

CHABAD COMMUNITY CENTER

For Jewish Life and Learning

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OKC CHABAD COMMUNITY BUILDS UPON FOUNDATION

More than 200 people showed up to a swath of land near Lake Hefner for a groundbreaking unlike anything Oklahoma's Jewish community has seen in decades.

Since last May when the new Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning first moved from a blueprint to a footprint at 3000 West Hefner Road, the 8,000-square-foot building has come close to completion.

But the work of Chabad will continue to progress.

"I have watched Rabbi (Ovadia) Goldman over the last 10 years spend so much of his energy trying to secure venues, going all over the place. ... And then you have Nechoma who, besides having to cook in her small kitchen, then she had to schlep all the food to whatever venue Ovadia had found," community member Michael Barlow said.

"I think one of the things that the Chabad Center will bring us is that Ovadia and Nechoma both will have much more time and energy to devote to the spiritual side of the community, to the Yiddishkeit side of the community," he said.

Barlow emceed the groundbreaking event, where guest speakers included Rabbi Yehuda Weg of Tulsa, Rabbi Berl Goldman of Gainesville, Fla., and Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson.



THE CHABAD COMMUNITY CENTER FOR JEWISH LIFE AND LEARNING IS NEARLY COMPLETE. FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE INSIDE AND LANDSCAPING ON THE OUTSIDE ARE AMONG THE PROJECTS STILL UNDERWAY.

Center important

Community member Diana Robinson said she is "ecstatic" about the upcoming opening of the Chabad Center.

"I want them to succeed," Robinson said. "I believe we need to

support all sects of Judaism and I believe there's a need for Chabad in Oklahoma City."

Robinson said she has participated in Chabad activities like

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PROGRESS REPORT

The Chabad Center is projected to be finished over the summer. An opening celebration is tentatively planned for Aug. 24.

QUOTABLE QUIPS

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MICHAEL BARLOW

"I believe we need to support all sects of Judaism and I believe there's a need for Chabad in Oklahoma City."

DIANA ROBINSON

"I think the rabbi is just a fantastic influence and a fantastic educator, particularly for kids. ... I sort of scratch my head every day wondering why more people don't have their kids involved in it."

DOUG KAPLAN

FOUNDATIONS' TWO GRANTS OFFER AID & CHALLENGE GENEROSITY

Thousands of dollars are available to help fund the new Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning – if the community can rise up to a challenge.

The community has received a guaranteed \$36,000 from the Oklahoma City-based Inasmuch Foundation, and an additional \$125,000 is available from the Tulsa-based Maybee Foundation, but it comes with strings attached.

The Maybee Foundation's grant is called a challenge grant. The foundation will donate \$125,000 toward the building project if the community raises enough money to get within that margin of the overall goal.

That means that the Jewish community has to collect \$1,375,000 by the end of this June - including any pledges that would have to be paid by the end of December 2009 - to have the Maybee Foundation top off the \$1.5 million money meter.

However, the \$125,000 will go uncollected if the community does

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Building

Purim parties and high holiday services.

"Although I consider myself a reform Jew, I truly embrace the most traditional service for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. I love hearing the Kol Nidre sang by a chazzan; it is very moving and meaningful to me," she said.

Doug Kaplan said the most important work Chabad does is to provide a meaningful Jewish education for his and other children.

"Raising my kids is of the utmost importance to me as far as their growth as people but also developing their Jewish identity, and I think the rabbi is just a fantastic influence and a fantastic educator, particularly for kids. He's done a beautiful job helping to give my kids a beautiful Jewish education," he said.

"I sort of scratch my head every day wondering why more people don't have their kids involved in it."

Event full of energy

Those who attended the groundbreaking donned T-shirts, pins and even hard hats, and there was no shortage of camera flashes coming from under the large white tent.

During the event, community members who made generous contributions to purchase the land were honored.

Barlow said it was nice to see such a good cross-section of the community there, including members of Emanuel Synagogue, Temple B'nai Israel, and unaffiliated Jews; dignitaries like Edmondson; and representatives from the Christian Zionist community.

He viewed part of his role as emcee to be motivational, and spoke about how the local Chabad movement inspires him.

"It means that there's another

home for me as a Jewish person in Oklahoma City," said Barlow.

Kaplan, who attended the groundbreaking ceremony, said the atmosphere there was "exhilarating."

"There was a lot that led up to it – essentially, there was a dream, a small group of people that had a dream," he said.

And of his family's decision to take part in that dream, Kaplan added: "We were excited and proud."

Planning extensive

It took years to get to the groundbreaking, let alone the grand opening that is still to come.



DOVBER GOLDMAN, LEFT, AND LEVI WEG SIZE UP A CONSTRUCTION VEHICLE.



