



Dnepropetrovsk Rosalind Gurwin  
Jewish Community Center



**DNEPROPETROVSK-BOSTON STUDENT  
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM  
Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine  
May 23-30, 2005**

**PROGRAM REPORT**

**Lesley Weiss, NCSJ Director of Community  
Services and Cultural Affairs**

## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **BOSTON**

### **DNEPROPETROVSK**

#### **TUFTS UNIVERSITY**

Arion Robbins

Aleksey Rudnitskiy

Oleg Svet

Genya Kogan

Danielle Warner

Vika Viznik

Max Weiss

Stas Tereshkevich

Alex Zerden

Lena Kasatkina

#### **BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

Eric Fleisch

Alexander Landau

Rebecca Hartman

Oleysa Karpenko

Rachel Hillman

Yuliya Gorbunova

Chana Langman

Mila Shuba

#### **PROGRAM COORDINATORS**

Lesley Weiss, Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs, NCSJ

Sheryl Adler, Director of International Partnerships, JCRC Boston

Ari Kristan, Program Associate, Tufts University Hillel

Anna Berezina, Director of Outreach and Engagement, Brandeis University

Yan Sidelkovsky, Project Coordinator, Boston-Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Partnership

Mila Shuba, Director, Dnepropetrovsk Hillel

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

American Jewish students from Brandeis and Tufts Universities participated in a unique student exchange program focusing on advocacy and cross-cultural dialogue in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. The program was sponsored by NCSJ, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston (JCRC), the Hillel Foundations at Brandeis and Tufts, and the Hillel International Center, and coordinated by Lesley Weiss, NCSJ Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs.

The program was modeled after the successful Moscow initiative sponsored by NCSJ, the Houston Jewish Federation, and University of Texas Hillel Foundation. As in that program, the focus of this one-week seminar was advocacy. It provided an opportunity for American Jewish students to connect with Jewish students from Dnepropetrovsk, and to share ideas for building Jewish identity and community, and confronting anti-Semitism, in the emerging democracy of Ukraine.



Seminar Participants in Dnepropetrovsk

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

The JCRC of Boston has developed strong programming experience and personal ties through its highly effective Kehillah partnership with the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish community. Yan Sidelkovsky, Kehillah Project Coordinator, helped organize the program in Dnepropetrovsk.

NCSJ, having advocated for Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union (FSU) for over thirty years, provided governmental and community-level perspective to the training program. The Kehillah project is part of a national effort by NCSJ to link American communities with Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union.

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is developing Russian-speaking, senior professionals in the FSU to direct and oversee Hillel, placing a greater emphasis on student empowerment and leadership development. Anna Berezina, Director of Outreach and Engagement at Brandeis Hillel, and Ari Kristan, Program Associate at Tufts Hillel provided professional staff assistance in the selection and orientation of the American students and in coordinating the program in Dnepropetrovsk. The Hillel in Dnepropetrovsk works closely with its counterpart in Kyiv, as well as with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) office in Dnepropetrovsk. Mila Shuba is the Director of Hillel in Dnepropetrovsk and helped coordinate the program.

American and Ukrainian students were paired as roommates, providing them with an informal opportunity to learn about each other and develop friendships. The major themes addressed were Jewish religious and organizational life, anti-Semitism, and democracy building.

### **Program Highlights**

- Meeting with Dnepropetrovsk Regional Government
- Shabbat Dinner with Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki, Chief Rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk
- Meeting with Media Representatives
- Discussions on Anti-Semitism in Ukraine and the United States
- Home Visits to Families at Risk, Elderly, and Visits to other JDC Agencies and Services
- Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility for the Elderly
- Bet-Hana Women's Pedagogical College and Education Resource Center for Children with Special Needs
- Discussion on Democracy and Freedom
- Israeli Art Exhibition Opening with the Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine
- TKUMA Holocaust Research and Educational Center and Visit to Mass Grave Site
- Home Hospitality and Touring

### **FULL REPORT**

#### **Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki, Chief Rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk**

Rabbi Kaminezki met with the group in his office in the Golden Rose Synagogue and again at his home for Shabbat dinner with his family. He spoke about the history of the community and its current state

of development. Shabbat dinner was festive and enjoyable. For many of the Dnepropetrovsk students, this was the first time they had been to the Rabbi's home. For some of the American students, it was their first Chabad experience. All of the students were touched by the Kaminezkis' hospitality and commitment to the community.



Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki meets with students

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

### Dnepropetrovsk Regional Government



(l.-r.) Lesley Weiss, Dmitry Pavlov and Yan Sidelkovsky



Meeting with Dmitry Pavlov

Dmitry Pavlov, Department of Youth and Family, spoke about the interaction between student government on campuses and the local government. He said that while there is little tension between religious groups on campus, there are efforts underway to bring different groups

together to enhance cultural understanding. We discussed the role of student activism in the Orange Revolution and student activism in the United States. He invited NCSJ and two American university representatives to a student conference, "Young People on Their Way to Europe," to be held later in the week.

### **"Anti-Semitism in Ukraine and in the United States"**

The Dnepropetrovsk students shared their personal experiences with anti-Semitism. Alexander Landau from Dnepropetrovsk stated that anti-Semitic incidents happen daily throughout Ukraine. He follows reports on a website which monitors anti-Semitic incidents and reads regularly about assaults, anti-Semitic vandalism and other incidents in Ukraine. For example, the Golden Rose Synagogue was recently vandalized with swastikas. Another Dnepropetrovsk student voiced the opinion that every non-Jewish person deep inside is anti-Semitic, and that even some Jews have negative feelings about Jews. Another student thought that anti-Semitism was worse when she was younger and had decreased in the last 15 years. Another student described a conversation with a friend who only used the word 'Jew' in a whisper, because in her village it is considered a bad word. In general it was thought that anti-Semitism was not prevalent in urban settings, but still virulent in Ukrainian villages. Brandeis student Eric Fleisch expressed his belief that there are at least three groups in civil society: hard core anti-Semites; defenders and allies of Jews, and those in the middle who are neutral.

The Ukrainian students further stated that the police rarely respond to anti-Semitic incidents, and when they do, they tend to characterize them as generic acts of violence or hooliganism, rather than anti-Semitism.

The students discussed the Kyiv-based International Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP), which disseminates anti-Semitic material, and is supported by some Ukrainian politicians. The students noted that swastikas appeared throughout Dnepropetrovsk following the recent Presidential election.

I concluded the session by suggesting that in the United States there are a small number of hard-core anti-Semites and a large number of people in the middle, but also a large group of allies. In Ukraine, I suggested, there are a large number of hard core anti-Semites, a large group of people in the middle who are predisposed to hate Jews and can be easily influenced, and a small number of allies.

To combat anti-Semitism we must promote and encourage at least four strategies: 1) Education about Jews and tolerance; 2) Hate crime

legislation and trained law enforcement; 3) Positive public statements by government officials; and 4) Opportunities for Ukrainians to meet and become familiar with Jews.

## Media



Meeting with media representatives

Photo by Ya n Sidelkovsky

We met at the “Window of America” Center with Oleg Rostovtsev, Director of the Media Center of the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community, and with representatives from other media entities, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Ukrainian Jewish Gazette, and the Dnepropetrovsk city newspaper.

The media representatives described the state of the media in Ukraine today as very active and having a particular interest in the Jewish community. They downplayed the existence of anti-Semitism in Dnepropetrovsk, but said there is a need to remain vigilant as there is danger that xenophobia in general could increase. They minimized the importance of MAUP as insignificant, and are hopeful about the growth of democracy in Ukraine.

## Conference at the National Mining University: “Young People on the Way to Europe”



Lesley Weiss and Anna Berezina addressing a conference on Euro-Integration. Panelists included Dnepropetrovsk Regional and Local Government Officials

Photo by Ya n Sidelkovsky

Government official Dmitry Pavlov invited NCSJ to offer remarks at a conference dealing with Euro-integration. Accompanying NCSJ were two American university representatives Oleg Svet from Tufts and Anna Berezina, from Brandeis. I spoke about the goals of the student exchange program, NCSJ's recent meeting with President Yushchenko in Washington, D.C., and the close partnership between Boston and Dnepropetrovsk.

Following the conference, we met with Gennady Pivnyak, Rector of the National Mining University and discussed possible future student exchange programs.



