

Cultural caravan

Throng of walkers converge to salute Israel

By JUDITH DONER BERNE
SPECIAL WRITER

I love this," Moreen Lett told her college-aged daughter, Danielle, as they walked from their car to join the thousands gathered for the Incredible Israel Fest held Sunday at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

"I think it's very exciting when the whole Jewish community gets together," Lett, a West Bloomfield resident, said of the annual celebration to commemorate Israel's Independence Day.

Carrying small Israeli flags and buoyed by a live band's spirited rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, more than 5,000 took part in the 3.5-mile walk.

It was a high-spirited if unwieldy contingent, as young and old, walkers, bike riders and in-line skaters, babies pushed in strollers and toddlers pulled in wagons, and dogs on leashes made their way.

The route took them east along Maple, through subdivisions stretching to Walnut Lake Road and then back to the JCC along Drake Road, all in breezy sunshine.

Dr. Leo and Mira Eisenberg, also of West Bloomfield, have walked each year since the local celebration began. And so has their dog, Jacob.

"From the first year, we saw it grow and grow and grow," reports Mira, who was born in Israel. "You don't miss it. Every year, there is something new."

"We're seeing everyone we haven't seen in the last 30 years of our lives," said an excited Susie Rosenzweig, a West Bloomfield resident. Accompanied by her husband, Max, daughter Rena and dog Goldie, she saw children she used to teach walking with children of their own.

"Oh, look," she interjected, as a plane flying a banner "Celebrate Israel" passed overhead.

"It's a fabulous day, fabulous weather, fabulous event," enthused a T-shirted Mort Plotnick, JCC executive director and



Joining in: Sara Langnas of Farmington and daughter Laynie, 11 months, enjoy the day's festivities at the Jewish Community Center.

West Bloomfield resident. "It gives people an opportunity to identify with the community in its broadest sense."

He pointed out "lots of generations families who have always walked together."

One of these was headed by Ida Goldenberg, a great grandmother from Oak Park, whose children and grandchildren walked beside her and whose great grandchild rode nearby in a stroller.

"Every year, the whole family walks together," she said. "It's a wonderful, wonderful feeling. We are all here to show the world what we Jewish people do."

A number of people sported T-shirts commemorating their participation in the just-retired second Michigan Miracle Mission to Israel, which involved 866

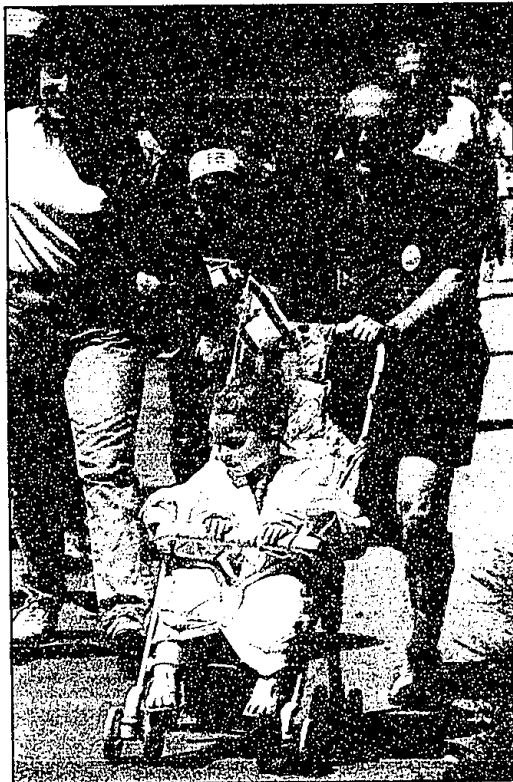
metro Detroiters.

Although the walk drew the largest crowd, many stayed or returned for events scheduled, for the first time, throughout the day, according to publicist D.J. Kucharski.

Other activities included a performance of Israeli and American nursery rhymes, an Israeli jazz band, the Farmington Hills Hillel Day School Choir and pop musician David Broza. Opportunities for families to take part in a mock archaeological dig, see kibbutz animals and sample Israeli foods were also part of the fest.

Fireworks about 9:15 p.m. concluded the event.

"In past years, after the walk, people just hung around," said Kucharski. "This year, we tried to bring Israel to them through artists, food and culture."



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOHN STORMEAND

Bingham Farms resident David Hermlin, co-chairman of the Walk for Israel commemorating Israel's Independence Day, participated in the 3.5-mile event with granddaughter Olivia Orley of West Bloomfield.

Site of Israeli capitol at issue

As more than 5,000 metro Detroiters paraded in bright sunshine through West Bloomfield Sunday to celebrate Israel's 47th anniversary, they couldn't avoid the ever-present shadow of Middle East politics.

And the issue of whether the United States should relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, as proposed in a bill by Senate Majority Leader and presidential candidate Bob Dole, was in the wind.

