

# Volunteer Extraordinaire

Mark Hauser earns Federation's highest award for his community involvement.



Mark Hauser at home in his library with some of the photos he's taken of his family.

## Vivian Henoach

Special to the Jewish News

**M**ark Hauser of Bloomfield Hills will receive the Detroit Jewish community's highest honor — the Fred M. Butzel Award — at the annual meeting Sept. 24 of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Hauser, 69, is a community builder, volunteer, fundraiser, financial steward and legal counsel, listed among the best lawyers in America.

From his first family trip to Israel in 1960 to his leadership in missions to Israel, from Federation's Young Leadership Cabinet to president of the United Jewish Foundation and vice chair of United Jewish Communities, from the Oak Park Neighborhood Project to the Jewish Community Center Applebaum Campus, from Jewish Family Service to Jewish Senior Life, from Temple Beth El to Yeshivas Darchai Torah — there's hardly an aspect of the Jewish community in which Hauser hasn't had impact and a positive influence.

Hauser sat down for a one-on-one interview shared in part here.

**VH:** You have often described your community involvement as sacred work in "the Jewish survival business." In your view, how has that business changed over the years? And in what ways has it stayed the same?

**Hauser:** We grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust, the bright lights reflecting from the new State of Israel, three wars to keep Israel alive, the challenge of freeing Jews from the Soviet Union — all seminal events that made it easy for young American Jews of my generation to identify with the needs for Jewish unity and creative survival. In contrast, many young Jewish Americans today are growing up past "all of that."

While the threat to Israel from its neighbors remains as real today as ever, the

economy in Israel is booming, most of the country is beautiful and, while Israel is filled with Birthright Israel travelers, many of our young people do not identify with the challenges facing Israel and the Jewish community. As American Jews have prospered, so has the pursuit of the good life that at times has obscured the reality of the needs of less fortunate Jews at home, in the remaining Diaspora and in Israel.

What has remained the same is the strength of Detroit's Jewish community. We have lost some of our major donors, but important new donors have stepped up. And we continue to have a cadre of upcoming leadership to take us forward in our mission. We also have had wonderful professional leadership.

**VH:** You have a family history of community involvement and a deep love of Israel starting with a trip you took with your family in 1960. Tell us about your first connections with Israel and the organized Jewish community.

**Hauser:** The Hauser and Baum families had strong connections to the organized Jewish community in Detroit. I remember, as a child of 10 or 11, accompanying my mother, Pearl Baum Hauser, as she did her face-to-face Campaign "Kit" at various people's homes. My Aunt Diane Hauser's father, Israel Davidson, was one of the great local Zionist supporters of Israel. I remember him returning from a trip to Israel in the middle 1950s where he told us that he met [David] Ben-Gurion and was shown statues that actually hid missile launchers.

Diane and Jerry Hauser returned from one of the first UJA national missions to Israel in the late '50s with great enthusiasm and many slides of the young nation. That led up to my parents, Myron and Pearl Hauser, taking my sister and me to Europe and Israel in the summer of 1960 following my graduation from Mumford High School.

Israel was something that changed my life. We met relatives who had survived the Holocaust and made their way to Israel with the help of our family and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. We had a wonderful guide who took us everywhere in his rusty 1949 DeSoto. It was very hot, the food was pretty bad, the roads were dusty and yet we had the most remarkable time of our lives because we felt the rebirth of our people in our Homeland. As we walked the streets of Tel Aviv, my mother kept saying in wonder after looking at Yemenites, people from India and even a few from Ethiopia ... "all of these people are Jews!"

**VH:** The term "volunteer" doesn't begin to describe your service to the community. Can you identify a specific challenge or opportunity that inspired you to get started on the path of community leadership?

**Hauser:** Upon graduation from law school in 1967, I was fortunate to be hired by the firm of Friedman Meyers and Keys. Many of the partners were stalwarts of the Jewish community. The firm did some legal work for Federation. So, I quickly learned that the Allied Jewish Campaign was run by the Jewish Welfare Federation. One day, right after the 1967 War, firm client Tom Borman, who was Campaign chair, stepped into my office, introduced himself and said, "Young man, you are at the right time and in the right place to make a difference for the Jewish people."

He invited me to participate, and I said that I would. A few days later, his son Paul D. Borman came into my office and told me about Federation's Junior Division [later named YAD and now NEXTGen]. Then, a few weeks later, my dear and lifelong friend Bill Barris, another firm associate, said, "I don't know how involved you want to be, but they would like you to join the Junior Division Board." So, that was my start.

I did a great deal of work on Campaign, learned about Federation and the agencies, and eventually became an officer and member of the Junior Division Executive Committee.

Step two was in 1976, when Larry Jackier convinced my wife, Jan, and me to join a national UJA Young Leadership Cabinet Holocaust to Rebirth Mission to Austria and Israel. Jan had not been to Israel. We both loved the trip, and I met these "Cabinet Guys" from all over the U.S. who had a level of commitment I had only seen in Larry Jackier and Stanley Frankel. The next year, my old friend Richard Krugel and I were asked to join the Cabinet.

I had five exciting years during which I spoke as the "outside expert" on campaign solicitation to large groups in Boston and Louisville, small groups in Saginaw and Bay

City, went on and/or led several missions to Israel, visited Poland, including my grandparent's shtetl, and took on leadership roles in Detroit. The Cabinet, in those days, was a real force in organized Jewish life and gave me many tools I have relied on for years.

**VH:** In your estimation, how has Israel changed or evolved in terms of its needs for our community support?

**Hauser:** In the summer of 2011, my wife and I were fortunate enough to be able to take our daughters Sandra and Molly, their spouses and five grandchildren to Israel. We enjoyed the nightlife in Tel Aviv, did Saturday night in Jerusalem in the new Mamilla Mall, and met and dined with old friends and family members. The kids loved playing soccer on the beach at night with Israeli children and saw a prosperous country with much history.

They learned about the rockets hitting Sderot, the needs of the Ethiopian immigrants, the complaints in the middle class about social inequality, but really did not see what I saw in 1960. On one hand, that is great because Israel is thriving and I think my grandchildren "get it." On the other hand, Israel's long-term survival is as precarious as ever it has been. Our Federation's commitment to Israel must remain strong and without qualification.

**VH:** What are your thoughts on NEXTGen and your dreams for Detroit's future?

**Hauser:** I am so pleased that Marty Maddin is the president of NEXTGen. I remember clearly that the 1971 Federation Junior Division nominating committee meeting was held in my office in Southfield one evening where we nominated his father, Michael Maddin, to be the next president. In the Maddin family, the apple does not fall far from the tree. My hope is that we can continue to raise future generations who understand the importance of charitable giving and Jewish survival.

**VH:** What do you do in your leisure time?

**Hauser:** My wife says that four things are important to me: my family, my business, Jewish survival and Michigan football. As usual, she is right. Over the years, I have enjoyed photography, primarily of our children, grandchildren and of our friends. I also like to read. Our home, as were the homes of my parents and grandparents, is filled with books. □

Federation's annual meeting will be held Sept. 24 at 7:30 p.m. in Handleman Hall at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. Vivian Henoach is Web content developer for Federation. The full interview can be viewed at [myjewishdetroit.org](http://myjewishdetroit.org).