and reflect on more recent atrocities in other countries. Activities serve to remind participants and visitors about the dangers of antisemitism, racism and all forms of discrimination.

Antonia Stowe works in public, private and educational settings using a wide range of materials to create both temporary and permanent art works. She is using the buttons to create the sense of 6 million + people who lost their lives in the Holocaust.

We need as many volunteers with personal experience as possible to ensure that the maximum amount of people can benefit from this 3-week exhibition. We need volunteers who are avail-



able to work 2-hour shifts between January 22 and February 10. Training will be given by Antonia Stowe.

The exhibition will take place at Brent Cross.

If you are interested please contact via 0208 385 3083.

Note about Nora Newhard

I am a student from Clark University (Worcester, Massachusetts) and am interning with the Association of Jewish Refugees until mid-December. At Clark University I am a Global History Major concentrating on Holocaust and Genocide Studies, with a minor in Government and International

Relations.

At the AJR I'm working for Carol Hart and assisting her with the volunteer realm of the AJR, as well as with administration work in the office. I am also befriending two AJR members and attending regional meetings.

I have been enjoying my stay in London and I am finding my experience at the AJR extremely interesting and rewarding.



TRUSTEE HIGHLIGHT: FRANK HARDING

By Nora Newhard

Frank Harding is a Trustee of the Association of Jewish Refugees Charitable Trust. The Charitable Trust holds substantial funds which it employs to support the AJR, its members and their wellbeing. In addition, it supports Holocaust education and research.



Frank, a Chartered Accountant, retired from practice 11 years ago. Shortly before his retirement, he was contacted by former trustee Helmut Rothenberg, the father of David Rothenberg, the AJR's current Vice Chair, who asked him to become a trustee. He declined, being already over-committed, but later, having reduced his commitments, he accepted. Frank felt, and feels, an obligation to the refugee and survivor communities - by working with the AJR and the charitable trust, he is working for those communities and what they stand for.

Frank's parents came to London in 1936 from Berlin, where he was born. He is a member of Belsize Square Synagogue, which was founded by refugees from Western Europe. His grandfather was one of its founders.

Frank believes that the AJR has an important

role to play, in particular in supporting first generation refugees, and that it does an excellent job. He is proud that it provides social, welfare, and financial assistance to members across the country. But, happy as he is, he thinks much still needs to be done as former refugees and survivors become older: 'The AJR's most important years are coming up. As refugees and survivors approach the ends of their lives, they need more support. I'm happy to be a part of helping these people.'

Frank sees volunteers as a key part of the AJR team. He thinks their role is extremely important in helping and supporting members.

Frank is not only a trustee of the Association of Jewish Refugees Charitable Trust,

but is, or has been, on the boards of many charities and trusts. He is a past board member of the Belsize Square Synagogue and a trustee of the Otto Schiff Housing Association. He chairs Paintings in Hospitals, which supplies art work to some 250 health-care sites throughout the country, and is a trustee of the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery Development Foundation. He also works with Pilotlight, a charity that advises other charities on how to develop their activities and organisation.

In his spare time, Frank visits his family, some of whom live in France and the United States. He enjoys going to the theatre and the opera as well as fly-fishing and playing golf and bridge.

"Frank sees volunteers as a key part of the AJR team"

Staff Highlight: Vivi Markstein

By Nora Newhard

Viviana Markstein has been working for the Association of Jewish Refugees for the past ten years, and her voice is usually the first one people hear when calling into the office. She began working for the AJR as a receptionist, soon after coming from Argentina to England to live with her aunt and uncle.

Vivi was born in Buenos Aires. Her father is a refugee from Austria; her mother was born in Argentina; her family on her mother's side is from Poland and Russia. She has family all over the world.

Vivi came to England to learn English and to see family and Europe. Though she misses her friends, family and the weather in Argentina, she has come to love living in London. She appreciates all the benefits the city has to offer, including the museums, the markets, and the ability to meet people from all over the world.

When Vivi first came to England, especially working at the AJR, she found it challenging. Not only did she have to deal with a completely different language, but she also had to work with people with very different backgrounds from her. However, she came to find the AJR office to be a good working environment with a friendly staff.



Since Vivi has been with the AJR she has worked as a receptionist and has taken charge of membership. She very much enjoys being able to aid refugees. She thinks the volunteers are 'wonderful' and are a very important component of the AJR that gives so much to the members. Vivi is an essential part of the Association of Jewish Refugee's team, which would not run as smoothly without her.

"Vivi is an essential part of the Association of Jewish Refugee's team; it would not run as smoothly without her"

Rita Rosenbaum's visit to the House of Commons

This article was omitted from our last newsletter. Rita was invited to the House of Commons on behalf of the AJR to attend a special ceremony marking the 350th anniversary of British Jewry. Here is a profile of Rita, with her thoughts on the event.

