

New AJC Executive Director is Reaching Out

By Lorraine Thomas Sherman

Combating anti-Semitism and bigotry, encouraging the spread of democratic values, and supporting Israel's endeavors for peace and security are basic to the American Jewish Committee. The new Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee Westchester Chapter, Scott Richman, is planning to carry out their 100-year old mission. Projects already initiated will be continued by Richman, an attorney, who has also brought in new ideas.

Richman has worked in the Jewish community for 13 years. As first Executive Director of Dor Chodash, he brought together young professionals (ages 22-45), and Israelis living in New York. He was a program director at the Joint Distribution Committee for 10 years. In addition to strong advocacy

for Israel, he intends to continue building on the Chapter's diplomatic outreach work, and interfaith community efforts.

"Israel is a major focus of mine and of the Chapter, and given the current situation, is all I am working on," Richman said. "A priority has been placed on a project, 'New Perspectives,' for the past couple of years, and I am particularly interested in continuing that to the next level. We are showcasing Israel...not just related to the conflict but as a place of cultural advances and technological breakthroughs ...a cutting edge place that deals with real issues, the sort of place American Jews can connect to, not just through philanthropy or through the conflict." The series is meant to show everyday life of

people in Israel.

Various efforts are also under way. The Israel Film Center features several Jewish films every March. This year, Richman noted, "Etgar Keret, the most well-known

Israeli writer/filmmaker of this generation will present a film, talk about it, and about films and the literary

industry in Israel." The annual Gala event scheduled for June 4th, will focus on the new face of Israel--bringing in Israeli diplomats from around the world.

On January 22nd at Congregation Sons of Israel, Briarcliff Manor, Boaz Shapira, political correspondent spoke, relative to the February 10th elections in Israel, showcasing a very real, authentic Israel from the insider's viewpoint.. "It was very, very Israeli as presented. We tend to focus on American press and forget that others have a different perspective."

AJC nationally is producing Op-Ed articles to support Israel, Richman



Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee Westchester Chapter, Scott Richman

Interfaith work and other ethnic work, offering a perspective of the Jewish community in Westchester, is an important part of Richman's agenda. "We may reach out to clergy and do an event where we try to portray this perspective."

The chapter of over 1,000 members is very strong. The 70 Board members represent County

leadership, a committed and active group.

Referring to predecessor, Laura Lewis, Richman commented, "She did an incredible job building up the Chapter; my goal is to maintain it and continue to grow it, following the wonderful trajectory she laid out, continuing to examine the source of how the Jewish community relates to their religion and ethnicity."

Richman hopes to have a more communal Westchester Jewish Festival this year, celebrating all the different kinds of people and issues. "I am excited to bring this kind of program-