

Community gathers to celebrate, shine light for Hanukkah December 6th, 2002

BY BOB SEIDENBERG

Evanston Review

The 10-foot-tall menorah seemed particularly appropriate as Evanston's Jewish community gathered in Fountain Square Plaza Tuesday to celebrate the 10th annual public celebration of Hanukkah.

Rabbi Dov Hillel Klein of the Tannenbaum Chabad House-Northwestern Jewish Center, which has sponsored the celebration since its beginning, said that while people are living in troubling times, Hanukkah represents "hope, a better tomorrow."

He said the lighting of the menorah candles - a new one is lit each day of the eight-day celebration - symbolizes the need to increase the light, through acts of goodness and kindness, until peace is spread throughout the world.

Other speakers also sounded a message of hope.

"Too many people say, 'Let's have peace,' but make little effort to make peace," said Mayor Lorraine H. Morton.

She said people can put such words into action by giving more and showing more compassion toward others.

Hanukkah marks the victory of the Jewish Maccabees over their oppressors, in a quest for religious freedom. It saved the Jewish community at the time from total annihilation.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, of Evanston said the story of Hanukkah is still being played out today in other Jewish communities, such as in Cuba, where people strive to maintain their heritage.

She spoke about a conversation with a woman, an activist there, who was responsible for getting President Fidel Castro to pay a visit to the Jewish congregation there.

"Even in places where we think Hanukkah cannot survive and cannot flourish, there is a light that is burning brightly," she said.

Schakowsky joined Klein, the mayor and Aldermen Steven J. Bernstein, 4th Ward, and Arthur B. Newman, 8th Ward, in flicking on the menorah lights, capping the celebration.

Lisa Allen and her husband, Joshua, watched the celebration with their son, Eli, 4.

Hanukkah means "dedication," Joshua Allen said, "and each year we rededicate ourselves to be thankful and joyous."