Rita Rosenbaum (Hauser) arrived in this country as a refugee in 1939 at the age of 12 and has been a volunteer with the AJR for the last 8 years. She records the *AJR Journal*, together with a dedicated band of volunteers, for our visually impaired members and for those unable to hold books. This service is free to AJR members.

Rita attended a reception on June 26 2006 at the House of Commons. Michael Martin, Speaker of the House, hosted the event.

Following security checks, the guests, who included members of the Board of Deputies and volunteers with various charities, walked through the House of Commons to the house of the Speaker. He, together with Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan and Lady Sachs, welcomed the around 80 visitors most warmly. Rita announced her name and said she was representing the AJR.

Champagne was served and everyone moved into the magnificent dining room for food, drink and chat. The Speaker welcomed his guests and announced that Mr Rothschild, who had twice refused to take his seat in Parliament through not being allowed to take the oath in the Jewish tradition, was able to do so after Oliver Cromwell ordered that Jews were to be allowed to practise their religion. The Speaker mentioned that, when he was growing up in Glasgow, his mother lit the fires for their Jewish neighbours and switched on their lamps on the Sabbath and he was very happy that the Chief Rabbi had told him she was a 'helpful Gentile'. He added that the Chief Rabbi lit Chanukah candles for Jewish MPs in one of the offices and always had to bring his own Menorah. The Speaker thought this was unacceptable and last year commissioned the making of a silver Menorah which will remain in the House of Commons for future use. He is the first Catholic Speaker of the House since the Reformation.

The Chief Rabbi thanked the Speaker for his hospitality and Henry Grunwald QC, representing the Board of Deputies, handed the Speaker the new catalogue of the Jewish Museum, which he was delighted to ac-

cept. After the speeches the Speaker obliged everyone by calling 'Order, Order!'

The Speaker then autographed booklets explaining his role. He asked Rita whether she had come to this country as a refugee and thought she must have been 'just a wee gerlie!' Rita told him that had Britain not allowed her in, she would in all likelihood not be standing there chatting to him and that she was very grateful to this country.

It was a delightful evening, in magnificent surroundings, and Rita wants to thank the AJR for giving her the opportunity to attend such a special occasion.

Rita has been a volunteer for over 15 years, starting at the Royal Free Hospital. She edited the *Kindertransport Newsletter* for 6 years. For the last 8 years she has worked for Jewish Care, despatching edited audio versions of the *Jewish Chronicle* every week as well as recording books for their audio library. In recognition of her work, she was given an award for 'Services to the Community' in 2001. She also assists in the offices of Shaare Zedek UK and has worked for the Pascal Theatre Company.

"Mr Speaker thought this was quite unacceptable and last year commissioned a silver Menorah to be made which will remain in the House of Commons for future use"

Ellen Singer: AJR Volunteer

By Nora Newhard

Ellen Singer's lively, energetic and unique spirit welcomed me when I visited her at her lovely home for tea. Mrs Singer began volunteering with the Association of Jewish Refugees in approximately 1952. She volunteered for the Meals on Wheels Programme, where she delivered meals made by the Day Centre to members unable to cook for themselves. She also volunteered at the Leo Baeck Home of Jewish Care Aid. She was on the committee there and took people out for tea and even to the theatre. She has also befriended numerous members of the AJR.

Mrs Singer came to England from Berlin in 1935. She was 17 years old and on her own. She came



as a visitor but stayed on due to the war. She had to take a job as a domestic: to stay in England during this period she either had to work as a domestic or as a nurse to keep her visa. As a domestic, she did things she had never done before: cooking dinner, washing the house, eating in the kitchen, and lighting fires to heat the water for the house. Her first employer here asked her to leave at the end of her first day, saying she was 'completely useless'! But in the end she learned the domestic trade to survive.

Even though she is no longer volunteering with the Meals on Wheels Programme or regularly visiting the Leo Baeck Home, Mrs Singer is very active in the volunteer arena. She will be turning 90 next year but is still befriending a member of the AJR. She is still driving so, when it is nice weather, they often take trips to the park. Mrs Singer also helps the AJR's Hazel Beiny to coordinate speakers

and provide tea at a synagogue for the Edgware regional group. She still occasionally visits the Leo Baeck Home when she has time. When she is not volunteering, she spends time with her family and visits her friends. She has one daughter, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren who live nearby.

Mrs Singer truly wants to help others. She told me that social work gives her pleasure: 'Money isn't everything. I feel satisfaction in making one smile, laugh, just generally light up.'

We're on the web!
www.ajr.org.uk/volunteers.htm

ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH
REFUGEES
CAROL HART
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Jubilee House
Merrion Avenue
Stanmore, Middx
HA7 4RL

Tel: 0208 385 3070
Fax: 0208 385 3080
Email: volunteers@ajr.org.uk