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**BODY:**

**Henrietta Szold** grew up in the late 1800s about 50 years ahead of her time. The eldest daughter of a Baltimore rabbi, she was treated like a son and became a Hebrew scholar. In 1912 she founded an organization that 75 years later continues to influence quality of life in Israel.

Szold organized Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization of America, with a belief that Jewish people needed a land of their own. "She wanted to prepare that land so that it would be ready," says Ruth Popkin of New York, national president of Hadassah. "At the time, sanitation was nonexistent, disease was rampant, and medical facilities were very primitive."

Today the group is said to be the largest women's volunteer organization in the world, having a thriving membership of 385,000, including 15,000 Chicago-area members. Last year Hadassah-sponsored activities raised well over \$56 million.

In addition to supporting medical research in Israel, Hadassah funds nursing and vocational schools, youth programs and land development efforts.

Hadassah's beginnings were humble. One of Szold's first projects was to load donkeys with containers of pasteurized milk for mothers and children in Jerusalem. In 1913 two America-trained nurses set up a maternity center in Palestine to fight disease.

"**Henrietta Szold** was a woman who was both an idealist and a pragmatist," says Popkin, a Hadassah member for 40 years. "That is a rare combination."

Szold was active in Hadassah throughout her life. At age 75 She organized the first Youth Aliyah group to rescue Jewish children from Nazi Germany, saving more than 15,000 between 1945 and 1948. She died in 1945, three years before the state of Israel was established.

Hadassah's diamond jubilee will be observed locally May 19 with a historical, retrospective commentary and fashion show at the Marriott Hotel. Among national observances is an international symposium at the United Nations to discuss Hadassah's contributions to medicine. The Hadassah Medical Organization, the group's health care arm in Israel, is recognized worldwide for the quality of its research and medical services and for its cooperative training and treatment programs with developing nations, Popkin says. Founder Szold had emphasized that the health field "knows no frontiers. We serve all races and creeds."

Currently Hadassah is developing new programs aimed at helping young women balance the demands of family, work and community service.

For information: Hadassah, 111 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill., 60602; 312-263-7473.