

BELIEFS Values

Friends foster relationships between Arabs and Jews

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

When Farmington Hills resident Arnold Michlin lost a good friend and colleague due to tensions between Arabs and Jews, he saw it as an injustice that had to be addressed.

"If friends couldn't be friends because of this division, then bridges had to be built," said Michlin, who was president of B'nai Brith at the time. "It was a job that had to be done because the largest Arab community outside the Middle East is in Detroit."

Intent on building friendships between Arabs and Jews, Michlin teamed with Judge George Bashara of Grosse Pointe, a leader in the Lebanese Christian community, to host a dinner in Detroit for 30 professionals in November 1981.

"I invited leaders of the Jewish community," recalled Michlin. "George invited leaders of the Arabic community."

The newly formed constituency, which grew to 45 professionals within a month, became the core of "The American Arab and Jewish Friends," a Detroit-based organization dedicated to improving understanding and friendships between Arabs and Jews in an atmosphere free from discussion of the Middle East. The group maintains its autonomy as a program of the Greater Detroit Interfaith Round Table of the National Conference, on which Michlin

holds a seat.

In the 15 years since its founding, Friends has attracted 500 members in the tri-county area representing the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. Though they come from diverse religious backgrounds, members tend to focus more on their similarities as "fellow children of Abraham" than their differences.

"We're cousins. We all come from the same geographic area and our religious languages are similar," said Michlin, whose interfaith work also involved him as a past president and board member of the Southfield-based Ecumenical Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies. "We're all dedicated to family, dedicated to education and dedicated to seeing our children become bigger and better than we are."

"Even the main teachings in all three religions are the same ... We differ in food, but that's not important. We believe in being good, in offering charity and in helping each other."

The group of diverse professionals, who began breaking bread in honest fellowship, has evolved through its ongoing activities to impact the entire families of the Arab and Jewish communities, including children and youth.

Jane Shallal joined Friends as a member of the board after attending several annual dinners held to raise money to provide scholarships for high school seniors of Arab and Jewish



Friends founder: Oakland County resident Arnold Michlin speaks to members of "The American Arab and Jewish Friends."

descent.

"The scholarships - that's what impressed me the most," said the West Bloomfield attorney, who represents the Chaldean community. "And the tremen-

dous friendships I'm starting to develop."

Friends also promotes cultural, educational and social awareness among its youth through its annual essay con-

tests, which pairs Arabic and Jewish youth in the writing process, and programs like the AAJF Youth Service Corps, which joins teens of different cul-

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In town: Rabbi Moshe Tutnauer is an interim rabbi at Cong. Shaary Zedek.

Rabbi shares world experiences, faith

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Rabbi Moshe Tutnauer left a more simplified lifestyle in Jerusalem last August to take up temporary residence in Southfield as interim rabbi at Cong. Shaary Zedek, one of the foremost Conservative congregations in the country.

"A dear friend and colleague said he needed me," explained the 63-year-old rabbi. "And I thought this was the kind of congregation with which I could communicate on an intellectual and spiritual level."

The New York native arrived in Oakland County shortly after the Shaarey Zedek search committee began the process of selecting a third rabbi for its 2,000-family congregation — which has facili-

ties at both 27375 Bell Road in Southfield and at 4200 Walnut Lake Road in West Bloomfield. Tutnauer's nine-month stay, which includes a two-month home leave, will end in May. He has made the acquaintance of the congregation twice before as a visiting scholar.

"Rabbi Tutnauer has served as a rabbi of Conservative congregations in the United States for many years, and his wife grew up in our congregation," said Leonard Baruch, the synagogue's executive director.

"There are many ties and familiarities, and the fact that he does such an excellent job is the reason we selected him."

Though he has been here only five months, Tutnauer

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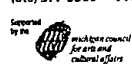
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