

THE RIVER REPORTER

VOLUME XXXI No. 27

Narrowsburg, NY

Jt

Sections

News
 Editorial
 Columns
 Feature
 Arts & Leisure
 Outdoors
 Sports
 Obituaries
 Forum
 Photo Gallery
 Classifieds

Directories

Government
 Calendar
 Links

TRR

About us
 Supplements
 Archives
 Advertising
 Photo Reprints
 Subscribe
 Newsstands
 Contact us

Submission

Press release
 Event
 Classified ad

Amphibian

Amphibian
 online

newsstories

Camp owner endures racial vandalism

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

LACKAWAXEN, PA — Meil Helshkop reached out his hand and agreed to talk about the swastikas he found after returning to his summer camp for children on June 27.

The 48-year-old walked by the cabin where he's staying with his assistant, Michal. The emblem of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party had been sprayed in white on the cabin's red siding. Beside the swastika the vandal(s) had sprayed an anarchy sign.

Helshkop pointed out a swastika on a doormat, one on the window of a storm door and one on a nearby picnic table. The word "Nazi" had been sprayed on the table's bench.

"Heil Hitler" had been sprayed in the grass, and the culprits had broken into a building, stolen Hebrew Bibles, ripped out pages and strewn them by the entrance gate to the not-for-profit camp, Machne Menachem, which sits in a secluded 87-acre valley along the Upper Delaware River.

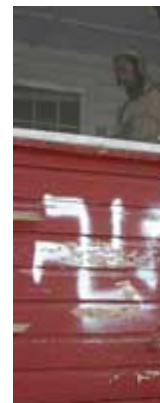
Meil and Michal were busily preparing for the 350 children who would arrive on July 7 for eight weeks of summer camp. Helshkop took a break, stepped out of the rain under the roof of a porch and began talking about the history of the camp.

He and his partners purchased the property in 1997. This incident, which Helshkop described as an "accident," is the first of its kind to occur here, though once before some thieves broke in and stole a charity box that contained \$13.

"But this. I think this is a shame. It's very sad," he said. "I hope it's not going to happen again."

Helshkop belongs to a liberal community of Hasidic Jews. Before he moved to the United States from Israel, he worked as a counselor for boys.

"Me and my partners decided that it was most important that every child has a chance to go to summer camp," he said. Machne Menachem provides opportunities for kids to go to camp, even if their



TRR photo by Ch

Last week at Mach summer camp, Me assistant, Michal, p arrival of 350 childi found numerous sv painted at the cam returned on June 2 larger version)

parents can't afford the \$1,500 tuition. Families are asked to pay as much as they can, Helshkop said.

"I knew what it was like for kids to not be able to go to camp," he said. "I decided to do something."

What would he say to the people responsible for the vandalism?

"I would invite them here and I would talk to them. They don't know what this means," he said, referring to the swastikas. "They don't know what it means to be a Jew, or who Hitler was."

Indeed the signs seem to indicate different, even contradictory messages. Beside the anarchy sign, the vandal(s) spray-painted the words, "Nazis suck."

He said there have been no complaints about the camp from the community. "I'm trying to be nice. I think the people in the area are very nice. There have been no complaints," he said.

One neighbor donated a Chevy Blazer for use at the camp.

Walking on the grounds of Machne Menachem, Helshkop said he would continue happily with his work at the camp.

"If you wake up in the morning and you can smile, then you should be happy," he said.

About the vandals, he said, "I would invite them here, and I would forgive them."

Problems? Comments? [Contact the Webmaster.](#)
Entire contents © 2005 by the author(s) and Stuart Communications, Inc.