TOP: ABOUT 200 PEOPLE GATHERED FOR THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY. BOTTOM: THE CHABAD CENTER GOT UNDERWAY WITH THE HELPING HANDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

Goldman said he began developing the idea for the center as early as 2004.

Still, it wasn't until 2006 that he said he began turning that idea into concrete plans with a general contractor, the Gardner Tanenbaum Group led by CEO Richard Tanenbaum, and with architect Pascal Aughtry.

Since that early beginning, the community has raised \$1.1 million toward the \$1.5 million project. The Chabad Center for Jewish Life and



RABBI YEHUDA WEG OF TULSA, WHO IS ALSO THE DIRECTOR OF CHABAD OF OKLAHOMA.

Learning is expected to be completed and open before the end of August.

In looking back at how far the Chabad Center has come, Barlow said he is looking forward to what will come next.

"When I think of what's going to happen to that building," he said, "it's going to astonish people to see what a marvelous, functional and beautiful facility it's going to be for Jewish learning in our community."



RABBI OVADIA GOLDMAN AND ED KASWAN, WHO MADE THE FIRST LARGE DONATION TO THE BUILDING.

Grants

not reach that level by the deadline. About \$1.1 million has been raised so far.

Rabbi Ovadia Goldman said he is confident the challenge will be met.

"Given the generosity shown by the foundation and the importance of the work, I'm confident the community will respond and not leave that money on the table," Goldman said.

Foundation impressed

Chabad community member Stephen Tanenbaum went with Goldman to meet with foundation officials in Tulsa.

"They were impressed with the quality of construction as well as a lot of the community members involved," Tanenbaum said of the reaction of Maybee Foundation representatives.

"The reason I went out there is because we felt that we could get 100 to 200 grand, which is a significant amount of hard dollars that we would need to complete the project," he said.

Process lengthy

The process began about a year ago with an application and in-person meeting.

Tanenbaum said he and Goldman met with a small group of foundation officials to explain their goals, show them construction plans,

"I'm thankful to have participated in a project that basically is one of the first Jewish buildings in over 60 years to be erected in the community, and to know that I had a part in bringing this thing to life."

STEPHEN TANENBAUM

and answer questions and make sure the project met all the funding requirements for the grant.

"And they let us know the project was approved, baruch Hashem," Tanenbaum said.

Involvement rewarding

Tanenbaum said he feels fortunate to take part in the raising of money for the Chabad Center.

"I'm thankful to have participated in a project that basically is one of the first Jewish buildings in over 60 years to be erected in the community," he said, "and to know that I had a part in bringing this thing to life."

"I'm involved in the fundraising side because I believe in the project and I believe in the Jewish community."

BUILDERS DRAW UP PLANS TO FIT NEEDS AT HAND



**PASCAL
AUGHTRY**

Architect Pascal Aughtry had to think outside the box when drawing up blueprints for the Chabad Center.

In addition, the GardnerTanenbaum Group helped lower project costs by more than \$300,000 through contributions of time and materials.

Aughtry designed what is really a commercial structure as a large house to make it more economical.

He also made sure large rooms can be subdivided so they are more functional, and that the whole building does not have to be heated and cooled as a single space to control utility costs.

"I think they've got a nice project and I think it will be real functional," Aughtry said.



**RICHARD
TANENBAUM**

GARDEN SPACE TO BLOSSOM

Roses and geraniums will fill a serenity garden at the Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning in memory of the donor's mother and in gesture to those in need of a place for reflection.

Community member Moshe Tal is donating landscaping costs, including the garden and a separate playground.

In addition, general landscaping will include a significant number of trees and bushes to help contain sound and light, Rabbi Ovadia Goldman said.

The center will have more landscaping than required in large part because of positive feedback from neighbors about the building, he said.

"We felt we should invest to make them even happier and help bring beauty to the Chabad Center and beauty to the neighborhood," Goldman said.

But when Tal speaks about his donation, he talks mostly of the serenity garden because of the emotional connection he has with it.

"It's in honor of my mom. It's to have a peace and

quiet place," Tal said. "She was the most giving person that I ever knew in my life. She never cared anything about her; she always cared about others."

He said she used to relax at night by a small garden with roses and geraniums that she kept on her terrace. Tal's mother, Holocaust survivor Rubina Taib, died in 1977.

Several factors moved Tal to make the substantial donation.

Chief among them is that Goldman reaches out to all Jews and teaches about both Judaism and the Holocaust, said Tal, who identifies as a reform Jew.

"They still need more money to finish the inside of the building, so I told them I'd finish the outside," Tal said.

"Unlike most of the synagogues here that have membership dues ... he (Goldman) doesn't. You come in and you want to give a donation and it's obviously appreciated, and if you can't give you're still welcome. And I like it - that's how things are in Israel."

