



Gift Bestowed to Name Senior Activity Center

Honoring the memory of Melvin G. Shimm

Steven Drysdale,
Partnership for a Jewish Center

The Partnership for a Jewish Center is proud to announce that it has received a naming gift from **Cynia Shimm** that will dedicate the Shimm Senior Activity Center in memory of her late husband, **Melvin Shimm**, a long-time member and leader of our community who passed away in 2005.

Cynia and Mel came to Durham in the early fifties when Mel was offered a Professorship at Duke Law School. Cynia accompanied him, having graduated from Yale Medical School the same year that Mel had graduated from Yale Law School. Cynia stayed at home for several years raising their two sons, and then resumed her medical career. Today there are also two grandsons.

Having come to Durham at mid-century, the Shimms found a very different Jewish community from the one we have today. Although they were part of the soon-to-be growing community of Jewish academics, most members of the community were small shopkeepers. There was no Jewish Federation – only one synagogue, an Israel Bonds drive and a Hadassah chapter.

Their first involvement was with Beth El Congregation, where Mel served as President for a total of six years. During the Six Day War in 1967, Mel was among those in the community that galvanized support for Israel through the establishment of an active UJA, which led to the creation of the current Federation. However, before the Federation was organized, growing awareness of needs within the community led to the formation of the Jewish Family Service, which later was incorporated into the Federation.

Cynia joined the Jewish Family Services Advisor Committee when she retired from her practice in 1994, and she has been involved with the Committee ever since. She has served as the Chair and as a member of JFS, as well as Chair and member of the Services to Senior Sub-Committee. Her involvement in JFS and the Services to Senior Sub-Committee has led her to appreciate the growing needs of our community's changing demographic.

As the Jewish population ages, the community is called upon to provide more and more services. The new Shimm Center will alleviate the severe shortage of space that now hampers the development of those services. The new facility will feature space for informal gatherings in a senior lounge, as well as more formal meeting and activity space. Seniors, of course, will have use of all the JCC facilities, including the arts and health and fitness areas, with programs geared specifically for seniors.

That commitment to a vision of the future is at the core of Cynia's generous commitment to name the Shimm Senior Activity Center. It will ensure that our new facility will be a magnet for seniors for many years to come, and a most fitting tribute to Melvin and Cynia Shimm for their many years of devotion to our community.

For more information on the Israel Center, contact Ziva Raney at (919) 489-5335.

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“His deft intellect, very genteel manner, and long-time commitment to Jewish causes commanded respect from individuals in all camps, yet his leadership assertively directed the synagogue towards what he considered to be the community's future.”

– Barak Richman, in a Duke publication honoring Mel Shimm

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