

# *The Polinger Pulse*

*A Publication of the Polinger Family Foundation*

*Summer 2007*

## **Music Fest A Global Affair**

### ***Festival Performers Span the Globe***

**M**usic of all kinds filled the air as the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Jewish Music Festival (WMJF) took to the stage to sell-out crowds the first week of June, with performances ranging from ancient Hebrew chants to up-to-the-minute hip hop beats.

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Initiated by the DC Jewish Community Center in 1999 at the behest of the Polinger Foundation, which remains its major sponsor, the Festival strives to highlight the diversity and creativity of Jewish music, while offering less-engaged Jews an opportunity to connect with aspects of their culture through music, and fostering community connections across lines of religion, culture, and age.

Supporting the performing arts in the Washington area has always been a vital part of the Foundation's mission, and the notion of creating a connection to Jewish life and culture through music dovetails seamlessly with its long-standing interest in reaching out to unaffiliated or unengaged Jewish populations.

This year's Festival was especially successful at engaging young and first-time concertgoers. Not only was overall attendance up 45% over last year's numbers, but over 60% of those surveyed reported attending a WMJF event for the

first time, and almost 35% were under the age of 35.

Festival headliners this year were Grammy-winning klezmer superstars the Klezmatics, known for their fusion of traditional klezmer music with gospel, African, and even punk influences.



**Israeli pop diva Rita drew the biggest crowds of the Festival to her closing night show. Photo by Natan Fingerman.**

Also featured were Orthodox hip-hopper Y-Love, beat-boxer DJ SoCalled, Duo46, Danya and Eyal, Ari Gold, and Israeli superstar Rita.

You can find additional Festival coverage and performance information here:

<http://www.theaterj.org/center-for-arts/music/washington-jewish-music-festival>

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## **Kids Flock to THEARC**

### **March Open House Shines Spotlight on the Arts**

**Y**ou didn't have to go far to find the smiles on March 4 – they were everywhere. From the kids trying out instruments in the “instrument garden,” to those practicing their silk-screening skills with a little help from an adult volunteer from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, to the jazz concert in the 365-seat theater – everywhere you looked around the THEARC's Community Open House, people were beaming.

THEARC is a state-of-the-art performing arts complex created in 2005 to provide arts, recreation and educational programming to underserved families east of the Anacostia River.

Although the neighborhood where THEARC sits represents only a quarter of Washington's



**Face painting and balloons were among the numerous activities available at THEARC's Community Open House.**

overall population, it is home to nearly 45% of the city's children. Almost 7000 live within a mile of THEARC, over half of them in poverty.

More than two thirds of the homes in this part of the city are headed by single parents. Families in this area face significant challenges, including a near-total lack of cultural programs for children and youth.

Into this gap stepped the THEARC, a \$27 million 110,000 square foot cultural, recreational, and health center located on 16.5 acres east of the river.

From the beginning, the innovative 9-agency collaboration (officially known as the Town Hall Education Arts and Recreation Campus) set out to make an unprecedented array of programs and services – everything from dance, music, and art, to academics and sports, to employment training, counseling, and health care – available under one roof.

For the Polinger Foundation, THEARC represented a wonderful opportunity to expose young people to the performing arts and potentially inspire a lifelong involvement in and love of the arts, as well as a chance to provide enriching

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**At the Mental Health Association of Montgomery County's May 8 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Executive Director Sharon Friedman presents an award to Polinger Foundation Board Members Lorre Polinger and Jan Chavis in recognition of the Foundation's long-time support of the agency.**

# *The Polinger Pulse*

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*(cont. from previous page)*

and meaningful programming to youth and teens.

In 2006, the Foundation founded the Arts Fund for THEARC to support a broad range of visual and performing arts initiatives at the center. This spring's event, also sponsored by the Foundation, was a chance for THEARC to throw open its doors to the community and spotlight its numerous cultural and arts education programs.

## **New Grants Approved**

Spring 2007 Polinger Foundation grant recipients are:

**The Abraham Fund – \$35,000**

**The Engagement Project \$25,000**

**EntryPoint – \$25,000**

**The Gandhi Brigade (youth video project) – \$50,000**

**Hillel - \$40,000**

**Israel on Campus Coalition \$10,000**

**THEARC – \$40,000**

**Washington Jewish Music Festival – \$35,000 (plus \$15,000 challenge grant)**

Nearly 400 children and families, many of them first-time visitors, participated in the afternoon's activities. The Polinger Foundation plans to fund the event again next year and also hopes to attract the support of other funders to the project.

