

STATE & LOCAL

HAMC student a one-man band in Darfur awareness campaign

by Ron Kaplan
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When Jonathan Stone chose a mitzva project for his upcoming bar mitzva, he didn't just sign up to fulfill a few hours of mandatory community service; he has thrown all his energies into raising funds and awareness for Darfur.

Jonathan has created a Help Darfur Now chapter at the Bohrer-Kaufman Hebrew Academy of Morris County in Randolph, where he is a seventh-grade honors student. The chapter participated in the Million Voices for Darfur postcard-writing campaign, sold bracelets, and organized students who made dolls for Darfur pins as fund-raisers.

The chapter also organized a bus to take fellow students and community members to the Sept. 17 Rally for Darfur in Manhattan. During Sukkot, Jonathan cre-

ated the March for Darfur: 14 Days of Conscience campaign sponsored by the North Jersey Coalition for Darfur from March 4 to 18. He will be the guest speaker for the coalition Friday, March 16, at Morristown Jewish Center Beit Yisrael, where he will become bar mitzva the next day.

The Stone family has purchased 20 solar cookers in honor of their guests in an attempt to ease the burden of Darfur women who must search for wood far from the safety of the refugee camps in order to cook for their families.

Jonathan's inspiration for the project came during the January 2006 Mitzvot of MetroWest fair held at the Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus in Whippany. Surrounded by myriad projects with Jewish themes, however, Jonathan was drawn to the booth for Help Darfur Now, an organization created by New Jersey high school students Arielle

(In fact, Jonathan told NJJN, if his parents had suggested Darfur as a possible mitzva project, he might have chosen something else.)

"We are so pleased to have Jonathan Stone as an active member of Help

and awareness-raising activities."

Eric Messinger called Jonathan "an inspiration not only to the students at HAMC but to students in other chapters."

Jonathan said his decision to

home where the concepts of *tzedaka* and *tikun olam* — repairing the world — are vital. "We always had them divide their allowances," said Lew Stone. "Some was for spending money, some was for the bank, and some was for *tzedaka*."

Such constant activity would weary an adult, let alone a teenager trying to find the balance between school, home life, and preparing for his bar mitzva. Yet Jonathan still finds time to play on the HAMC basketball team and in Hearts & Spades, a rock band he formed with some friends.

"I really make it my business to get these things done, and I have very supportive parents, so they help me organize," he said.

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"When the Holocaust was over, people said we will never let this happen again, but we still have to remind them."

Darfur Now," said Wisotsky in a press release. "As president of the Hebrew Academy chapter of Help Darfur Now, he has gone above and beyond, with both his fund-raising

become active on behalf of Darfur was an extension of how he and his brother, Jeremy — HAMC class of 2002 and now a freshman at George Washington University — were brought up. His father described a



Jonathan Stone has gone "above and beyond" in raising funds and awareness about the crisis in Darfur. Photo courtesy Lisa Stone

ated a poster board display for his school that compared the custom of eating in the *sukka* with the plight of the Darfurians, residents of a southern region of Sudan who have been persecuted, massacred, and driven into refugee camps by government-backed militias.

"While Jews may spend only eight days living in temporary shelter during the holiday," he wrote in his project, "more than a million Darfurians are living in temporary shelters with no idea of when they may be able to return to their homes."

At the moment, he is putting together a March 8 screening of *Hotel Rwanda* at HAMC with all proceeds going to Help Darfur Now.

Jonathan's *simha* falls during

Wisotsky and Eric and David Messinger.

It was a choice that surprised his parents, Lew and Lisa Stone. But Jonathan saw the connection between the Holocaust and the situation in Sudan, which has been declared a genocide by the United States government.

"It's important for Jews to realize this is what's happening [there]," Jonathan said in a telephone interview. "When the Holocaust was over, people said we will never let this happen again, but we still have to remind them."

"He came to this himself," said Lew Stone. "He saw it as something that pertains to the Jewish community and said, 'This is what I want to do.'"