

Hatikvah partners with the Basketball Hall of Fame

By Tracy Sullivan

SPRINGFIELD — Two Springfield organizations — the Hatikvah Holocaust Education Center and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame — have entered into a partnership to open two exhibits that show the catastrophic results of Nazi rule in Europe.

Hatikvah's "A Reason to Remember: Roth, Germany 1933-1942" traces the true stories of five Jewish families living in Roth, a small village in Germany, when the Nazis came to power, and what happened to them under Nazi persecution.

"The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936" will have its only New England appearance courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame's Special Exhibit Gallery. This temporary exhibit will run through Jan. 17, 2005.

"The Nazi Olympics" illustrates how Adolph Hitler used the 1936 Olympics in Berlin as a world stage to begin the promotion of a united Nazi Germany that had at its core one supreme race and world domination. The 11th Olympiad became a hotbed of international political controversy as the world watched the growth of racism and the persecution of Jews, who were not allowed to compete on the German Olympic team. It is at that same Olympics that American track and field star Jesse Owens, the grandson of slaves, won four gold medals and embarrassed Hitler.

In the summer, officials from Hatikvah learned that the nearby Basketball Hall of Fame was planning to open a temporary exhibit on the 1936 Olympics in Berlin around the same time as the grand opening of Hatikvah's permanent exhibit.

To avoid any competition, John L. Doleva, president and CEO of the Basketball Hall of Fame, suggested that the two organizations work together because the exhibits complemented each other.

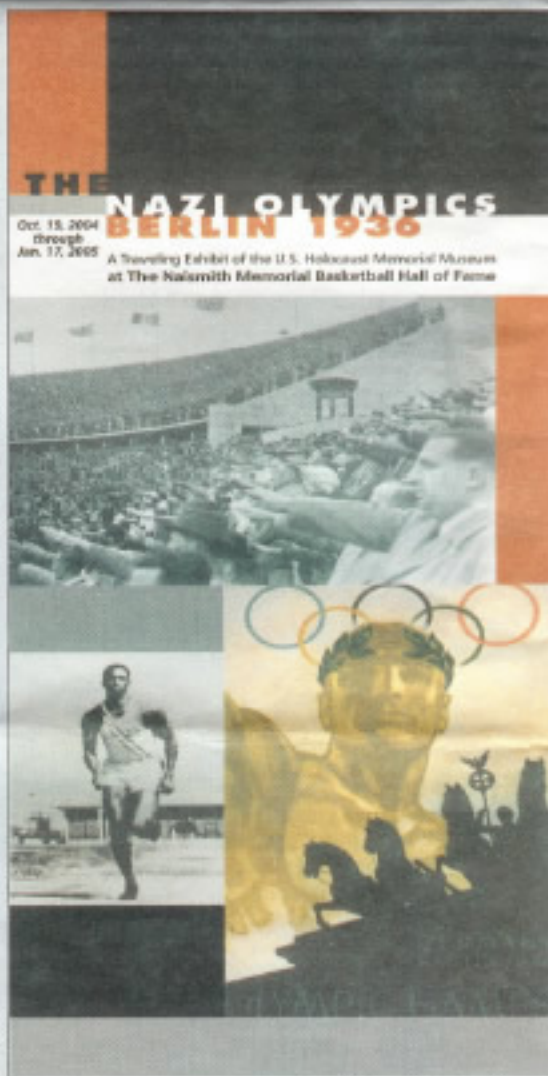
By experiencing both exhibits, organizers explained, viewers would have a more complete understanding about the stories told in each exhibit.

At a press conference on Sept. 10 at Hatikvah, Liz Rome, chair of the permanent exhibit at Hatikvah, explained the reason for the partnership.

"Our exhibit named 'A Reason to Remember' shows how ordinary people living in a small town and going about their everyday business were stripped of all of their rights simply because they were different. 'The Berlin Olympics' shows how qualified athletes were denied a chance of a lifetime and not allowed to compete simply because they were different," Rome said.

"And that's where the themes of the two exhibits come together. It doesn't matter — you could be minding your own business, you could be talented, you could think you have everything going for you. And if discrimination and hatred and intolerance are allowed to run rampant, the world falls apart and you're denied your talents and even your right to live," she added.

The Basketball Hall of Fame, which opened two years ago in Springfield, recently completed its new 4,000-square-foot special exhibits gallery. Dean O'Keefe, vice president of



A poster promoting the grand opening of the temporary exhibit "The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936" at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame on Oct. 19.

sport at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. And despite some reluctance due to his disapproval of Nazi policies, Dr. James Naismith, who founded the game of basketball at a YMCA in Springfield, went to Berlin in 1936 to see his game played in the 11th Olympiad.

Officials from Hatikvah and the Basketball Hall of Fame hope that those who visit either exhibit will be moved by what they see, want to learn more about the Holocaust and the importance of tolerance, and know that they can travel just a few miles to do so.

The Hatikvah Holocaust Education Center, 1160 Dickinson St., Springfield, and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of