

HUMANITARIAN EFFORT FOR CUBAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

To my dear Traditional Congregation family,

I will graduate in June 2010 from Northwestern University. My Jewish experiences at the NU Fiedler Hillel Center were enhanced by years of study and connection with my heritage at Traditional and Solomon Schechter Day School. But perhaps the most powerful event I will experience there has yet to occur. In March, thanks to a religious humanitarian aid permit from the U.S. government, I will travel with 39 other students from Hillel to deliver medical services and various supplies to a Jewish community that doesn't receive much attention—that of Castro's Cuba.

Before 1959, Jews in Cuba were free to practice and became an important part of the society. However, the new socialist government took most of what the community had worked so hard for, and Jews (and others) fled to Miami or various Latin American countries. For a generation, Judaism vanished from the island; there was no such thing as a Jewish community center or synagogue. But in the early 1990's, Fidel Castro finally deemed religion permissible on the island, and Jews in Cuba rediscovered their roots as the community began to regroup.

A major resource the Jewish Community Center provides is a free pharmacy, which relies solely on donations from groups like ours. It provides Cubans with types of medicines and treatments that are otherwise unavailable or extremely difficult to obtain. Many Jewish Cubans, as well as friends they tell about it, rely on this pharmacy to get the modern medicines that they need.

Most excitingly, you can help the Cuban Jews. Throughout December, I am collecting anything you can help provide, as well as trying to cover my cost of going, which is nearly \$3,000. Any donation, no matter how small, helps a great deal. We are hoping to pack around 1,500 pounds of aid into our suitcases to deliver to the Jewish community.

The most highly-requested items are:

- Arthritis creams (including open tubes)
- Any unopened prescription or over-the-counter pills expiring after April 2010
- Toiletries like toothbrushes and soap
- Makeup
- Blood-pressure cuffs
- Pens and pencils
- Magazines
- DVDs
- Asthma inhalers
- Canes
- New undergarments

Anything else is welcome, such as clothes, Israeli food, toys, books, sports equipment, and Judaica. Cubans struggle for everything, usually making around \$120 a year, so anything you can provide helps a great deal. To donate items, bring them to Traditional and put them in the designated bins. To learn more about the Cuban Jewish community and the trip, and/or to help cover the cost of my trip, please visit www.TinyURL.com/BenjaminToCuba or email me at BenjSing@gmail.com. Call me anytime with questions at (314) 239-1308.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to read what our group does and how you can help.

B'ahavah,

Benjamin Singer