## **Got Video?**

### **Local Youth Speak; Silver Spring Listens**

**D**id you know that fewer than half of all Washington, DC 9th graders will stay in school long enough to graduate from high school?

This is an astonishing statistic and one with tremendous social and economic consequences. Nationally, 72 percent of black males who are high school dropouts are unemployed. For Latina girls, whose high school graduation rate is the lowest of all groups, more than half will be pregnant before they reach their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gangs, drugs, poverty – the potential societal and personal costs can be staggering.

For the Polinger Foundation, whose involvement with issues affecting family life is longstanding, the question was how best to develop and support programming that could address some of the needs of greater Washington's youth population.



**A Silver Spring teen prepares for a video shoot.**

The answer lay within the field of "positive youth development." Groups endorsing this approach provide meaningful opportunities that give teens the chance to get involved with activities and issues, build skills, and exercise leadership. The self-confidence, trust, and practical knowledge that young people gain from these opportunities keep them away from risky behaviors and help them grow instead into confident, engaged, and self-sufficient adults.

*(cont. on p. 4)*

# *The Polinger Pulse*

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*(cont. from p. 3)*

Using this model, in the spring of 2006 the Foundation created the Silver Spring Youth Collaborative (SSYC), a consortium of youth-serving organizations in the Silver Spring area charged with developing innovative solutions for engaging and empowering local youth.

The SSYC launched its first program in fall of 2006, using video creation as a vehicle for

community advocacy, leadership development, and youth voice. The group's first initiative, "Finding Our Turf," took 15 teens and taught them video production skills while also providing the tools to meaningfully influence the outcome of an ongoing community issue – the use of public recreational space in downtown Silver Spring.

Media attention, a city council presentation, and invitations to participate in public forums on the future of the downtown space have been direct consequences of the first phase of the project.

With a second round of funding from the Foundation, a new program, "What's Your Story," involving 50 additional teens and 25 adults, was launched this past spring. Future plans call for the teens themselves to teach the skills they have learned to other youth as the project continues to grow.

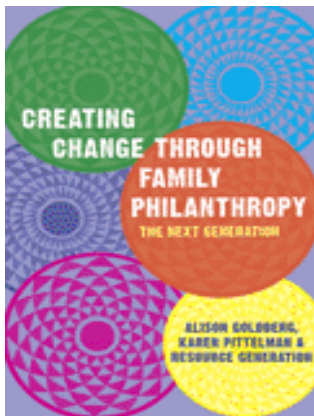
For Richard Jaeggi, the primary adult advisor to the teens in the video

project, "What gratified me most was watching the young producers start to understand, maybe for the first time, that what they had to say was important and that people of influence wanted to listen to them."

You can view the "Finding Our Turf" video here:

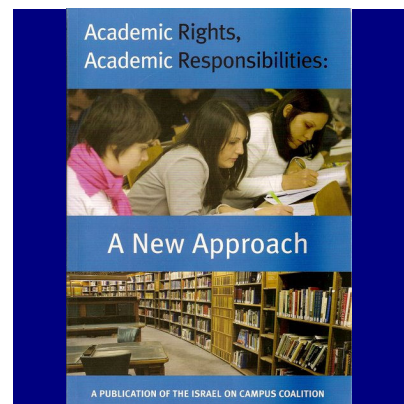
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3ThdOfKRU>

## ***Recommended Reading***



### **Creating Change Through Family Philanthropy: The Next Generation**

By Alison Goldberg, Karen Pittelman, and Resource Generation.



The Polinger Foundation was delighted to announce the March launch of the Israel on Campus Coalition's long-awaited monograph on academic freedom. The monograph, underwritten by the Foundation, will be distributed to university presidents, leading Jewish and community groups, and the media, and will also be available via a dedicated website. For full monograph text, go to:

[http://www.israelcc.org/NR/rdo\\_nlyres/46A1605D-F83B-459D-A59B-82803CB5198D/0/academic\\_rights\\_responsibilities.pdf](http://www.israelcc.org/NR/rdo_nlyres/46A1605D-F83B-459D-A59B-82803CB5198D/0/academic_rights_responsibilities.pdf)