

Local youths' kitemaking inspires talk of Mideast peace

By DAN MCGILLVRAY
Staff Writer

AUGUSTA — Rain failed to dampen the push for peace Sunday at Temple Beth El.

When showers canceled the original plan for children to fly kites along the Kennebec River shoreline, the youngsters carried out their peaceful mission under the watchful eyes of parents inside the temple.

Rabbi Susan Bulba Carvutto said children and adults across the country were flying kites Sunday to show solidarity for the movement to ease tensions between the Israelis and Palestinians.

"We're a little disappointed with the rain," she said.

But the children were energized.

They used paper, tape, short bamboo splints, surveying line markers for tails — and a dash of imagination — to concoct most of their kites by 10:30 a.m.

Although they must wait for another day to test the wind, the assemblage of 15 home-made kites was hung with cheers from an inside line as a beacon of hope for the Middle East.

A short time later, Carvutto gathered the children together to talk about resolving the difficulties along the Israeli-Palestinian border.

"Some of us may disagree about the



Staff photo by Andy Molloy

HIGH HOPES: Emily Schiff-Slater, 13, of Hallowell, left, holds the tail of a kite from the display assembled by children at Temple Beth El in Augusta on Sunday. The kites are symbolic peace gesture between Israel and Palestine.

how, but we've got to get the process going," she said.

About 40,000 kites had flown Friday above the barrier wall that separates the Israelis and Arabs. Organizers initially had expected 10,000 kites to saturate the space overhead.

Children in the Augusta temple

she helped other youngsters make kites. "They're a good idea, to bring everybody together," she said.

Channa Schroff, 11, of Fayette, and others drew the 1960s peace sign on their kites.

Chuck Acker of Whitefield supervised the kite-building on a long table. He had hoped to test the children's engineering skills at Mill Park, site of the former Edwards Manufacturing Co. property.

"I think they'll fly," said Acker, the Temple's coordinator for Tikkun, an organization that works for social justice and political freedom.

Carvutto said she had invited members of other local churches to attend the kite flying at Mill Park if the rain had held off. She said a similar event had been planned in Bangor by the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Bangor.

In the West Bank, a 38-foot high, 310-foot-long wall forms a physical border between the Israelis and Palestinians. Kites and strings held by residents on each side of the barrier flew Friday over the separation zone emblazoned with messages of peace.

Israeli artist Adi Yekutieli, the project's visionary, and his Palestinian colleague, artist George Nustas, facilitated the joint event.

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suggested various ways to end the years of conflict, including the need to "listen to each other."

They said kites displaying the word "peace" — in the native language of Jews and Palestinians — would be a good start.

Emily Kaley, 14, of Manchester said