

For Immediate Release

Contact: Lisa Bernard (913)642-0332

Local Youths Striving To Put "KC" on the Map

Local B'nai Mitzvah youths Shira Bernard, Federico Zepeda, and Shoshana Margolies are committed to saving lives in Israel. Their goal is to raise \$10,000 for Pups for Peace, a non-profit organization that trains dogs in Israel to sniff out bombs. So far the youths have raised over \$6,000 toward their \$10,000 goal. Once they hit the magical \$10,000 number, they get to name the dog that will join the active corp of Pups dogs that works daily to keep Israelis safe.

"We'd like to name the dog, 'KC,' in honor of everyone from Kansas City who helped to support this project," said Bernard. "Plus, we have in mind all of those people from around the world who have supported our efforts by contributing funds in honor of our B'nai Mizvah celebrations. We are grateful to all for their gifts and support of this project," said Bernard.

Each of the three youths designated Pups as the recipient of funds from their B'nai Mitzvah celebrations. Bernard, a 7th grader at Indian Woods Middle School, celebrated her Bat Mitzvah in Israel on May 3, 2006, and had a local celebration on May 27, 2006 at Congregation Beth Israel Abraham & Voliner. Margolies, a 7th grader at Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, celebrated her Bat Mitzvah on September 9, 2006 at BIAV. Zepeda, a 7th grader at Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah on June 9, 2007 at Congregation Beth Shalom.

"We invite kids from all congregations to participate and consider designating Pups as their B'nai Mitzvah Project. We realize there are many worthwhile projects and causes, locally and internationally. We want to support others' projects and hope others will support ours," said Zepeda. The local youths are willing to speak to those interested in supporting this project.

How did the youths raise over \$6,000? The bulk of the funds came from direct contributions to Pups in honor of Bernard's Bat Mitzvah. Additional funds were raised from local efforts. At the end of last summer, the youths held a Pups BBQ and Movie Night at Bernard's house that raised nearly \$1,000. Several young children from the BIAV community even emptied

their Tzedakah boxes and contributed the contents to Pups. In addition, Bernard and fellow Pups supporter Rachel Kaplan, a 9th grader at Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, held several lemonade stands, which raised over \$60.

Inspiration for this project came from Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy student Carlye Reece, who celebrated her Bat Mitzvah at BIAV nearly two years ago. Reece is currently a ninth grader at HBHA, and is the daughter of Debby Berger and Dr. Jeffrey Reece. At her Bat Mitzvah, Reece spoke passionately about how Pups for Peace dogs in Israel are trained to save human lives. Bernard, Margolies, and Zepeda listened. The youths share a passion for dogs and Israel. When the time came to plan their B'nai Mitzvah celebrations, they remembered Reece's inspiring words.

Bernard even scheduled a visit to a Pups for Peace training facility in Netanya, Israel last May while in Israel celebrating her Bat Mitzvah. "Seeing the dogs in action was one of the highlights of my trip," said Bernard. This sentiment was echoed by her grandmother Marjorie Adler, who visited Israel for the first time; 10 year-old brother Beni; 86 year-old great-aunt Marion Lipsitz from St. Louis; and her parents Lisa and Jerry Bernard. (Bernard's older siblings, who were in Israel representing the United States in the Chidon Ha'Tanach International Bible Contest, did not accompany them on their touring.)

The Bernard group saw three simulations. "The Pups for Peace dog trainers asked Beni and me to plant a pipe bomb, pistol, and bullet cartridge in three different locations on an Eged Bus, a real commercial bus. In each case, the dog successfully located the items in less than four minutes," said Bernard, who had never before seen a pipe bomb let alone held a pistol or bullet.

"The visit to Pups was an educational experience for all of us," said Marjorie Adler, Bernard's grandmother. "It really helped me understand what Shira is supporting. So when Shira spoke about Pups at her Bat Mitzvah in Kansas City, I had an image in my mind of what we saw in Netanya, Israel. That made it much more understandable and meaningful," said Adler.

A visit to the Pups training site is one of the stops for the upcoming 9th grade HBHA trip to Israel. Reece and Kaplan will be able to see the fruits of their efforts – to see the dogs in action. "I can't wait for them to visit Pups and

see the dogs. I'll look forward to hearing about their trip when they return," said Bernard.

According to Eliyahu Krigel, Dean of Students at the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, "The Academy and the greater KC Jewish community have been demonstrating our commitment to ending the violence in Israel by partnering with Pups for Peace. Reece, Kaplan, Bernard, Margolies, and Zepeda have made important strides in their efforts to support peace in Israel. May we all learn from their example of applying theory to practice and continue in the process of trying to name our dog KC."

For more information on Pups for Peace or to donate to the cause, visit www.pupsforpeace.org. In order for credit to be given to the local fundraising effort, you need to note that you are donating to the "KC fundraising effort."

If any local B'nai Mitzvah youth want to join in this effort, please contact Shira Bernard at JLBernard4@aol.com.