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» **Local Honorees** JCPA Plenum in Detroit celebrates Mayor Dave Bing and Mark Davidoff for their work. **See page 18.**

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Zita Weber of West Bloomfield, a Czech child survivor, with her "passport"

metro

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Arrowman Kevin Neff from Gaylord escorts Holocaust survivor Jack Weinberger of Oak Park into the capitol.

Touching History

Out-state Scouts learn about the Holocaust firsthand from survivors.

Allen Olender | Special to the Jewish News

The bus, accompanied by two cars, pulled into the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' National Guard Armory in Lansing about 9:30 p.m. April 18, after a three-hour ride from Traverse City. In these sparse surroundings, a life-changing 24 hours began for 25 Scouts and 18 adult leaders, all members of the Indian Drum Lodge of the Order of the Arrow.

These young men were chosen for a special task — providing the honor guard and escorting Metro Detroit Holocaust survivors into the rotunda of the state capitol for the annual Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony. None of the Scouts are Jewish. Few had even met Jewish people. Not one had

ever met a Holocaust survivor.

For the last nine years, Metro Detroit Jewish Scouts have done the honors, but the numbers had been dwindling. A conversation with Susan Herman, director of the Lansing-based Michigan Jewish Conference, who plans the annual capitol event, and a number of Detroit Scout leaders led to choosing Scouts from a different venue, one that offered a unique challenge and an incredible opportunity.

They decided that for this year's ceremony, Scouts would be invited from rural out-state communities. The opportunity to introduce the survivors

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Madam Secretary

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reflects on her family history and lessons for today's world.

Jackie Headapohl | Managing Editor

Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright recalls the first time she had an inkling of her Jewish heritage, around the same time she was being vetted for the office she would hold from 1997-2001.

Since she became a public figure in 1993 as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Albright, a native of Prague, Czechoslovakia, began to receive letters from Czechs claiming to know her family, but none of the names, towns or years matched up — not until 1996, when she received a letter from

a person who had known her family and remembered



Madeleine Albright

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The Arrowmen and their adult leaders at the Michigan Capitol

Kim Flees

Touching History

Out-state Scouts learn about the Holocaust firsthand from survivors.

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Allen Olender | Special to the Jewish News

to a new group of witnesses, who, it was hoped, would return to their communities having turned the lessons of their history books into a life-changing experience, was a captivating thought. It succeeded beyond the more optimistic expectations.

With the encouragement of Lodge Adviser Vicki Riley, last August an initial presentation was made to the Youth Executive Committee of the Indian Drum Lodge of the Order of the Arrow (OA). OA is Scouting's National Honor Society and members, elected by their Boy Scout peers, are known to be the most committed to service in the Scouting community. Indian Drum is the Lodge of the Scenic Trails Council in Traverse City. Scenic Trails represents Boy Scouts in 13 counties in Northwestern Michigan and runs a great program.

When the meeting adjourned, without

having yet made a presentation to the entire Lodge, 16 Executive Committee members, all high school Scouts, had signed up to take the day off from school to go to Lansing to serve. Without even having made the Lodge presentation, the largest number of Scouts ever to have signed on for this event was in place.

Having decided to cap the spots at 25 youth because of space issues in the capitol rotunda, a presentation to the Lodge was made some months later. The cap of 25 Arrowmen was quickly reached. What was even more incredible was that 18 adult members of the Lodge had signed up to attend. And while adults would not have a role in the ceremony itself, they wished to be present to meet the survivors and witness the event.

Forty-three Scouts and adult leaders from 15 towns in Northwestern Michigan,

many driving an hour or more to Traverse City to take the bus leaving from the Council office, headed to Lansing.

The Michigan Jewish Conference welcomed the group to Lansing, providing snacks and breakfast to the Scouts who had spent the night on cots at the armory. A surprise early morning visit by U.S. Army Gen. Mike Stone who met and spoke with the Scouts highlighted the start of the day.

