

Godfrey collection gets a helping hand

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MIDDLETOWN — Residents of Jewish decent searching for help in mapping out their family trees now have new research tool

available to them at the Godfrey Memorial Library at 134 Newfield St.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut has relocated its collection of books, newsletters,

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videos and other genealogical materials to the library for anyone to use.

On Sunday the society met at the library so members could acquaint themselves with the Godfrey's resources view the new shelves filled with 75 books and over 100 newsletters.

Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut President Howard Siegel said members decided to house the collection at Godfrey so people could access it with greater ease.

"Before the collection was scattered around at different locations and a lot people had difficulties finding the time to track materials down," Siegel said.

Previously the society kept the materials collected through purchases and donations at United Synagogue of West Hartford and at various member's homes, he said.

"The Godfrey Library is the perfect location for our collection," Siegel said. "The library is open five days a week, which gives the public a great opportunity to use our collection to research their family histories."

Since 1951, the Godfrey has helped residents trace the branches of their family trees using its collection of nearly 40,000 items dedicated to family genealogies, local histories and biographies of everyone and anyone.

"We're planning on doing a full count of everything in the library soon to figure out exactly what we have," Godfrey Associate Director Thomas Kemp said, noting the library's

goal to double in size every year.

Kemp said anyone can come to the library to use the society's collection, but only society members can check items out.

"This collection adds a dimension to our overall collection we didn't have before," he said. "One funny thing is that we have a pretty extensive collection of Connecticut city directories with a few years missing here and there. The society's collection just happen to include the years we needed."

Society Vice President Maria Indianer Meyers said the collection included books listing families who took ships from Russia to the United States, and Eastern European victims of the Holocaust.

"We also have a collection of newsletter from Jewish Genealogical Societies from throughout the United States, Switzerland, Great Britain, Canada, Israel and Australia," Meyers said. "These newsletters have information about families looking for relatives, and articles on how to obtain the records you need."

Society member Liz Whittaker said, "It's wonderful to have all of this in one location. I've already taken out two cassettes."

For more information on the Godfrey Library and its collections, call (860) 346-4375 or visit the library's Web site at www.godfrey.org.

To join the Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut, visit the society's Web site at www.geocities.com/jgsct.

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