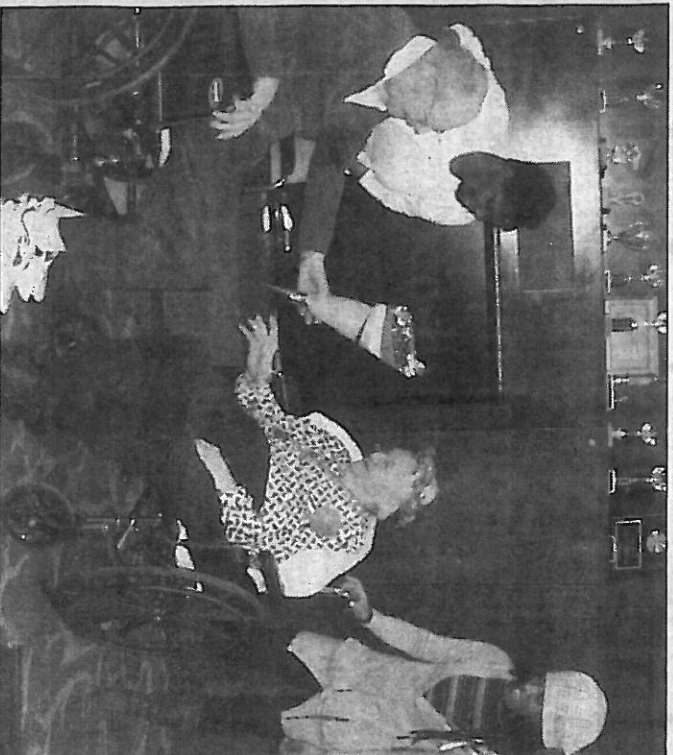


State & Local



At the Daughters of Israel Senior Olympics opening ceremony, Herman Barchanowitz passes the "torch" to Ray Gerner. Photos by Johanna Ginsberg

Going for the gold at Daughters of Israel

JOHANNA GINSBERG
NJN Staff Writer

As the nation's eyes were on Vancouver, another kind of Olympics was taking place at Daughters of Israel Plafsky Family Campus in West Orange.

On Tuesday, Feb. 16, the senior care facility kicked off its own week-long senior Olympics with a ceremonial torch relay. Made of metallic cardboard and fiery-colored tissue paper, the torch was passed from one senior citizen to another, six in all, across the residence.

Ray Gerner, one of the torch bearers, was appropriately decked out for the occasion. An ivy wreath adorned her head, and around her neck she proudly wore a medal

from the last DOI Olympics, held in 2004. "I'm a ray of sunshine," she said. "I like to help everybody, even in a wheelchair." As she carried her torch into the elevator to pass it along to someone on another floor, she led a sing-along of "Heveinu Shalom Aleichem."

Gerner was escorted into an area with an Olympic fanfare and a shower of balloons, preparing to pass the torch along to Leonard Lonoff. Holding the torch, he said, "Of course I'm watching the Olympics; I love it. I love all sports. It's a wonderful feeling to be carrying the torch!"

Sydelle Zabow, next in line, grasped the torch and said, "It's nice that even though we're here and we can't run with the darn thing, at least it keeps reminding us of the old times. Everybody thinks of now but they don't think of what came before." She said she enjoys discussing the Olympics' start in Greece.

Throughout the week, seniors and staff are participating in a variety of Olympic challenges, from a ring toss to trivia competition, to volleyball. Although there was no figure skating or ice hockey planned, residents were set to compete in table hockey, in place of skiing and luge, there was a "snowball toss" — with beanbags.

With a capacity for 300 residents, there are currently 275 living at Daughters of Israel. All who are able were invited to participate.

Gold, silver, and bronze medals will be given to winners in each competition in a closing ceremony on Friday, Feb. 19.

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Herman Barchanowitz celebrates with an aide as he carries the Daughters of Israel Olympic "torch."

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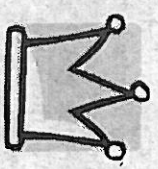
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Daughters of Israel



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