

BELIEFS Values

Third World artisans craft gifts

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

As she fingers handcrafted items from the Philippines at the Global Gifts and Crafts Shop, Janice Jones is mentally transported to another place and time.

"I've been able to travel and I've lived in the Philippines," said the wife of Dr. Stephen Jones, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Birmingham, where the shop is housed. "I did see Christian Cottage Industries and their cooperatives at work. Often I would see the children playing near the co-op but not with the packing. I really did see it as a family focus and a chance for the children to go to school and have family meals."

It's been 13 years since Jones accompanied her husband on a sabbatical to the islands, but her interest in helping the poverty stricken in the Third World nations lives on.

While her husband served churches in Colorado, Ohio and Pennsylvania, Jones was busy at work during the Christmas holidays setting up shop to sell the crafts of struggling artisans from around the world. When she



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. McKEE

Worldwide appeal: Gift items crafted by artisans from 40 developing regions greet shoppers at the First Baptist Church of Birmingham's Global Gifts and Crafts Shop. Profits benefit the craftspeople.



STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF KICKEL

Informative site: Funeral director David Techner (left) and GLOBALINK NEW MEDIA President Joshua Linkner check out the new Ira Kaufman Chapel web site created to educate the public about the traditions and customs of the Jewish funeral.

Web site educates on Jewish funerals

BY RENA FULKA
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Four times a week, David Techner frees time to lead children on a tour of the Ira Kaufman Chapel as he answers questions about death and burial.

His weekly classes on "Living with Death" at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield draw 60 high school students each year.

For the West Bloomfield funeral director, educating children and youth on the rituals and traditions of Jewish funerals goes hand in hand with consoling the grieving. His book, "A Candle for Grandpa," continues to help children he has never met cope with loss.

Seven months ago, when his teenage son, Chad, suggested a web site for the 57-year-old family run business, Techner took the request seriously. "It's not just a 57-year-old tradition. It's really been happening for 3,000 years and will probably go on for 3,000 more," said Techner, who has worked at the Ira Kaufman Chapel since 1965. "When we have a death, our goal is to make the funeral meaningful. We bury people so we can go on living. What every funeral should be is a celebration of a person's life."

In his new quest to educate, Techner teamed with Josh Linkner, president of Bloomfield Hills-based GLOBALINK NEW MEDIA, Inc. Together

they met the challenge of creating a non-threatening format that explains the traditions of a Jewish funeral and offers survivors the information through e-mail correspondence.

The web site opened unannounced in early October. During its first three weeks in operation, 1,169 visitors browsed the pages, 6 percent of them from outside the country. And the numbers are growing. "Our goal is to educate the Jewish community," said Techner. "That's what we're here for and that's what the web site is here for...to give them a source of information."

The home page offers sections on Jewish tradition from bedside prayers for the dying like the Vidui (Confessional) to funeral preparations by the Chevra Kadisha (Holy Society). A special section devoted to children provides sensitive answers to frequently asked questions.

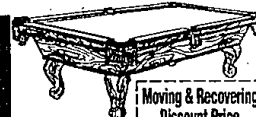
"It's a really nice resource for children," said Linkner, who lives in West Bloomfield. "It's an outreach to the community that says death is a part of life. It's a positive thing."

Browsers are also briefed on the chapel's history, staff profiles and services. "What's of comfort to people is that someone is here all the time, the Shomer, who prays on behalf of the soul," said Techner. "Shomer means watchman. He's here 24

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