The Jewish people will celebrate the 3,000th anniversary of their ancient capitol this year. At the same time, Jerusalem is also holy to both Muslims and Christians. Its future is a delicate matter in the Israel-Arab peace process.

Berne and Marlene Margolis of West Bloomfield reflect the split on the issue. "Jerusalem is the center. It's an honest move," Berne said.

"I think you're defeating the purpose of the peace process," Marlene countered. "Right now is the wrong time."

Dr. Leo and Mira Eisenberg, also of West Bloomfield, both favor Dole's bill. "We should have done it a long time ago," said Leo, a native of Mexico who met his wife in Israel.

"It makes a statement," seconded his Israeli wife. "It's never the right time. It's the most efficient way to establish Jewish identity in Jerusalem."

Ida Goldenberg, a great grandmother from Oak Park, agreed that, "It should have been done long ago."

Moreen Lett, her daughter Danielle, and their friend, Jill Goldman all say this isn't the right time.

"I think at this point it should stay where it is," Moreen said. "First there must be real peace and a sincere effort on all sides."

Moment's respite: Susan Victor of West Bloomfield, with her two dogs in tow, looks for relatives while taking a break from the festivities marking the 47th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel.



OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest features a roundup of some Oakland County's top news stories as reported in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers in the last week.

■ DEVELOPER CAUGHT IN WEB
Paul Johnson, whose influence in Birmingham is evident through his charitable deeds, is "disappointed and saddened" that his foundation may have lost millions of dollars as result of the bankruptcy filing and subsequent liquidation of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy.

Johnson's real estate company developed both Merrillwood Mall and Birmingham Place in Birmingham and is a major property owner in the city. He also supports a number of charitable groups and organizations through the Johnson Foundation, which has more than \$4 million tied up in New Era, according to the Pennsylvania-based group.

But Johnson spokesman Scott Matby called the figure exaggerated, adding the Johnson Foundation is in the process of determining an accurate figure. He said Johnson investigated New Era thoroughly before a decision was made to invest with the group.

■ COURT SIDES WITH CITY
An Oakland County Circuit

Court jury has found the city of Troy and city manager Frank Gerstenecker did not discriminate against former purchasing personnel director Ronald Dowell six years ago.

After a five-day trial before Judge Steven Andrews, the jury took 1 1/4 hours last Thursday to find no cause of action for Dowell's claim of handicap discrimination in connection with his leave of absence for a mental condition in 1989 and his claims that the city manager prevented him from coming back to work. Dowell claimed handicap discrimination and "tortious interference" with employment relationship, intentional infliction of emotional distress and loss of consortium with his wife, Antoinette, who is a co-plaintiff.

■ SITE PLANS REVIEWED
Lathrup Village residents finally will get a look at The Sunnow Co.'s controversial plan to replace the historic Annie Lathrup School on Southfield Road with a 40,000-square-foot complex of stores and offices.

City Council agreed last week to consider developer Jeffrey Sunnow's petition to rezone the school site, now owned by Akiva Hebrew Day School, from public

service land to commercial use. A public hearing on the rezoning request will be at 8 p.m. on Monday, June 19 in the Lathrup Village City Hall. Council members will tour the school before June 19 with Sunnow and a Lathrup Village Historical Society member to inspect its overall condition.

■ COUNTRY LIFE

A development that Farmington Hills residents believe would ruin one of the area's most bucolic Natural Beauty Roads will have to be changed to win approval from the city planning commission.

The proposed plan for the 14-home Oakwood Hills subdivision, that would be built on 23 acres on the west side of Old Power Road north of 11 Mile, was turned down unanimously by commissioners, but will not likely go away.

"We're not used to seeing this level of caring about a community in other communities," said Rich and Rosemarie, a consulting engineer representing developer Joseph Trupiano.

Soamstad made the case for the development, which would push from 80 to 71 the number of houses on the meandering dirt road that has been officially cited

as a Natural Beauty Road by the city for its bounty of flora and fauna.

But 23 city residents protested the plan as "too dense" of a development for the historic, pastoral area.

■ PROVIDENCE TO STAY

Providence Hospital has been a vital part of Southfield since 1963 and it intends to remain that way for years to come, its chief executive officer says, even though a 6-year-old plan to move 200 beds to Novi still is on the agenda.

"If that was to happen, we would continue to run a very viable hospital here in Southfield," Mike Slubowski said. "But over 40 percent of our patients come from the Novi-Farmington Hills area."

"We would not be abandoning Southfield. There were rumors to that effect in the past, but quite to the contrary, our activities here continue to grow."

In 1969, the hospital filed a "certificate of need" with the Michigan Department of Public Health to transfer 300 of its 462 beds to Novi. That application has been laid up in Lansing ever since, Slubowski said.



Marchers: Thousands of people of all ages took part in the Walk for Israel, which wended its way from Maple and Drake east and north before heading back to the starting point Sunday.