Lesley Weiss, Anna Berezina, and Oleg Svet meeting with Gennady G. Pivnyak, Rector

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

**Visits to TKUMA (Ukrainian Holocaust Research, Education and Memorial Center), and the site of mass murder during the Holocaust.**



Arkadiy Shmist addressing students

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

In 1941-42, over 11,000 Jews were murdered in a ravine near the University of Dnepropetrovsk. A soccer field now covers the area believed

to be the site of the massacre, and goats graze on a nearby burial ground. Arkadiy Shmist, a local historian and designer of the Holocaust memorial, met us at the site, relating what happened there, and the Jewish community's efforts to erect a memorial.



Dr. Igor Shupak of TKUMA

Photo by Aleksey Rudnitskiy

TKUMA was established with the support of the local Jewish community, JDC and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, to promote awareness of Holocaust history through education and research, to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and to create a central memorial. Dr. Igor Shupak, Director, and his staff spoke about the activities and programs of TKUMA, including the establishment of a Jewish history and Holocaust awareness curriculum for all public schools in Ukraine.

### **Bet-Hana Women's Pedagogical College and Education Resource Center (ERC) for Children with Special Needs**



Tamara  
Olshanskaya  
facilitating a  
discussion at  
Bet-Hana

Photo by Aleksey Rudnitskiy

Bet-Hana is a seminary that trains young women to teach in Chabad schools throughout the FSU. Bet-Hana also features an

education resource center for children with special needs. It is the only special needs center that trains teachers in the FSU.

The Special Needs Initiative began in 1995 and is a partnership between the Jewish Family & Children's Service (JFCS) of Boston, JCRC, and Bet-Hana. JCRC and NCSJ lay leader Dr. Judy Wolf, together with her daughter, Sue Wolf-Fordham, were the initiators of the Education Resource Center.



Scavenger Hunt with students and parents at the Education Resource Center

Photo by **Aleksey Rudnitskiy**

Upon our arrival at the ERC, we received an overview of the center, a quick tour, and then joined the ERC children and parents in a scavenger hunt outside in the playground area. We divided into small groups and worked as teams. The American and Dnepropetrovsk students enjoyed themselves, felt they were participating in a fun and worthwhile activity, and the ERC kids and parents had a great time.



Lag B'Omer at Bet-Hana

Photo by **Ya n Sidelkovsky**

After the program at the ERC, we ate lunch at Bet-Hana. We returned that evening to celebrate Lag B'Omer with the Bet-Hana girls. Before the bonfire and dinner, Tamara Olshanskaya, Director of Bet-Hana, facilitated a discussion between Bet-Hana students and our group. The

group answered questions such as “what does freedom mean to you?” and “what is the meaning of democracy?” It was a lively exchange, and our students found it very revealing as to the different ways Americans and Ukrainians think about democracy, elections and freedom of information. For some of our Dnepropetrovsk students, it was their first visit to Bet-Hana and the Resource Center.

### Or Avner Day School



Small group discussions at Or Avner Day School (l-r): Lena Kasatkina, Anna Berezina, Or Avner student, Alex Zerden

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

We visited the school while it was in session and met in small groups with some of the older students, who are part of the Havayah winter camp program (administered by the Bureau of Jewish Education in Boston), and with Georgy Skorokhod, School Headmaster and his staff. Pictures, posters, murals, and other educational materials displayed throughout the building attest to the strong involvement of the Boston Jewish community.

Max Weiss and Rachel Hillman at home visit



Photo by Aleksey Rudnitskiy



Photo by Lesley Weiss

### Home visits to elderly and families at risk

We divided into four groups to visit four different families, bringing food packages to those in severe financial difficulty, and with home-bound elderly. For many of the students, this was one of the most moving experiences of the week. “Visiting that poor girl Katrina and her blind father really struck me. These poor people live in such squalor and have such hard lives” observed Tufts student Danielle Warner. “Without Hesed, this family would be in even more unimaginable poverty and despair,” said Tufts student Alex Zerden. Later, the group discussed the responsibility of government to its citizens.

Other JDC sessions and visits during the week included the Hesed, the Rosalind Gurwin Jewish Community Center, the “Chai” Family Service Program, and the “Tikva” Special Needs Club.

