

# *The Jewish* **Post & Opinion**

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## **Tree story for Tu B'Shevat, New Year of the trees**

For those of you living in climates like Indianapolis, currently experiencing snow, freezing temperatures and sunset by 5:30 p.m., I have a story to share that is WARM and de-LIGHT-ful. This is in honor of Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the trees, and demonstrates how important they are.

Just after Thanksgiving on Nov. 30, 2009, a new sculpture was formally dedicated at The Children's Museum (TCM) of Indianapolis. Depicting a page from the diary of Anne Frank, it was commissioned for the museum's new Anne Frank Peace Park.

In our April 15, 2009 issue, I wrote about a permanent exhibit at the museum that is a replica of the Secret Annex where Anne Frank was in hiding with her family and others during World War II. It is part of an exhibit titled "The Power of Children: Making a Difference." Anne Frank's section is called "Facing Hatred: Daring to Dream: The Power of Words."

This is the only permanent Anne Frank exhibit in the U.S., approved by the Anne Frank Center USA in New York ([www.annefrank.com](http://www.annefrank.com)) and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam ([www.annefrank.org](http://www.annefrank.org)).

Now outside in front of the museum, something new is being established. One might expect this to be taking place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Denver, Detroit or Cleveland. But it is here in Indianapolis with an approximate Jewish population of about only 10,000.

The 150-year-old horse chestnut tree that stands outside the Secret Annex and which provided comfort for Anne Frank was suffering from a fungus disease, but so far is being preserved. Last spring the Anne Frank Center in New York contacted TCM about the incredible opportunity to receive one of just three initial saplings being grown in Holland from the dying Chestnut tree in Amsterdam. Of the other two, one is to go to the White House, and the other to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

In addition, TCM is slated to receive the saplings that will be planted at eight other locations to care for them during their "quarantine period" in their BioTech Lab up in ScienceWorks at TCM. The quarantine period is three years.

"We are very excited about this opportunity to receive and care for these world treasures," Jeffrey H. Patchen, president and CEO of TCM remarked at the dedication.... "It is our hope that the Anne Frank Peace Park and Diary Sculpture will serve as a remembrance of the tragedy of the Holocaust, but also as a symbol of Anne's hope and our hope for the future."

After the quarantine period, one sapling will be planted in the Anne Frank Peace Park next to the sculpture of her diary in front of the Museum. This has all been made possible through the generous support of local Holocaust survivors Gerald and Dorit Paul, and the sculpture was created by Michael Donham of Accent Limestone & Carving in Spencer, Ind.

I talked to the creator of the sculpture, and his assistant Travis Abrams. Donham has more than 20 years experience, and Travis has 15. It took both of them about two weeks to finish it. They were given guidelines such as length, height and width, but the quote and the style of letter had to be approved by the Anne Frank House. Donham and Abrams did some research to make sure that the leaves on their sculpture were precisely those of a Chestnut tree.

I asked Donham if this was an unusual request and how they felt about creating it. He said they had respect for where it came from and what it represents.

"We like to make the most out of what we have to work with and put it into the stone. Whenever we are asked to do a sculpture, we have those involved talk to us about what it means to them. We usually have a great feel for what they want, even if they can't describe it. The fun part for us is to take a two-dimensional drawing and make it into something three dimensional," he explained.

These were the same artists who created the Seven Wonders of the World for The Children's Museum and the County Walk on pieces of stone at the Indiana State Museum, both outside the buildings. Donham said that they have done sculptures for places as far away as California and even Canada. Their Web site is [www.accentlimestone.com](http://www.accentlimestone.com).

After the dedication, I spoke with Patchen and mentioned that there is a new Holocaust museum in Skokie, Ill., that opened last April.

"What about a sapling for them?" I asked him. "Surely there are other places around the country that deserve to have one."

"I wouldn't be concerned about a shortage. They are way ahead of us in Holland," he commented with a grin. "It is rumored that saplings have been planted from that Chestnut tree and are growing all over their countryside."

*Jennie Cohen 1-13-10*

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