



JIBsight

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

volume 21 number 40 - Spring 1997

A Feeling of Home — JIB Dormitories

Filled with chatter, giggles and the tic-tac of canes on the floors, the dormitories at the Jewish Institute for the Blind are always bustling. When a pupil needs a sympathetic ear, however, a counselor can always find a quiet corner to listen to the events of the day. The Jewish Institute for the Blind is not just a school to many pupils, but it is a real 'bayit' — a home away from home.

According to Moshe Ben-Mocha, Director of the Residential Facilities of the Institute, the afternoon and evening programs at the JIB are excellent. We encourage the pupils to feel at home, but we give them the assistance to develop individually as well. Even after a morning of study, afternoon activities are varied and challenging. A new student council of the residential facilities has been created, and students actively volunteer to represent their own interests.

Our students are eager to know what is going on, so newspapers are delivered daily, and they prepare a constantly changing bulletin board of current events, explains Ben-Mocha. The pupils are divided into small groups with 6-8 participants with their counselor, and they function as a unit for afternoon and evening activities.

Group activities include assistance with homework which can give students the extra push to succeed. And of course, a group discussion, board game, or large-screen video (an Israeli film- so even the blind can understand the film from the Hebrew dialogue) are fun and enriching. Music is perhaps one of the favorite activities, and instruments are played and practiced in the music room. Oftentimes an impromptu audience gathers, or several students will improvise musically themselves for the enjoyment of all.

Israeli folk dancing, self defense, and agriculture are favorite afternoon activities in addition to swimming, sports and judo in the Sports Center. Counselors are sensitive to the students' yearning for independence, and they encourage them to participate in youth movement activities in the Institute's neighborhood of Kiryat Moshe.

We have an excellent staff of madrichim (counselors) and a valuable group of national service volunteers so our boarders have the love and attention of an older brother or sister figure, according to Ben-Mocha. Even young children for whom it is difficult to leave home find their niche quickly at the residential facilities of the Institute.

Although the dormitories are not new, they reflect the love and attention that brighten any home. Cheerful pictures

adorn the walls, fresh paint and colorful curtains add zest to the halls, and the individual dorm rooms are usually very orderly.

Counselors are also given help and coping skills to enable them to deal with special problems that might arise—deterioration of eyesight, medical, social or emotional problems. They have weekly lectures by professionals such as ophthalmologists and psychologists.

The counselors and volunteers develop a keen devotion to their charges and they relish the contribution they make to the students in the dormitories. It seems as if dorm life at the JIB gives pupils the love and security of their homes as well as the means to develop to their fullest potential.

