

Jewish students show their support of rally's message

by Alan Brody Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service

Ben Caplan was just a speck among the thousands of rally participants who gathered at the National Mall Monday in support of Israel, but he wouldn't have missed it for the world. "This is a wonderful opportunity for American Jewry to come together to support Israel, not only because of its future, but also in the war on terrorism," said the George Washington University junior, one of the many students who attended the rally that was sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The impact of student involvement and participa-

tion in the rally cannot be underestimated, said Sarah Levin, a George Washington University freshman. "That's of utmost importance," she said. "When people question Israel's existence, they question Judaism's future." Even high school students made the rally part of their visit to the nation's capital. The program Panim el Panim, which translates to "face to face," brings Jewish high school youth to Washington for four-day seminars to gain exposure to American government and the political process and to learn about Jewish community relations and the Jewish public policy agenda. The schedule of this week's seminar was altered

to include participation in the rally, much to the delight of students. "I am a Jew and my homeland is Israel," said David Ades, a junior from Deal, N.J. "I believe it is my obligation as a Jew to support Israel, whether it is lobbying government or fighting in the Israeli army." "It shows that it's not just the adults that care about (Israel), it's the whole community," said Miriam Prensky, a sophomore from Silver Spring, Md. Once the rally was announced a week ago, seminar leaders had little doubt that it would benefit the students. "We are Panim el Panim - 'face to face' - and we come face to face with political and social issues," said Jack Rosenbaum, assistant director of the Wash-

ington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, the organization that runs Panim el Panim seminars. "One of the reasons they are here is to make change in the world through politics." For Ades, the significance of the rally was clear. "We are sending a message that we will not go away," he said. "We have been persecuted since the beginning, through the Crusades, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, in general. But regardless of how many people have died, we have survived."

People are spending more on home entertainment systems

by Heather Newman Knight Ridder Newspapers

You walk up the steps, guided by the aisle lights, and take a seat in a cushy chair. The screen covers most of the wall in front of you, flanked by Grecian columns and heavy velvet curtains. A click and the lights dim, the beams of the projector appear over your head, sound gently swells around you and on screen appear the credits for "Survivor." Welcome to the magical world of home theater systems. They range from tiny theaters-in-a-box with a few gadgets and speakers for less than \$500 to the full-scale theater experience, architecturally and visually, which can cost upwards of \$200,000. Most folks fall somewhere in between, putting in a media room with a large-screen TV and a surround-sound system that costs a few thousand dollars. (Not so long ago, builders and buyers usually called these spaces the family room.) People with more money to spend typically pay between \$10,000 and \$50,000 for dedicated home theater rooms with projection TVs, more advanced

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-Eric Seiger, a West Bloomfield, Mich., dermatologist. Seiger has a nine foot screen on one wall of his bedroom.

electronics, controls and some flavor of a theater environment. Home entertainment rooms add one more way for people to reconnect with their families at a time when some surveys suggest people are spending more time with their loved ones at home. Media rooms and home theaters are also the new place to entertain friends and extended family: a comfy, 360-degree experience you can create whenever you like. High-end systems can look and sound

better than what you get in a typical movie theater. "The difference in the experience is the difference between watching television and having goosebumps," says Eric Seiger, a West Bloomfield, Mich., dermatologist. He has a nine foot screen on one wall of his bedroom, complete with columns on either side and a sound system. His installation cost as much as a low-end luxury car. "I go to the movies now and the movies don't even compare to my bedroom," he says. "I'd trade in my car. Heck, I'd trade in my house. I'd move off the lake. But don't take away my TV." Don't dismiss media rooms and home theaters as the playthings of people with money to spare. Not so long ago, "home theater was a 'something you heard about but not for me' thing," says Randy Blanchard, vice president of Troy, Mich.-based Pecar

Home Theater Environments. "Now we're doing higher-end, very nice home theaters in homes that are much more modest than we would have anticipated." Many remodels in \$200,000-\$250,000 homes now include a basic media room in the basement, he says. Home theaters in a box are selling like hotcakes, according to the Consumer Electronics Association: From 2000 through the end of this year, sales are expected to triple to just under \$1 billion. And professionally installed units aren't far behind; one estimate puts the increase in media rooms and home theaters at close to 85 percent over the last year alone. Watching television is America's favorite leisure activity. Folks who live in industrialized countries worldwide spend an average of three hours a day in front of the tube, reports Scientific American magazine. That's more than any single activity other than work and sleep, and half of all leisure time.

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