

Campers

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"It came about with my experience. My goal is to have every Jewish child, regardless of how they function, should have a camp to go to," he said. "The children with special needs seem to be the group always left out."

So far, eight children have been integrated with the 200 young campers, ages 11 to 14, during the first summer session June 27 through July 23. The second session at Camp Meas, July 25 through Aug. 20, isn't offering a Horizons program.

The blending of campers apparently is working. "The other kids have accepted them without any trouble. The younger are the better it is."

Besides the special needs children getting a chance to participate with others their age, all the children at the camp are getting a course in sensitivity, Finkleberg said.

Camping trips

During the monthlong visit to Camp Meas, the campers will go on a three-day canoe trip, camp out for two nights and cook over an open fire. Counselor Steve Sobol, a medical student from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, explained the camp's strategic plan — 50 kids in all will be going on the trek. They will spread out in four or five trips across the water, there will be three staff members per nine kids and the different groups won't meet up until it's time to return to Camp Meas.

"We'll be in the complete wilderness using survival techniques to live," he said.

Sam Miller of Oak Park, a red-haired freckle-faced youngster with Down syndrome, will also make the trek by canoe. However, he was more excited about going to see a snake named Ka than discussing the trip.

Ka the Snake

Counselor Debbie Scott was giving a brief talk about Ka to other staff members and their children at the time of Miller's arrival. He petted and kissed

the large reptile from Indiana.

Scott explained how Ka wraps herself around her prey and smother it, then the snake swallows it whole. It will constrict only when the prey is the right size to eat — a rabbit is about the largest meal she will have, Scott said.

"She's a wonderful snake and has helped thousands of kids get over their fear of snakes. She's been touched a million times," Scott said as one leery child finally reached out his hand and petted the snake.

"I can't believe how comfortable Sam is with the snake. He goes right up to it and kisses it," said Ouwkerk on the walk back from the Environmental Nature Center.

"It took me three sessions to go near it," said Sobol.

He's a swinger

Jeffrey Stone of Bloomfield Township and his specialty needs trainer Jeff Dannowald from Ottawa, Ontario, headed to the mini-circus where two trainers were strapping kids into a safety vest and rope to swing from the trapeze about 50 feet in the air. The campers will put on a circus during the last week of camp, Ouwkerk said.

Stone, 13, who also has Down syndrome, jumped on the trampoline numerous times as the other campers waited their turn and cheered him on.

Afterwards Stone sat on the ground resting up and watching the others swing from the nearby trapeze. He said he enjoyed swinging from the gymnastic bar the best and decided to give it a whirl.

A circus trainer helped Scott position his arms far enough apart on the bar so that he could flip his body through and hang from his knees. Scott leaned his head back as instructed and brought his knees up to his chest, then positioned his feet behind the bar.

Soon the smiling youngster made the flip and was hanging happily upside down.

Lubavitch

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The Lubavitchers promote Jewish education and the traditional observance of Judaism, explained Polter. Recruits are typically Jews who have a need to more strictly adhere to the teachings of their religion.

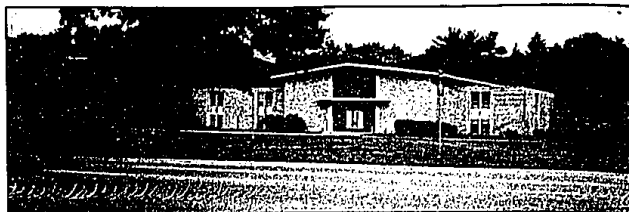
"We reach out to the farthest Jew in order for them to become closer to their own heritage," he said. "We sincerely know and convince Jews in certain places, regardless of their age or gender that they have a Jewish soul."

We want them to be more aware of God and the Torah. When we see Jews convert to other religions of the world, we see it as a Jewish soul and don't have the power to change."

Lubavitch has been called by many a fundamentalist ultra-orthodox movement. However, both rabbis said the description gives the group a negative connotation.

"A distinct orthodox group is more inward than outward. They stay in the community and close to the observances. We, on the other hand, are more outward," he said. "We are orthodox. We are similar in the way we pray and the way we observe the Torah, but we are an outreach group. We feel better when we reach out."