### Corky Ribakoff Women’s Clinic



Photos by Yan Sidelkovsky

Our visit coincided with the visit of a Boston medical delegation volunteering at the clinic. Dr. Johanna Perlmutter, a professor at Harvard Medical School, and Ob/Gyn physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital, and Rita Sneeringer, a medical resident, described the state of women’s health in Ukraine and the advances made as a result of the founding and organization of this clinic by the Boston Jewish community and Dr. Benjamin Sachs, Chief of Ob/Gyn at Beth Israel, and Chair of JCRC’s Committee for Post Soviet Jewry. The clinic was in the process of receiving the city’s first mammography machine, a donation from the Dana Farber Cancer Institute facilitated by Dr. Sachs.

## Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility for the Elderly



Chana Langman (right) speaking Yiddish with a Beit Baruch resident

Photo by Aleksey Rudnitskiy

Beit Baruch is the first assisted living facility in the FSU, and serves as a model of elderly care for the region. Rabbi Kaminezki told us that the facility has literally saved the lives of Jewish elderly, and rescued many more from horrendous living conditions. Housing over 60 elderly survivors of the Holocaust and communism, Beit Baruch hopes to eventually accommodate 100 residents. Before touring the facility, we were given an impromptu concert in Yiddish by a few of the residents. Afterwards, we divided into small groups and visited residents in their rooms where they shared some of their life experiences and spoke about their life at Beit Baruch. Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly and Hebrew Senior Life in Boston provides annual training and consultations to Beit Baruch.

## Israel Art Exhibition Opening Ceremony



(l-r): Oleya Karpenko, Chana Langman, Arion Robbins, Amb. Ben-Ami, Lesley Weiss, Max Weiss, Alex Zerden, Yuliya Gorbunova.

Photo by Yan Sidelkovsky

The group attended the opening of an Israeli Art Exhibition at the Dnepropetrovsk History Museum where we had an opportunity to meet

briefly with Naomi Ben-Ami, Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine, Yulia Gur, Director of the Israel Cultural Center, and other Jewish community members.

### **Summary**

Throughout the week, the students discussed issues relating to human rights, democracy, anti-Semitism, and the role of government as well as Jewish community life in Ukraine and the United States. In each session particular attention was paid to understanding the ways democratic institutions can be used to protect individual and group rights.

As the following student summaries show, the program provided the American Jewish students with a rich and varied introduction to Jewish life in Ukraine, and the challenges faced by their Ukrainian peers. The American students also gained insights into the history of the Jewish community in Ukraine, and the revitalization of Jewish life in Dnepropetrovsk through the successful partnership with the Boston Jewish community.

The Dnepropetrovsk participants learned about life as a student and Jew in the United States, as well as strategies for developing and defending the values of pluralism and tolerance in a democracy.

Follow-up programming will include press interviews and presentations to local Jewish organizations. Upon the students' return to campus in the fall, a follow-up meeting will be held with the Hillel Foundations, JCRC and NCSJ to discuss ways to support the Kehillah project.

### **Student Summaries (excerpts)**

#### **Alex Zerden – Tufts University**

*Ranging from informal peer discussions to meetings with religious and government officials, the diverse programs enabled us to engage many different, and at times contradictory, opinions about life in Dnepropetrovsk. This allowed us to absorb the spectrum of ideas and perspectives that define the Jewish community.*

*The Dnepropetrovsk college students were incredible assets for the trip. Since most of us Americans had very limited Russian skills, we were able to see life in Ukraine through their eyes, as Ukrainian Jews. Receiving honest answers about such things as college life in*

*Dnepropetrovsk or the prevalence of anti-Semitism among the youth could not have been answered by government hacks or older community members.*

*The trip was incredibly rewarding. It enabled me to substantially broaden my understanding of Diaspora Jewry. Many times in America, we cannot appreciate the tremendous social, cultural, political, economic, and religious opportunities that our country affords us. Seeing the progress in Ukraine firsthand gave me hope for the future of the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish community, as well as how much further there is to go.*

### **Danielle Warner – Tufts University**

*Having a younger sister with special needs, the Educational Resource Center at Bet-Hana was of great interest to me. I enjoyed seeing the facilities they've developed for children with all kinds of disabilities. Interacting with the children was a real treat. I'm glad they are attempting to overcome the stereotype that exists within Ukraine about handicaps.*

