



FEATURES

Two Jewish entrepreneurs give credit where it's due – Israel
Page 13

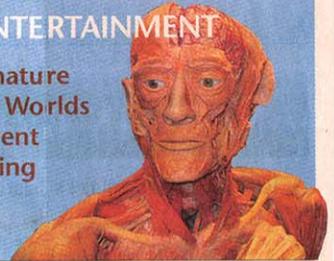


BUSINESS

Peretz declares support for free market
Page 17

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Would the nature of the Body Worlds exhibit prevent it from coming to Israel?
Page 24



WWW.JPOST.COM

THE JERUSALEM POST

Volume LXXIII, Number 22275

FOUNDED IN 1932

NIS 8.00 (EILAT NIS 6.90)

FOR YOUR FREE INTRODUCTORY OFFER CALL

1-800-574-574
THE JERUSALEM POST

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2005 ■ 29 HESHVAN 5766



GIVING CREDIT where it's due. HAS Advantage creators Menachem Landau (left) and Zev Dobuler.

Solidarity, one swipe at a time

A new credit card on the American market allows holders to donate money to Israeli causes with every purchase of goods and services

Just when it seems that the Jewish world has run out of fund-raising techniques, two 20-something entrepreneurs have come up with a novelty. The innovation: a credit card enabling consumers to donate to Israel-related charities, while earning points toward trips to the Holy Land and other enticements.

It is the brainchild of Zev Dobuler and Menachem Landau, who met in Jerusalem when they were in their teens - through a youth group for English-speaking immigrants - after their families made aliya from the United States.

After growing up in Israel and serving in the IDF, the friends left the country and opened an office in Long Island, Dobuler's original home, to try and turn their dream into a reality. They contacted the Advantage Consultant Group, a top credit-card consultant company, which was able to help them forge their idea into a viable business. That was three years ago.

On a return visit to Jerusalem earlier this month, Dobuler spoke to the Jerusalem Post about the enterprise, the HAS Advantage Card, which - in conjunction with Visa and US Bank - became available to the public last week.

"We saw that there were many people, though not ready to pack up and move to Israel, who wanted to support the country in any way they could," Dobuler explained over breakfast in the center of town. "We thought that if people could support Israel just by going shopping - and take a step closer to visiting the country in person - they would go for it. Everyone was getting into 'affinity' cards, so we figured, why not for Israel?"

This, he said, was the idea behind the card. How does it work in practice?

First, he said, the card functions as a vehicle for donations, through the transfer of a small percentage of each purchase to an Israeli charity of the card-holder's choice, at no additional cost.

According to Dobuler, there are currently 13 charities from which to choose, including the Jewish National Fund, Meir Panim, which assists the needy, and One Family Fund, which aids victims of terrorism. An additional 25 are in the process of board

approval. The goal, he said, is to establish a wide network that includes environmental organizations and aliya assistance groups.

Card-members can support up to five organizations at a time, but can easily replace charities online within a matter of minutes. Dobuler and Landau estimate that within the next couple of months, there will be about 40 charities in partnership with the card.

The way it works, Dobuler went on, is that with each dollar spent, the card-member receives a point toward discounts on trips to Israel. At present, the benefits include frequent flyer miles on El Al, discounted lodging and upgrades at the Dan and Sheraton hotels in Israel, discounts on Budget rental cars, and other deals outside of Israel on

Landau in a phone conversation from his New York office.

Though Dobuler and Landau declined to go into specifics, they said they had met with Tourism Ministry officials, who, they claimed, were "very excited about the card," and who offered their help. Dobuler also said that the Israeli Consulate in New York is equally encouraging.

SO MUCH for the altruism. As for the business side, Landau said the key is for the consumer not only to feel confident that his donations are going to causes he supports, but also to receive an equitable credit card.

"When creating the product, it was essential for us that the card far exceed the value of the other plastic people have in their wallets."

Landau said that thus far, a few hundred cards have been issued. He said that their office - with a full-time staff of eight and an additional two full-time employees based in Israel - receives questions from people curious about various aspects of the program, including specifics on the point system, and on whether a specific charity can be added to the list of options.

Landau and Dobuler said they do not limit their marketing of the card exclusively to Jews. Another target group is the Evangelical Christian community, among Israel's staunchest champions.

"We consider them an important demographic," said Landau, "since their support of Israel is unwavering."

To bolster their PR, they invested effort in the look of the card, as well. There are four different design options, appealing to different aspects of support for Israel.

Dobuler said that how comfortable a consumer feels about presenting the card at a shop was also taken into account.

For consumers looking to stress the religious aspect of their connection to the Jewish state, there is a card displaying men praying at the Western Wall. For those Americans who want to stress their support for Israel alongside their patriotism to the United States, there is a card featuring the flags of both countries together. A third design is a picture of an Israeli flag. A fourth has a slightly more ambiguous blue-and-white background.

"We want our members to open up their wallets and just by looking at our card - at a picture of the Kotel or the flag - to feel a continuous connection to Israel and their support of the country," Dobuler said, stressing that "this is not the 'give to charity' card, but rather the 'support Israel' card."

Solidarity, in other words, with a swipe.



domestic travel, electronics, furniture and Judaica.

They said they are negotiating an agreement with a series of companies to award card-members double the amount of points, as well as double the percentage of their purchases to their determined charities. Called "Partners in Solidarity," this program will include museums, restaurants, supermarkets and Judaica shops, and is scheduled to go into effect next year. Dobuler and Landau hope that the program will help support shops both on both sides of the Atlantic.

"In Israel, we're looking at merchants who may interest tourists on their visits to the country, such as restaurants or Judaica shops. In America, we're trying to establish agreements with local grocery stores and others who cater to the Jewish community," said