



INSIGHT

news from *Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem*

volume 21 number 39 - Autumn 1996

Industrial Training Center of the Jewish Institute for the Blind

"Our workers are so industrious here, we are constantly looking for new sources of work to keep them busy," explains Ya'acov Lachmi, director of the Industrial Training Center of the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Motioning to the busy factory floor, Lachmi's words are illustrated in all of the activity going on around him. Not only are all of the workers busily stuffing and sorting informational brochures, but they seem to be in great spirits besides. Perhaps the only thing that would differentiate this factory floor from any other are the large number of white canes and seeing-eye dogs on the premises. All of Lachmi's workers are blind or partially sighted, and they have all been referred to the Training Center from social workers or the Jewish Institute for the Blind.

The building, located in industrial premises in Jerusalem's Givat Shaul neighborhood, belongs to the Institute, a joint venture with the government social affairs authorities. "We believe that there are no jobs that these workers are incapable of doing," explains Lachmi. "With the motivation of the workers and proper work conditions and preparations, production is very high."

Lachmi's 30 workers range in age from 23 — 70 with various educational levels and abilities. Two Arab workers from East Jerusalem are well accepted members of the work force, and quite a smattering of Russian is heard as at least five immigrants from CIS are now employed.



Staff and employees work together at Industrial Training Center

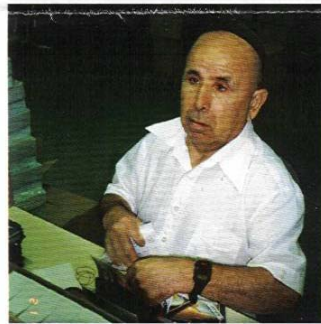
"We like to keep busy," explains Menachem, a former teacher of mathematics from Uzbekistan, before making aliyah with his family. "Moving to Israel at my age with no knowledge of the language was not easy," he says. "On the job I have had help with He-

brew lessons, and basically it's here that I've learned to speak the language." He has also learned to be a proud Israeli citizen, and Menachem has lots of experiences to share with his family at the end of his work day.

All of the workers already receive some financial assistance because of their physical handicap, and their jobs are more than just the paycheck they receive at the end of the month. "All the workers are able to get to work at the industrial park on their own, and that says a lot for their independence and dedication," Lachmi adds. Occasionally, overtime hours are also necessary in order to complete certain jobs.

Work includes binding, sorting, packaging, collating and assembly. Industries send electrical circuits to be assembled and jobs to be finished. Lachmi's background is in both industry as well as education so he is well suited to the task of finding work and dealing with his work force. "We received an order to assemble electrical panels for air conditioners which was a very complex project," recounts Lachmi. "We committed ourselves to 50 panels per week, but now we are able to complete 500."

And the more difficult the work, the higher the self esteem of the employees — some of whom suffer from mild retardation and problems other than blindness. Several of the older workers like Horesh lost their eyesight later in life after being



cont. on page 3