*We created a stronger bond between the leaders of the two Jewish communities, thereby tightening the relationship. We personally saw the amazing attributes the Jewish community had to offer, as well as some of its problems. By seeing this we are able to aid the Dnepropetrovsk Jewish community and help direct it in improvement. I think it was important to see all aspects of the community because it also gave the Boston students insights into how they can help to create an effective organization. I think it also provided us with the tools to educate others back on campus about the Kehillah relationship.*

### **Rebecca Hartman – Brandeis University Graduate Student**

*While I wasn't sure what to expect at the outset of the trip, I was ultimately very impressed with both the program and the community we encountered in Ukraine.*

*I was initially nervous about sharing a room with a Ukrainian student. I am generally uncomfortable in any situation where socializing is more or less mandatory, and having a roommate with potentially nothing in common besides our religion seemed especially threatening. I was thus both surprised and pleased to find that the Ukrainians were open, friendly, fun, and interesting. My time with them was probably the most memorable part of the trip.*

*I was also very pleased with our tour of the Chesed building, where we saw a wide variety of Chesed activities ranging from toddler to elder*

activities. I would appreciate better understanding where Chesed fits in the community, how many people it serves and who else is doing these services, but everything I saw from Chesed looked lovely. I was especially impressed with the art studios. The art displayed looked wonderful, and the teachers we saw also seemed very creative and caring. Overall, the Chesed tour was very nice, and would have been even better with a longer discussion about their mission in Dnepropetrovsk.

### **Rachel Hillman – Brandeis University**

As a daughter of a special education teacher, I was especially interested in seeing what Bet-Hana had to offer. I did not expect to see the vast amount of resources at the facility. I was also touched by the Beit Baruch Assisted Living Facility for the Elderly. The facility was significantly nicer than any assisted living facility I have been to in America, with its clean walls and floors, lovely waterfall, piano, and nice-sized rooms. When I heard the residents speak, I was impressed with how happy they were.

I enjoyed meeting Dmitry Pavlov from the regional government. It was a unique opportunity to be able to meet a member of another country's government.

For me, interacting with students from Dnepropetrovsk was an entirely new situation. I have traveled in the past, but I have never interacted, especially on a daily basis, with students my age from other countries. It was very interesting to learn from them about life in Ukraine, the difficulty of foreign travel, and growing up Jewish in a country where freedom of religion is different than in the United States.

It was saddening to me to visit homes and see how impoverished these people's lives are. The home I visited with JDC was the size of my parent's bedroom and bathroom. I was also shocked at the size of the students; I had no idea that Ukrainian people were so thin. The older Jewish community members were heavier and looked more like the Russian immigrants in my city. I was very impressed by the advancement of the Jewish community in Dnepropetrovsk, and I am proud to say that my city (at school) had something to do with that development.

### **Chana Langman – Brandeis University**

The day before I embarked on this Leadership Advocacy Program to represent Brandeis University, I had the opportunity watch the Brandeis commencement ceremonies. In Margaret Marshall's keynote address, she urged the graduates to "follow the legacy of Justice Louis Brandeis."

She continued to emphasize “one aspect of Justice Brandeis’ legacy: social justice.”

Above all, our trip was an advocacy trip, a trip so in-line with the spirit of Brandeis University, a trip in the name of social justice. Many organizations made great investments into this trip, because advocacy is the crucial tool for changing the situation. Further, youth and students can advocate so passionately, stirring people’s hearts and getting their attention. After spending a week in Dnepropetrovsk, witnessing such atrocious conditions, such as the state of women’s health care, it is a social and moral obligation to advocate. The famous Talmudic adage states: “Kol Yisrael areivim ze baze” (Shavuot 39a). All Jews are responsible for one another, and we make up a mutual support system. It is thus also our Jewish obligation.

I think the trip definitely strengthened the Boston-Dnepropetrovsk relationship, which was one of the goals. However, the main goal is advocacy. We all have a wonderful foundation, and I’m sure that our group will meet and even surpass the expectations and goals of the participating and sponsoring organizations.

#### **Max Weiss – Tufts University**

I was particularly excited to go to Ukraine because almost all of my family came from that area, either before or after World War II. I wanted to see the land from which my ancestry arose, and I was even more excited to meet our Ukrainian partners. I had little to no experience with anything other than Western Jewry, and I was more than eager to see how I would have ended up had it not been for a mere mistake of history. I was not disappointed. Our conversations were rich and deep. We discovered how different we were, as well as how very similar simply being a Jew, even living 7,000 miles apart, makes you.

