**SUPPORT THE SALOMON MITRANI SENIOR CENTER Havana, Cuba**

**Opening November 2011**

About 1,300 Jews currently live in Cuba, the vast majority in Havana. Cuban Jews face the same difficult economic and social challenges as do other Cubans due to a bad economy undergoing major reforms, negative repercussions from the global economic recession, and continuing domestic economic challenges resulting from the destruction caused by three hurricanes in 2008.

The Cuban Jewish community recognizes the need to provide services to an aging population: more than 18% are over 65 and receive a monthly government pension that averages only about $12. In addition, many medicines are unavailable in Cuba, the basic monthly food ration lasts for only about two weeks given increased food prices, and the government has eliminated various items from the ration books, including tooth paste. Sadly, the family support network that was once available no longer exists for many of the Jewish elderly given that many children and other relatives have made Aliyah to Israel.

These factors make providing services to this population more important than ever. To help elderly Cuban Jews meet their dietary, psychological, and basic medical needs, the leadership of the Centro Sefardi (Sephardic Center) is seeking funds from the Cuba America Jewish Mission, Jewish Cuba Connection, and other US based philanthropies to open the Salomon Mitrani Center, a senior day care center in Havana named for Salomon Mitrani, a well-respected member of the Cuban Sephardic Community who died last year. In 1948, he left Cuba to fight for the new State of Israel during the War of Independence.

The Mitrani Senior Center will be housed at the Sephardic Center and directed by Dr. Mayra Levy, the Sephardic Center’s Director, who will lead a staff of twelve professionals who have the skills needed to best serve this population. Dr. Levy is a physician with 36 years of experience, the author of two books on pharmacology and several scientific articles on pharmacology and gerontological research, and Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at the Havana Medical School. Jewish seniors who live in Havana and its suburbs will be provided the following services at the Center:

* Meals -- breakfast, lunch and snacks;
* Workshops – including arts and crafts, painting, performing, singing in Spanish and Hebrew, dancing;
* Basic courses for seniors – including tailoring, sewing, hair-cutting, massage, computer skills;
* Symposiums – including psychology for seniors and proper exercise and eating habits,
* Basic health care and psychological services -- including massage, medications, basic health supervision, physical and eye examinations, and distributing food packages with powdered milk and other food important for this population to eat;
* Gentle exercise and stretching;
* Targeted provision of services --for those with special needs including dietary needs, clothing, canes, and wheelchairs;
* A summer program -- to transport seniors and their grandchildren to the beach once a week to give them all a welcome day out away from their hot homes and allow them to spend quality time with their grandchildren and share a snack with them;
* Discussion groups -- on a range of issues including books, films and current events;
* Observing Jewish High Holidays, the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays, birthdays and special celebrations for seniors;
* Cultural activities and events -- discussion groups, films, musical entertainment, plays put on by visiting actors, book and art clubs, stimulating games, local tours); and

Program for homebound seniors -- Some seniors experience mobility and other issues that preclude their ability to travel to the Senior Center. Though this program, professionals from the Center would visit them at least twice a week to provide them with the services and companionship they need.

Please help us meet our goal of raising $70,000 for first year operations. Please give generously to the Cuba America Jewish Mission.