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NEIGHBORS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2007 | EDITOR: GAIL EPSTEIN | 305-671-4343 | MiamiHerald.com

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PINECREST

A Palmetto High graduate takes home a gold medal at an international physics competition in Iran, 4

FLORIDA CITY

The first black pilot to fly solo around the world encourages children to never give up on their goals and dreams, 6

NEIGHBORS THEN & NOW

See how FIU looked decades ago, 8

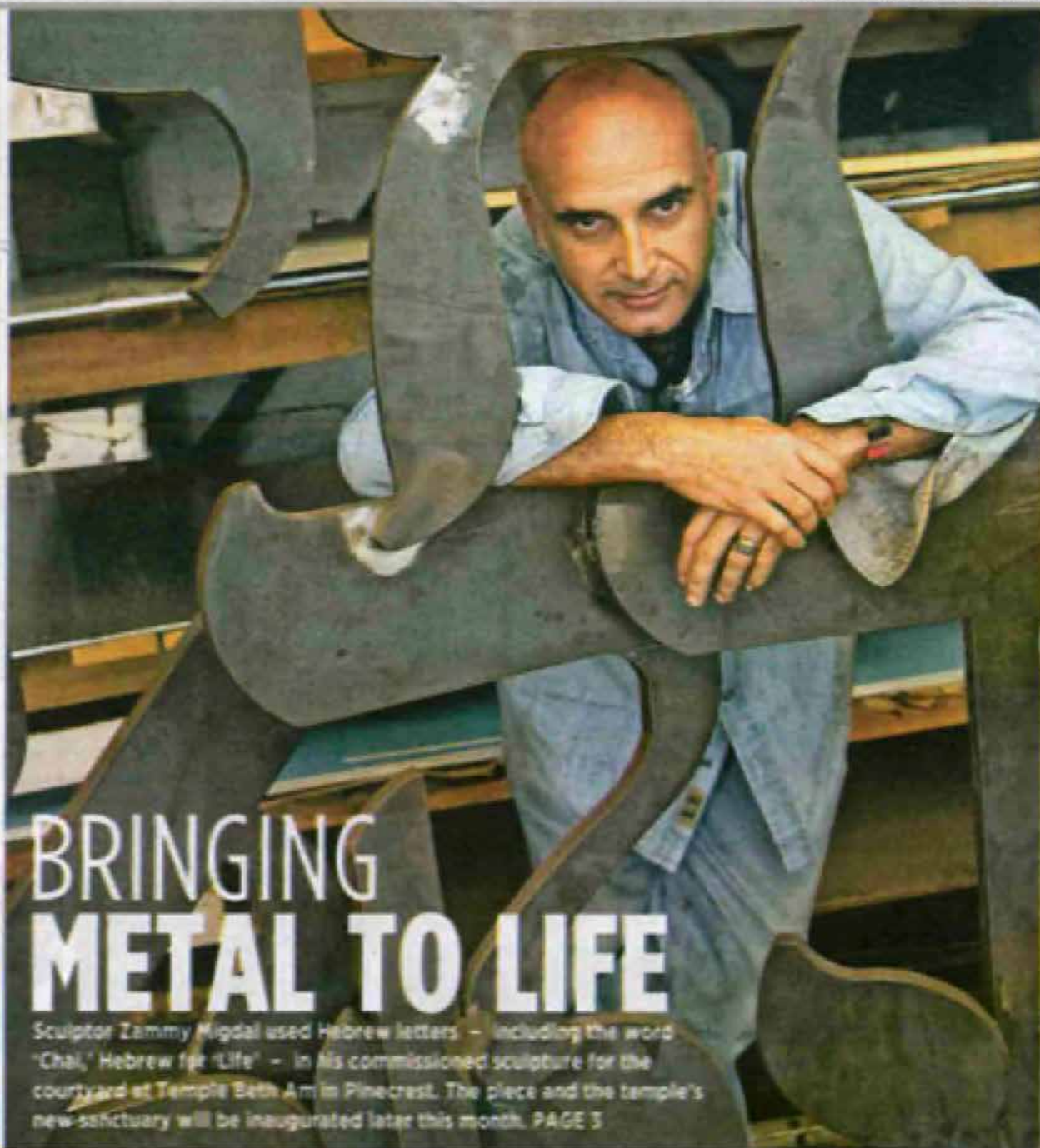
FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

