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Sent: Tuesday, September 11, 2007 2:39 PM
To: [email addresses suppressed for privacy]
Subject: New Year Greetings from Federation

Rosh Hashanah 5768

Dear friends,

As we celebrate the Jewish New Year it is time both to reflect on what has happened in the last year and also to look forward in the direction we wish to proceed.

Last Shabbat we read how Moses spoke to the Children of Israel on his last day on earth. He said “You are *standing* on this day together *all of you* before the Lord your G-d, princes, elders, and judges; each man of Israel . Children, wives and the strangers in your midst; from the hewers of wood to the drawers of water.” The sages tell us that this particular lengthy inclusive expression is used to stress that everyone is standing together. Those that are an integral part of the community and those that are less so. Those that have been born as Jews and those that are not. It also comes to tell us of our mutual responsibilities to ourselves, to our families, to the Jewish community, to those less involved and to those outside. And also that despite our troubles and woes, we are still standing straight, upright, confident and optimistic about the future.

These words resonate very strongly in New Orleans today. We have benefited from the support and generosity of Jews all over North America and we have also ourselves reached out our fellow citizens in New Orleans who have not been as fortunate as us. Now we are reaching out to newcomers to relocate to our city. Many have come and through the positive media publicity hopefully more are on the way.

As part of reaching out to the wider local community, 270 volunteers worked tirelessly this past Sunday to build a playground at the Henderson Elementary School on the Westbank. The Young Adult Division, on behalf of the Jewish Federation, coordinated the event. Gary and Suzy Lazarus, the YAD Social Action Chairs, along with Lauren Goodman, Campaign Associate, did an incredible job of organizing the event. The build day was co-sponsored by Kaboom and United Jewish Communities. The event was covered by numerous media outlets. To view the different television news broadcasts, see the link below. If the link is not clickable, copy the entire link into your browser address window and press enter:

<http://media.vmsnews.com/MR.pl?id=091007-786498-V001163175>

I thought it important too learn something of the more distant past and paid a visit to one of the Jewish cemeteries. Together with my wife Brenda, we visited the Gates of Prayer cemetery in Uptown and we were moved to see gravestones going back 150 years as testimony of the rich Jewish heritage here. I was especially pleased to see the graves of many Weils, who like myself, originated from the Alsace Region in France and Germany.

We attended our first Saints game two weeks ago and I had a first lesson in American football thanks to the kind invitation of Carol Good. Let us hope too that the Saints have a season this year as good if not better than last year's.

Close to our hearts and minds are the people of Israel. We pray for peace in the Middle East and hope that the battle for a just solution for Israel will succeed so that Israel can thrive in stability, security and prosperity and be a light unto the nations.

We hope to see a return visit of educators from our sister city in Rosh Ha'ayin in a few weeks time over Sukkot. If you can help in any way by hosting or meeting the educators, please get in touch with me or with Ann Kimball who is co-chair of the P2K Steering Committee.

I look forward to seeing many of you next Wednesday, September 19 at the Annual Meetings of the Federation and the Jewish Endowment Foundation, when we will reflect on the last year and look ahead with great hopes for a bright future. We will hear the results of the community and demographic survey and you will be able to express your thoughts on the new strategic plan that will be presented.

I wish you all, personally and communally, a peaceful and successful year, and a year of great strides forward.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful Jewish community.

Shana tova,

Michael Weil, Executive Director