What impressed me most about the trip was the sense of how much better these Jews’ lives were than most Eastern European Jews, or Eastern Europeans, for that matter. This is a direct result of the contributions made by the Boston Jews.

I realized the importance of Jews helping other Jews in the Diaspora. This idea is especially pertinent to American and Western Jews, who are blessed with prosperity, power, and freedom. We need to be reminded that there exist many Jews in the world who lack even basic needs, and that we have the power and obligation to augment their situations. My trip to the Ukraine opened my eyes to a reality and my role in world Jewry.

### **Oleg Svet – Tufts University**

*The trip for me was a little unique in that I was caught in between two groups: the Americans and the Ukrainians.*

*Being in the middle meant that I was not totally part of any group. The Americans looked at me as Ukrainian, while the Ukrainians looked at me as Americanized. But that did not stop me from having fun and trying to make the experience better for everyone. I did my best to help make the interaction between the two groups smoother, and the rest was up to the individuals themselves.*

*What I liked about the Ukrainians was how optimistic they were. Their “standard of living” was no match for the United States’, but they still seemed much more optimistic about the future, partied every day, hung out, drank, and so on. Their outward happiness could have resulted from internal despair, but I think that things in Ukraine are truly improving. Despite the garbage, the corrupt political system, the crime, etc., everything is getting much better, especially compared to what my parents told me.*

*There was another thing I noticed that is universal amongst Eastern Europeans: aggressiveness/competitiveness. This is a recurring theme in all my parents’ stories and in all Eastern Europeans I have met. Hopefully now, as things open up, all that energy will go towards positive improvement of Ukraine, as opposed to dog-eat-dog tactics.*

*Overall, the Ukrainian Hillel students were very nice, accommodating, and hospitable. They all seemed like they were having a good time, and I was happy to see that despite all of the problems they have (some of which are of a material nature), Hillel provides a social web of interaction where they can hang out, play music and have events.*

### **Oleysa Karpenko – Dnepropetrovsk**

*It is a common opinion in Ukraine that Americans are only interested and focused on American politics and culture. But judging from our program and my personal experience, I can say that it is not true. The American participants were very interested in the life and political process of Ukraine. So this stereotype proved to be wrong. It was the conversations with the American students that influenced my understanding of democracy. The brightest example of such conversations was the one at Bet-Hana during the Lag B’Omer celebration. Discussions with the Press Center representatives have influenced my understanding of the freedom of word.*

*During the visit I had the opportunity of seeing with my own eyes how Jewish people in the Diaspora are responsible for each other and feel connection with Jewish people from other countries. It was the special atmosphere created by mutual interest for Jewish life, Ukrainian and American cultures and human rights that I like most of all. I liked the Americans' readiness and willingness to understand the peculiarities of Ukrainian Jewish Community's life. Frankly, I felt as a part of a big American-Ukrainian Jewish family during your visit.*

*I enjoyed discussing the life of our Communities and their role in our lives and Jewish identity. It was very interesting to me to learn about American Hillel and the way American Hillel students celebrate holidays and do other activities.*

*The meetings with the representatives of City Administration, mass-media and religious leaders during the American students' visit were special as this communication was less formal and more open than usual and there were more opportunities for a dialogue.*

*Owing to our program I have learned about NCSJ activities and the considerable experience of this organization in the field of Jewish advocacy and renewal. Now I can share my knowledge with Hillel students about responsibility of Jewish people from different countries about each other, referring to NCSJ experience.*

## News Coverage

*Jewish Telegraphic Agency – June 3, 2005*

### **Students meet, learn in Ukraine**

(JTA) -- American and Ukrainian Jewish college students learned about human rights advocacy.

The students, who met in the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk on May 25-26, also had a cross-cultural dialogue on Jewish identity and community building. The meeting is a part of an international student exchange program organized by NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, that mentors Jewish students in political issues and skills that form the basis of American Jewish lobbying efforts on Jewish issues in the former Soviet Union.

The program, which links students in the sister cities of Boston and Dnepropetrovsk and is organized by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston and the Hillels at Brandeis and Tufts universities, introduces American students to Ukrainian Jewish life through meetings with students, Jewish community leaders, representatives of international Jewish agencies and Ukrainian government officials.