A university student from Miami is among 41 interns working on Capitol Hill for black lawmakers, 21

POLICE REPORT, 11

REAL ESTATE, 12

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BRINGING METAL TO LIFE

Sculptor Zammy Migdal used Hebrew letters - including the word "Chai," Hebrew for "Life" - in his commissioned sculpture for the courtyard at Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest. The piece and the temple's new sanctuary will be inaugurated later this month. PAGE 3

Turn to the Real Estate page inside and see what's selling in your neighborhood

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FINDING A COMMON BOND

A SCULPTOR DESIGNS A WORK FOR A SYNAGOGUE THAT CONNECTS THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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From a distance, the newly installed sculpture appears to be a collection of amorphous brown shapes. But a closer look reveals Hebrew letters made of metal, linked so that when walking around them, two words are apparent — *zkor* and *chai*.

In Hebrew, *zkor* means remember, *chai* means life.

The rest of the Hebrew alphabet is randomly arranged, leaving it to the viewer's imagination to envision other words.

Sculptor Zammy Migdal designed the piece in remembrance of the Holocaust and as a symbol of connectedness in the Jewish community.

"The sculpture is not just an object that stands by itself," he said. "It represents the past, present and future."

Temple Beth Am, 5950 North Kendall Dr., commissioned the work for the courtyard between its new sanctuary and its day school. Migdal said the proximity to the school inspired him to use the Hebrew alphabet.

"I wanted to create something abstract, but meaningful," said the Israeli-born artist, a former Miami Beach hotelier who lives in Coconut Grove.

The sculpture's 15-foot centerpiece spells *zkor*, and *chai* is embedded in three smaller figures that form a semicircle around the tower. Migdal said the sculpture's other letters are designed to intersect in random order so that observers can "create their own names or the names of loved ones."

Howard Wolofsky, president of Temple Beth Am and co-chair of its building committee, said the group immediately "connected" with Migdal's idea for the space.

"We knew right away when he came up with the concept that he was the one,"

he said.

Migdal began sketching designs in February. It took him seven months to finalize the intricate weaving of the letters.

"The way the words are hooked to each other represents the connection between all Jews," he said.

The biggest challenge was engineering an outdoor sculpture that would withstand Florida's hurricane season. Each of the pieces is anchored in concrete and is made of a metal that will rust gradually. Migdal anticipated the changing color and assures that the rusting "will not affect the quality or strength of the structure."

The sculpture is a warm brown under the sun, arranged in a semi-circle that mimics the sanctuary wall behind it. A low stone enclosure around it will be filled with pebbles. The letters intertwine, forcing the observer to move around and see them from all angles.

"It's more than just a Holocaust memorial; it's an interactive exhibit," said Wolofsky.

Migdal said that art is something that has always been "within" him. An art collector, Migdal is a source for friends to go to for advice. While he was the general manager and a partner at the Indian Creek Hotel in Miami Beach, he took painting and drawing classes. In 2001, he began metal sculpting classes at the South Florida Arts Center. That's when he became fascinated with the medium.

"I like the idea of taking an old piece of metal in a junkyard and giving it a chance at another life," he said.

Since the hotel was sold about three years ago, he has dedicated himself to his art full-time, showing in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

Migdal, who served in the



MITCHELL ZACHS/MAGICAL PHOTO

RELIGIOUS BOND: Sculptor Zammy Migdal's work comprises Hebrew letters that include the word *Chai*, symbolizing life.

Israel Defense Forces, said that creating the sculpture was an "emotional project" that brought him "back to his roots."

He believes the sculpture will be an educational tool for children to learn about the Hebrew language, history and

culture.

The temple's day school integrates Judaic teachings into preschool through fifth-grade education.

The invitation-only inaugural event for the sculpture, sanctuary and other new construction at Temple Beth Am

will be 7 p.m. Aug. 31.

"What he accomplished is something that will require thought and introspection," Wolofsky said of Migdal. "It's a dynamic piece and that's why I think it will stand the test of time."