Then it was off to the capitol for a pre-ceremony tour hosted by Senior Deputy Director of Military and Veterans Affairs and former Traverse City State Sen. Jason Allen, who is an Eagle Scout and himself a member of the Indian Drum Lodge.

The tour provided an insider's view of the Capitol and its workings. Complete with an introduction in the State Senate, a visit with Eagle Scout House Majority Leader James "Jase" Bolger and photos with Lt. Gov.

Brian Calley, it was a unique look at the operation of the state government as well as the historic beauty of the Michigan Capitol building itself.

Meeting The Survivors

At 11 a.m., the bus with the Holocaust survivors arrived. The 25 Arrowmen eagerly awaited the opportunity to escort each and every one into the capitol. This is what this trip was all about.

Gently assisting them and introducing themselves, these young Scouts viewed this duty as their sacred mission this day. After escorting the survivors upstairs and into the rotunda area, the Scouts' Honor Guard lined up to bring in the U.S. and state flags, lead the Pledge of Allegiance and join in the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Rep. Vicki Barnett, D-Farmington Hills, led the program, which featured many great

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Kim Fleas

The Arrowmen presented the state and U.S. flags during the ceremony.



Mark Ewing

Breakfast at the armory before the ceremony



Mark Ewing

Sharon Lipton, president of the Michigan Jewish Conference, gives Scout Stephen Pothoff of Copemish his award for his prize-winning essay.



Robyn Berkowitz

Shoshana Weinberger of Oak Park, wife of survivor Jack Weinberger, and Scouts Josh Olsen of Traverse City and Kevin Neff of Gaylord enjoy lunch and conversation at MSU Hillel.

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speakers, including the keynote address by author and survivor Miriam Winter of Jackson.

Herman had come up with the idea of having an essay contest for the Scouts. The topic was “What Are The Important Lessons of the Holocaust?” The winner would be introduced by Lt. Gov. Calley and read his essay at the ceremony. Stephen Pothoff, 17, from Copemish, a town in Manistee County with a population of 209, wrote the prize-winning essay, receiving enthusiastic applause and appreciation from the survivors and his fellow Arrowmen at the ceremony.

A candle-lighting ceremony takes place near the end of the ceremony and is always solemn as each survivor is introduced with his or her family history retold. As the name of each survivor is read, he or she stands to approach the podium to light a

“We must have learned by now how quickly a threat can become an enemy, and how quickly an enemy can become evil.”

— Stephen Pothoff, from his winning essay

candle. Here, the Scouts again served as escorts, walking each survivor up to and back from the front of the rotunda as his or her name was read.

As the ceremony concluded at close to 2 p.m., the group of rather hungry Scouts escorted the survivors downstairs to their bus, boarded their own bus and made the short trek across town to Michigan State University Hillel. It was in this casual and festive atmosphere, after such a serious and thoughtful day, that the survivors and Arrowmen enjoyed lunch together and indeed got to know one another. Every table

had a mix of Scouts and survivors. And, at every table, the Scouts became personal acquaintances and witnesses to the stories of these incredible members of the Jewish community.

The past few days home have been a flurry of notes and an exchange of photos. However, perhaps the most rewarding have been the comments that have come from Scouts and parents alike. Here is one that is representative of them all:

“My son, a Boy Scout and Order of the Arrow member, just returned from Lansing this evening where he took part in the

Holocaust Service ... I cannot think of any one activity — in or out of Scouting — that has had such an impact on my son. He was deeply moved by meeting the Holocaust survivors. And, even while it is a point in history that is beyond difficult to remember, to learn of, to hear about, he enjoyed himself on the trip at the same time.

“In fact, when I asked him his favorite part of the day, he said it was having lunch with a 95-year-old Holocaust survivor who really liked to talk, and he really enjoyed listening to her.”

For the 43 members of the Indian Drum Lodge of the Order of the Arrow, the words of fellow Arrowman Stephen Pothoff’s prize-winning essay have certainly taken on a new and more urgent meaning: *“We must have learned by now how quickly a threat can become an enemy, and how quickly an enemy can become evil.”* □