Some different ways Lubavitchers are extending their hand to the Birmingham community is through once-a-month bagel breakfasts. An offshoot of the local group, the Birmingham Association of Jewish Professionals, focuses on the downtown area and the local Jewish business people. Invitations are sent to various of-



Chabab house: The Birmingham Masonic Temple is used for Saturday Sabbath services for the Chabab Lubavitch congregation, a relatively new membership of ultra-orthodox Jews.

ices, such as a law firm, for a 45-minute breakfast beginning at 8 a.m. Polter gives a brief talk or "Torah tips for the professional" over bagels and cream cheese.

The rabbi described it as a "very classy" event where Jewish professionals can meet other Jewish professionals.

Other outreach programs include lecture series on abortion, reading Hebrew and discussions on creation and science. Last week his father, Rabbi Moshe Polter, gave a crash course in reading Hebrew at the Baldwin Library.

The younger rabbi also gives classes out of members' homes, on Jewish law, history, mysticism and the Torah. Children also are a large part of the outreach message. On Saturday evenings the rabbi meets in a member's house for the Birmingham Jewish Children Storytelling group for kids ages 5-12.

Rabbi Kagan of Farmington Hills said Lubavitchers are service-oriented people interested in strengthening the Jewish identity.

"The Jewish population is fac-



GUY WARREN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Learning Hebrew: Rabbi Moshe Polter assists student Richard Rosen during a crash course on the Hebrew alphabet.

ing problems of assimilation. We want to reach out to other Jews before we disappear into the woodwork," he said.

Of the large center planned for West Bloomfield, the rabbi stressed: "We are not bringing a Lubavitch community to West Bloomfield. The only Lubavitchers coming there will be directors. We are an outreach institution

and the center will service the West Bloomfield community as a whole for those who wish to use it."

The organization is based in Brooklyn, N.Y., and its leader is known as the Rebbe, a position that transfers loosely along family lines. The current Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, 91, has served in the position since 1950.

Hotlines to phone for helping seniors

Here's a list of toll-free numbers that may be of help and interest to older adults and their families. These toll-free hotlines may be able to assist the callers in finding the information they require.

- Arthritis Foundation 1-800-225-0292
- American Parkinson's Disease Association 1-800-223-2732
- Taxpayers Information (Federal) 1-800-829-1040
- Taxpayers Assistance (State) 1-800-487-7000
- American Council for the Blind 1-800-424-8586
- American Diabetes Association 1-800-232-3472
- American Paralysis Association 1-800-422-6237
- Social Security Assistance 1-800-772-1213
- Hospice 1-800-331-1620
- Energy Assistance 1-800-292-5530
- Cancer Information Center 1-800-422-6237

- 1-800-225-0292
- 1-800-223-2732
- American Parkinson's Disease Association
- Auto Repair Complaints 1-800-292-4204

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Beware of scams



RENEE MAHLER

The incidences of older adults being conned by telemarketing credit hucksters is growing. It is of concern to federal law-enforcement agencies, and they recommend the following ways to help avoid being the victim of a credit scam:

1. Be wary of telephone and mail offers from salesmen or companies you know nothing about.
 2. You can check on the company that calls by calling the attorney general's office in Lansing. The number is (617) 373-1140. The office is open 8 a.m. to noon and 1-5 p.m. Monday through Friday.
 3. You may also write to the Federal Trade Commission's Division of Credit Practices, Washington, D.C. 20580. You may also check with the National Consumer's toll-free hotline at 800-378-7080 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.
 4. Never pay application fees before you receive any service.
 5. Never give a credit card or checking account number to a telephone solicitor.
 6. Remember, if you need credit, the best thing to do is to go to your own bank.
- Also remember that if they ask you to call any 900 number there are charges for that and the charges will go on your phone bill. Unfortunately, there are many people who feel that older adults are vulnerable to all types of phony offers. The best advice is to be wary of any offer that seems too good to be true. It probably is.

Renee Mahler is a gerontologist and the director of communications and admissions at a Rochester Hills nursing facility. She is a former member of the Michigan State Commission on Services to the Aging. To leave a message for Mahler, from a Touch-Tone phone, call 953-2047, Ext. 1869. Send your questions to her at the Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

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