

Israel festival is a go

Stanley Park will host community's celebration.

You don't have to be Greek to appreciate Vancouver's popular Greek Days, just as you don't have to be from the Caribbean to be infected with the spirit of Caribbean Days. On Sept. 14, you won't have to be from Israel to appreciate the diversity of music and culture on display at Celebrating Israel at 60.

This year marks Israel's 60th birthday and, to celebrate the occasion, the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver (JCCGV) has teamed up with the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver to create Celebrating Israel at 60, an event that will celebrate both Israel and the local Jewish community.

"With this event we hope to showcase Israel's formidable accomplishments and contributions," said Tamara Frankel, event co-chair. "Israel has been the target of much negative press, and we believe it's high time her positive accomplishments are highlighted and celebrated."

Following the annual Terry Fox Run, at Stanley Park's Lumberman's Arch, between noon and 6 p.m. (rain or shine), there will be live music, dancing, lots of food, children's activities, a mini film festival, an Israeli shuk, a teen zone and educational workshops. To cap off the afternoon, popular Israeli singer Pablo Rozenberg will perform. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people are expected to attend.

"This event is the first of its kind in Vancouver," said event co-chair Shannon Gorski. "The potential for where this event might take us is limitless. I am looking forward to attending Celebrating Israel at 60 with my friends and family, Jewish and not Jewish, and I believe that celebrating Israel's birthday will become an integral part of Vancouver, much like Greek Days."

While no decisions have been made yet on whether this will become an annual happening, organizers are hopeful that Vancouver can replicate the success of other annual Jewish celebrations across North America.

"Jewish community organizations throughout North America typically program a day every year to celebrate Israel," said Frankel. "With this year being Israel's 60th birthday, the Jewish federations, along with Jewish community centres nationwide, have initiated celebrations of a much larger scope and we hope that Vancouver's community-wide celebration in September will mark the first of many to come."

Of course, planning a large event comes with some headaches. Orig-

inally, organizers had hoped to hold the celebration on West 41st Avenue, adjacent to the JCCGV, which would have required road closures and, therefore, city approval, but the process to acquire approval was a lengthy one so, when Lumberman's Arch became available, organizers were quick to secure it. Since Celebrating Israel at 60 is loosely modelled after San Francisco's Israel in the Gardens celebration, organizers felt that Vancouver's iconic Stanley Park would be a perfect fit for the occasion.

Once the venue was established, the next task was to enlist the many



Shannon Gorski, left, and Tamara Frankel

committee members needed. Honorary chair Gary Averbach has been an advocate of the event from the start and, once his daughter, Gorski, was brought on board, between her influence and that of Frankel, the rest of the committee members were recruited and the organizing began in earnest.

"Prior to the committees being formed, we were literally all over the map," said Gorski. "Ideas on what the day would look like were taking on many forms and I, for one, was feeling very overwhelmed, but before too long we had established a number of committees, chaired by very competent members of our community."

Gorski, a new board member at the JCCGV, complements Frankel, originally from Israel, but who has lived in Vancouver for many years. Between the two women, they represent the spirit of the event, which is to celebrate Israel's past 60 years and many achievements while introducing a whole new generation to Jewish music, dance, culture and history. With the recent addition of the *Jewish Independent* as a media sponsor, the organizers are optimistic about the local Jewish community pulling together to ensure a success.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Shalom B.C. volunteer co-ordinator Judy Stern at 604-257-5181. For more information about Celebrating Israel at 60, contact Debbie Tabenkin at 604-257-5113 or visit jccgv.com/israel-60/home.htm.

— Courtesy of the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver

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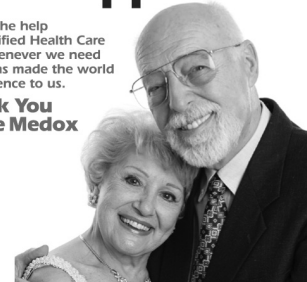
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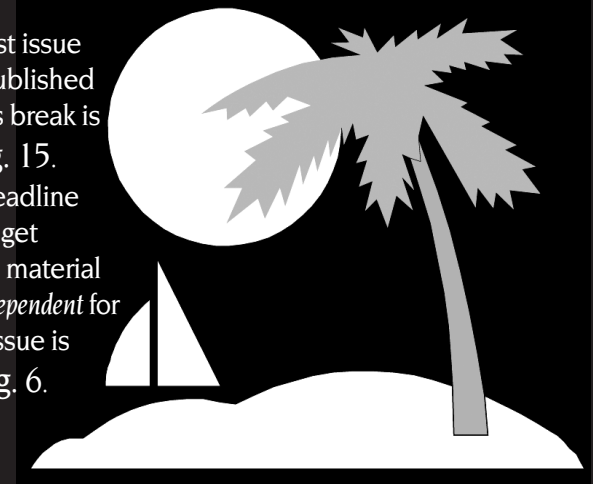
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