

# Plan

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using the funds from the hospital sale to help them has been discussed. Allocating a specific floor of certain hospitals was an idea he also first heard on Monday.

"There's some value in the concept from our perspective," Foley said. "There's nothing written down. It is an idea brought up and being discussed."

Although the state faces a \$1 billion budget deficit, Raczkowski said the areas that look the best in terms of funding are education budget and the Department of Community Health. "I anticipate from the state level you will be much happier this year," he told the crowd.

One audience member wondered whether the mentally ill would be turned out into the streets if there wasn't enough room for them. Another asked if money from the hospital sale would go into the state's general fund.

Raczkowski urged those present at the forum to make their concerns known and also to run for political office.

"This is the perfect time with term limits," he said. "If you don't like what's happening, you are only to blame if you don't run for political office. Term limits allows a great opening to run for office. You have a major number one issue which is near and dear to you. Write to your state reps. Camp out. I gave you my home address. Camp out at their home in front of their sidewalk. Write them, call them, harass them."

## Kids invited to spring break event

The Salvation Army of Farmington Hills is offering crafts, music and fun for elementary students this Spring Break.

The program is available, free of charge, April 1 - April 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., for children in grades 1 - 5. A lunch is provided. Extended hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. are available for a small charge.

For more information about the Spring break program call: (248) 477-1153.

# Turning the tables

## Hate crime victim uses experience to raise awareness

BY **SURAN B. TAUBER**  
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There are two parts to the story about Bradley Gonik, who was the target of hate mail over the Internet.

The first part deals with the way the West Bloomfield resident's life was disrupted after anti-Semitic death threats flooded his e-mail message box in November 1999.

The second part is the way the young man, who was only 12 at the time, turned the hatred directed at him and other Jews into a commitment to speak out about what he learned at a too-early age — that it's important to stand up to instances of hate and bullying.

Bradley, 14, now is an eighth-grader at Hillside Day School in Farmington Hills. His parents are Charles and Andrea Gonik. His sister, Jennifer, 17 and his brother, Jay, 16, are students at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills.

In the last two years, Bradley has traveled to eight different states to give his speech against bigotry and hatred.

He spreads the message that "issues like these should not be treated with silence but with action, and if we stand up as a people united we can face those deplorable situations."

"My speech lasts about seven to 10 minutes and then there's usually discussion," he said. He doesn't get nervous speaking in front of groups anymore because, Bradley explained, he believes in the message he shares.

His speaking engagements began after the local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League investigated the thousands of death threats that clogged Bradley's e-mail files one day when he was in an online chat room.

**Nationwide attention:** Andrea Gonik put together a collage of pictures and souvenirs of her son Bradley's talk in Washington, D.C., about fighting bigotry and anti-Semitism.



STAFF PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMANN



The message of the hate mail, sent by "Adolf Junior," was that Jewish people who survived the Holocaust should die.

"I was terrified," Bradley said. He said once the messages started pouring in, he found his parents and burst into tears.

"We didn't know what to do at first," said his mother. They immediately called the West Bloomfield Police Department.

"The police came out to our house within minutes," she said. "We couldn't believe how fast they responded to our call."

### A security blanket

Andrea said the police investigated the case until it became apparent it wasn't within their jurisdiction.

But the ADL was able to conduct its own investigation and learned, after many months of research, that the messages were sent from a computer at a business in the Netherlands.

Andrea said the ADL contacted the business and convinced it to tell its employees it was aware that someone was using their business e-mail to break the law.

"The ADL became our security blanket," Andrea said. "They stepped in right away and began investigating the case. They also called us weekly to see how we were doing on a personal basis."

She said her children were frightened. "They were afraid to go to the bus stop. They kept asking how things like this could happen to them in America," she added.

But the Goniks decided to "make lemonade out of

lemons," as Bradley's mother said. And when the ADL asked Bradley to speak at its national conference, he agreed.

Bradley intends to speak out against bigotry and about being safe on the Internet as long as people ask him to speak.

He's met several famous people and even shared the stage with Al Gore at a presentation in Washington, D.C. Bradley's speech there was featured on CSPAN. The television program *Cyberspace* did a segment on his experience.

When Bradley's not traveling with one of his parents to an out-of-state speaking engagement, the teenager enjoys downhill skiing, soccer and computers. He's learned to stay out of chat rooms, which a West Bloomfield police officer described to him as the same as talking to strangers on the street.

ADL Assistant Director Jennifer Loeren commended Bradley and his family.

"Brad turned a random experience around to reach out to people and to educate people about anti-Semitism and acts of hate," she said. "The ADL really tries to help people understand the impact of hatred and bigotry. We take seriously what the victims go through and try to help them understand and turn around something that is really horrible."

She explained that the mission of the ADL, a human relations and civil rights agency, is to focus on incidents of discrimination and bias against all citizens.

"We work with any person in the community who has a bigotry problem and we investigate the situations," she added.

**Keynote speaker:** Bradley Gonik, 14, speaks to crowds as large as 1,000 across the country about his experience with life-threatening hate mail on-line.

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# The Destiny of America and The Promise of World Peace

At this time of turmoil, the United States Bahá'í community offers a perspective on the destiny of America as the promoter of world peace.

More than a hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of Bahá'í Faith, addressing heads of state, proclaimed that the age of maturity for the entire human race had come. The unity of humankind was now to be established as the foundation of the great peace that would mark the highest stage in humanity's spiritual and social evolution. Revolutionary and world-shaking changes were therefore inevitable.

The Bahá'í writings state:

The world is moving on. Its events are unfolding ominously and with bewildering rapidity. The whirlwind of its passions is swift and alarmingly violent. The New World is insensibly drawn into its vortex... Dangers, undreamt of and unpredictable, threaten it both from within and from without. Its governments and peoples are being gradually enmeshed in the coils of the world's recurrent crises and fierce controversies... The world is contracting into a neighborhood. America, willingly or unwillingly, must face and grapple with this new situation. For purposes of national security, let alone any humanitarian motive, she must assume the obligations imposed by this newly created neighborhood. Paradoxical as it may seem, her only hope of extricating herself from the perils gathering around her is to become entangled in that very web of international association which the

Hand of an inscrutable Providence is weaving.

The American nation Bahá'ís believe, will evolve, through tests and trials to become a land of spiritual distinction and leadership, a champion of justice and, unity among all peoples and nations, and a powerful servant of the cause of everlasting peace. This is the peace promised by God in the sacred texts of the world's religions.

Establishing peace is not simply a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace.

Universal acceptance of the spiritual principle of the oneness of humankind is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace.

Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace.

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality of the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged, prerequisites of peace.

The inordinate disparity between rich and poor keeps the world in a state of instability, preventing the achievement of peace.

Unbridled nationalism, as distinguished from a sane and legitimate patriotism, must give way to a wider loyalty, the love of humanity as a whole.

Religious strife, the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts throughout history, is a major obstacle to progress. The challenge facing the world's religious leaders is to contemplate, with hearts filled with compassion and the desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their God, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of human understanding and peace.

Bahá'ís pray, "May this American Democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace.

During this hour of crisis, we affirm our abiding faith in the destiny of America. We know that the road to its destiny is long, thorny and tortuous, but we are confident that America will emerge from her trials undivided and undefeatable

- National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

For more information and for a free copy of the booklet "The Promise of World Peace" please visit our web site at [www.us.bahai.org](http://www.us.bahai.org) or call us toll free at 1-800-22-UNIT1  
Local Phone 248-737-4006