



Tammi Faraday: helping to universalise the AIDS issue.

Photo: Lex Mrocki

Fighting prejudice against AIDS sufferers

Jackie Brygel talks to Tammi Faraday about how she reconciles her religious beliefs with her work on the Victorian AIDS Council.

AS A YOUNG Orthodox Jew working in a voluntary capacity for the Victorian AIDS Council, Tammi Faraday has often been forced to defend her job. For the 20-year-old Leibler-Yavneh graduate, however, there is no conflict between her religion and her work.

"I have been asked how, as a religious Jew, I can work for an organisation that is condoning homosexuality," she said, in an interview with the *Australian Jewish News*. "First of all, my position on homosexuality is absolutely inconsequential to the cause. Regardless of what I feel, it is not for me to judge.

"We talk of God and we talk of mercy and compassion and all these other things that people very easily forget. Ritualism is very important, but I think the essence of religion often gets lost."

Ms Faraday said that homosexuality was "problematic" within the Torah. But by the same token, she added, the saving of a life is a fundamental precept in the Jewish religion.

"We should perpetuate that by helping people and by educating people. And it is not just gays who are affected (by AIDS).

"I think there is a syndrome in the Jewish community of being very judgmental. People should be embraced. Thank God, the incidence of AIDS is not huge within the Jewish community, but I don't think that anybody has the right to disenfranchise a person or to make a person feel remote or ostracised. It is an issue that has to be dealt with."

Ms Faraday, who is currently studying law/arts at Monash University, has also been asked why she has not channelled her ener-

gies into Jewish causes. It is a question to which she has taken umbrage.

"To me, AIDS is a human cause," she said. "It is a Jewish cause as much as any other cause. I am a very proud Jew who wears Judaism on my sleeve. But we are human and we are not immune to this disease."

Ms Faraday first developed an interest in AIDS at the age of 14 when she read a book on a haemophiliac who had contracted the HIV infection through a blood transfusion. After spending eight months studying at the Hebrew University in Israel, she approached the Victorian AIDS Council in April this year.

Ms Faraday is now public relations officer for the Council's Red Ribbon Project. Red ribbons, the international symbol for AIDS awareness, will be sold by shops, businesses and street sellers for World AIDS Day on December 1. All proceeds from the red ribbons go towards the support of men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS.

"I was very nervous to come back to Australia after living in Israel," Ms Faraday said. "I had been very fulfilled there and all my senses had been on overload every minute of the day.

"When I came back, I wanted to throw myself into an organisation where I felt I could

provide some expertise and do something positive to help others."

Ms Faraday also believed there were many misconceptions about AIDS with many Australians still referring to it as the 'gay plague'.

"That is not the case," she said. "It's a universal disease and it doesn't discriminate. I felt that as someone who was Jewish and a woman and a minority in this organisation, I would be able to help universalise the issue.

"Now the figures show that AIDS is decreasing slowly in the gay population, but increasing substantially in the heterosexual population...Twenty million people have been infected with the (HIV) virus thus far around the world. It is the highest killer of 22 to 44-year-old Americans. It is an epidemic we are facing."

Ms Faraday conceded she initially felt like the "odd one out" at the Council, but quickly found her niche.

"The environment here is so warm, friendly, loving and supportive. It's a wonderful environment to work in.

"I wanted to ensure I confronted the disease head-on and be knowledgeable about it so I was not prejudiced in any way, shape or form. Knowledge is the key."

Budding entrepreneur has a moral conscience

LITHUANIAN-born Rina Yudelevich, 24, has trouble thinking of herself as a young entrepreneur. But she cheerfully admits she has always wanted to do her own thing and build up her own business — albeit a "noble business".

Ms Yudelevich, who came to Australia 15 years ago via Israel and Italy and has also lived in Canada, recently established Arena Entertainment.

"My aim is to organise functions with a theme, something which is completely different, where people can enjoy themselves and at the same time raise money for charity."

Ms Yudelevich, who is also a budding actress, discovered her talent for organising events last year when she was involved in the Brunswick Street Festival. She organised a jazz function to raise funds to help stage a play in which she was involved and discovered she both liked and enjoyed organising events.

At the same time Ms Yudelevich noticed many people of all ages complaining there was nothing for them to do on weekends. They would go out to dinner and/or a nightclub, spend \$60 or \$70 and have a pleasant time, but find there was nothing particularly memorable about the event.

"I'm providing what I would expect out of a function which means the right atmosphere, the right people and lots of food and entertainment," she says.

According to Ms Yudelevich, the

Rina Yudelevich is organising events that benefit single people, business and charity. She discusses her plans with Margaret Safran.

"right people" do not all have to be beautiful young things. She says she knows plenty of people in their 50s who are more energetic and positive than many people in their 20s.

Ms Yudelevich is currently organising a '1001 Arabian Nights' function at Dickens Manor in Elwood on November 11. It will feature atmospheric decorations, live music, a Mediterranean smorgasbord, complimentary drinks, belly dancers, a private harem, a sports memorabilia auction, casino games and door prizes.

The \$85 ticket also includes a donation to Harrison Community Services, which provides accommodation to homeless youth and youth at risk of becoming homeless. All proceeds from the sports memorabilia auction will go to Harrison Community Services and each guest will also receive information about the organisation.

Ms Yudelevich organised a similar function in May which attracted about 80 people and was a practise run for this event. While the function did not make any money, it received a very good response and encouraged Ms Yudelevich to try again. This

time she hopes to attract 150 corporate guests.

"It's hard if people don't know who you are. It's not easy to do all the organising yourself. But at the end I've created it, I've put in all the hard work. It's great to have your own business and put in 100 percent.

"I'm always organising people. I've been in sales since the age of 14. I've always wanted to do my own thing and I think this is a great thing to do."

Ms Yudelevich wants to build up her data base and organise five or six functions with different themes for different charities each year. She has met a number of people involved in Jewish charities over the past year and plans to support a Jewish charity in her next event.

"I want to move into corporate work but still include the charities. People can have fun but at the same time donate to charities. It's a great thing."

▲ For more information about Arena Entertainment or to book for the 1001 Arabian Nights function contact Rina Yudelevich on 9525-6118 or 019 199-327.



Rina Yudelevich: always organising people.

Photo: Lex Mrocki