SIGNATURES SHOW SUPPORT

Members of Temple B'nai Israel, Emanuel Synagogue and the Jewish Federation of OKC have written a letter urging financial support for the new Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning, saying that Chabad will "enrich appreciation for our shared heritage."

The signatures of eight couples follow a letter written to inspire people to contribute to a cause its authors see as inspiring in its own right.

The fact that members of all of Oklahoma City's Jewish entities signed on also strengthens another of their points, that Chabad's doors are open regardless of the upbringing or affiliation that individuals identify with.

They wrote: "Chabad measures its success not by how many people participate with Chabad but by the increase in each individual's personal commitment to, knowledge of and pride in Yiddishkeit. ...

"Help our community achieve its goal."

We are writing to request your support for Jewish Life and Learning in Oklahoma City.

We are contributing members of Emanuel Synagogue, and the Jewish Federation of Oklahoma City, and the Chabad Community Center for Jewish Life and Learning. We hope to benefit our entire community.

**View the entire letter online at
WWW.JEWISHOKC.COM**

HOW TO HELP

**Help Chabad reach its
goal and be a part of
this momentous project!**

CALL

(405) 503-9006

EMAIL

rabbi@jewishokc.com

VISIT

www.jewishokc.com

WRITE

**3016 Castlerock Road
OKC, OK 73120**

WENDY KLEINMAN GUEST COLUMNIST



I recently received an e-mail from my college Hillel telling me they will host a ceremonial groundbreaking on the campus Jewish center this month. It is sorely needed, as what has served as the Hillel center for years is a small home that only has space for administrative offices.

But when I visited Atlanta's Emory University as a high school student, I was told the Hillel center would be completed by the time I was a sophomore. Given that I'm now two years past graduation and the organization has yet to lay the first brick, I have been particularly impressed and excited by the speed and enthusiasm for the new Chabad Community Center here in Oklahoma City.

Both the Emory Hillel and the Jewish community in Oklahoma City already are strong, but there is no doubt that having a building will serve to strengthen

them. The fact that individuals in the community here will soon walk through the doors of a place to claim as their own heralds a future full of promise.

And just as a building helps a community gather and grow, so too, hopefully, will this newsletter.

When I came to the Chabad community here in the summer of 2006, I didn't know much about it. Now, I know a lot - like what classes I can go to to learn more about Judaism, like the fact that there are actually more than a dozen 20-something Jews to hang out with, like who's having a Bat Mitzvah and who's having a new grandbaby, like the feeling of fahbrenging hours after Shabbos services have ended, like the feeling of being a part of a community full of ruach.

This will be the place where we share with each other all the things that make this community what it is. Also be sure to check out www.jewishokc.com for more of the same, and the new Chabad center to personally experience it all.

**NEWSLETTER DESIGNED,
WRITTEN AND EDITED BY
WENDY K. KLEINMAN**

NEWSLETTER TO OPEN NEW DOORS

WOMEN RAISE RESOLVE & MONEY FOR NEW MIKVAH

By Rietta Miller

Through the ages Jewish women have embraced their strengths and resources to further Yiddishkeit.

It was the women who eagerly gave their valuables for the building and beautifying of the Mishkan-Tabernacle.

It was from this example that the idea took root for a local mikvah event to celebrate the spirituality of Jewish women and empower them through the act of giving.

On Oct. 28, the Jewish Women's Mikvah Committee held an inspirational event in the lovely home of Kathryn Cox, complete with fine kosher cheeses and wines.

The guest speaker was Chani Carlebach of Canada, who spoke eloquently about the history and laws of the mikvah.

In response to community members' questions and personal reflections, Carlebach also expanded to talk about greater issues of femininity and holiness.

In the end, many of the women present were moved to give from their own resources.

A Chai club started with donations of \$1,800 had provided seed money of \$18,000 to encourage others to support the building and caring for the mikvah. More than \$36,000 has now been raised by local women.

The event helped the approximately 40 attendants reach back and connect to their matriarchal ancestors who found their resolve grow stronger as they journeyed through the dessert.

SPECIAL OPENING

Women will be the first to see the completed mikvah at a special opening event. No date has been set.



TOP: CHANI CARLEBACH WAS THE FEATURED SPEAKER AT THE EVENT.

BOTTOM: THE NEW MIKVAH IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION.



ADI ROTEM, AN ISRAELI STUDENT STUDYING MUSIC AT OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY, PLAYED THE PIANO AS WOMEN ENTERED THE HOME OF KATHRYN COX FOR THE FUNDRAISING AND EDUCATIONAL EVENT.



ABOUT 40 WOMEN GATHERED FOR AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE JEWISH WOMEN'S MIKVAH COMMITTEE TO SHARE INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS.



**Chabad Community Center
for Jewish Life and Learning**

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