

5 Towns in NYC to 'Celebrate Israel'

By Malka Eisenberg

Schools, shuls and individuals from the Five Towns joined hundreds of thousands of people from throughout the tri-state area and beyond to demonstrate support for the State of Israel, at the 50th Annual Celebrate Israel Parade and Israel Day Concert in Manhattan on Sunday.

The parade line-up included 16 marching bands, 30 floats, over 80 schools and organizations, street performer groups and political and civic dignitaries — 35,000 marchers in all — led by Grand Marshals Martin and Melode Scharf of Lawrence.

Security with a heavy police presence was evident and welcomed in and around the parade route. The enthusiastic marchers, in spite of the humidity and warm sun, were a sea of blue and white Israeli flags, colorful T-shirts and banners proclaiming the parade's theme, "Picture Israel: The Art and Craft."

Among participating Five Towns-area schools were the Hebrew Academy of Five Towns and Rockaway, Hebrew Academy of Long Beach, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, North Shore Hebrew Academy, Shalhevet, Shulamith, Rambam, and Yeshiva Bitachon of Belle Harbor.

Spectators hugged the barriers, waving flags, applauding and cheering as the marchers flowed down the street.

Danny Frankel, executive director of the Young Israel of Woodmere, proclaimed, "We are very, very, very happy to be here."

"It was terrific," said Karen Ostrove, creative director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, NY. She praised the colorful groups, T-shirts, banners and improved music systems. "The rush of feelings of love for Israel was palpable," she said.

As for preparations for next year's parade, "We first take a couple weeks to clean up, evaluate, and then start all over again — July sounds about right," said Ostrove. "It takes a whole year to create this incredible celebration! See you again next year, tentatively on June 1."

First time marchers in this year's parade included Kids of Courage, Ohel/Camp Kayle and the Cyprus Federation of America. Standouts included West Point Gadets, Israel's soccer team, and two camels with the Zone Camp float. Upbeat Israeli and Chasidic music from boom boxes and bleachers along the route alternated with the brass and drums of the marching bands. The Maimonides Academy traveled from Los Angeles to participate.



HAFTR students carried their banner along Fifth Ave.



Joyous HAFTR marchers cheered the State of Israel.



Hebrew Academy of Long Beach students represented both their school and their South Shore communities with unbounded youthful enthusiasm along the parade route.

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HAFTR students took to heart the parade's theme: "Picture Israel..."



Everyone from Hebrew Academy of Nassau County seemed quite happy on Sunday.



PHOTO: JEFF GARDNER/JEWISH STAR

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Photos by Tom Callan/Jewish Star

Teachers, administrators and students wearing light blue T-shirts, carried colorful posters with the parade theme at the Celebrate Israel Parade on Sunday.



HAFTR students in bright orange sing and hold fake torches as they march.



Brandeis students in pale green carry their banner up Fifth Avenue.



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