

CHILDREN OF SDEROT

Dear Friends,

We would like to report the progress of the Russian Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Boston to you, as it is that many of you follow our activities through our website www.rjcf.com or through a subscription to *Jewish Russian Telegraph*.

Last year, we appealed to the Russian-speaking Jewish community for help in bringing 20 children from the city of Sderot to the United States to spend some time in community run summer camps in Boston and in New Hampshire. Our goal was to give them a break from the terrors of their everyday lives, for at least a couple of weeks, and to show them that people do care.

The city of Sderot is situated practically on the border with Gaza Strip. Since October 2000, the city has been under constant fire from Qassam rockets launched by Hamas that have caused deaths and injuries, as well as significant damage to homes and property, psychological distress and emigration from the city. People have only 15 seconds to make it to a bomb shelter. Sderot's population has decreased to about 20,000 who cannot afford to leave.

The response to the Children of Sderot Project was so enthusiastic that we collected much more than we anticipated. Not only did people send checks, but some organized fundraising among their friends. Money came not only from Boston but from other states and even from other countries! From the bottom of our hearts and on behalf of the children of Sderot, we thank you for your commitment and generosity!

Owing to the contribution of so many supporters, we were able to continue helping the children. In the autumn of last year, we paid for the renovation of an abandoned bomb shelter to be used for after-school activities.

In such conditions of permanent threat of rocket fire, with parents being away at work, after-school programs where children can get together are incredibly important. People should spend time together and create new relationships which will sustain and support them. They need a safe place to gather. We can help by helping the people of Sderot build a community and lives that are as close to normal as possible.

In January 2008, the RJCF Board member Greg Margolin visited Sderot. He remembers that coming to the city was like driving onto a movie set where they were shooting a war scene – blocked roads, crowds, police cars, ambulances... But he really wanted to see the shelter that was built with the hard-earned money of the people of the Russian Jewish Community of Boston - your money - and he felt that he had to show solidarity with the people of Sderot.

We are proud to report to you that the Children of Sderot Project remains our main priority. In addition to building a safe play room where our Sderot partner, organization Mishol, is able to continue with their after-school program; in April 2008, we paid for another after-school program for children in another location of Sderot. Today the Russian Jewish community of Boston is proudly sponsoring two after-school programs in Sderot.

The idea behind the after school programs is to keep the kids in a safe place, after school, in such a way that they do not feel locked up. They can enjoy an interesting and useful program together with their

friends and at the same time advance towards their life goals with learning that is different but complements what they get in school. This gives both the children and the parents the feeling that somebody cares about them while the government, which is supposed to defend them, consistently abandons them for political reasons, and the entire country continues on as usual.

Our next goal and the next phase of this project is to raise money for sending 50 Sderot children to a summer camp in the Jerusalem Mountains and to winter camp during Hanukkah vacation in Negev – together with our good Israeli partners, *Jewish National Fund* and *The Green Horizons*.

Jewish National Fund, one of the biggest landowners in Israel which develops new lands and builds infrastructure there, found locations for the camps. The Green Horizons, a branch of JNF, is working with teenagers somewhat similar to the American boy scouts and will provide group leadership and educational program for the kids in the camps.

On March 4, 2008, members of the Russian Jewish Community Foundation met with Major General Uzi Dayan, Chairman of *The Green Horizons*, and Colonel Sharon Davidovich, Emissary of *Jewish National Fund* in Boston, for the official ceremony of launching this project. Uzi Dayan talked about his frequent visits to Sderot - he visits the city at least once a week, - and about the necessity to address education and poverty problems in Israel. Dayan thinks these problems are as important as the security issues. He expressed his gratitude to the Russian Jewish Community of Boston for doing so much for his country. Sharon Davidovich confirmed JNF's commitment to the project and discussed some details.

To send the children to summer and winter camps, we need to raise \$75,000.

To date we raised \$35,000. We need to raise another \$40,000. Again, we are asking for your help.

All donations done through [RJCF](#) are tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to the *RJCF Children of Sderot Fund* and mail it to Russian Jewish Community Foundation, 1674 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02445, or visit our website www.rjcf.com.

Your help will be much appreciated by us, but, most importantly, by the children of Sderot.

We are their hope.