



## Building Self Esteem Through Art Therapy



*J. can explore and process his thoughts in the ceramics studio*

S. suffers from Usher syndrome, and she is losing both her vision and hearing. Very little relieves the mounting depression she feels. She will soon lose her ability to read, and even though her teachers are lovingly trying to help her with Braille acquisition, S. resists and holds on stubbornly to her remaining vision. There is one class at the Jewish Institute for the Blind that offers her a great deal of solace – art therapy in the ceramic studio.

“With clay in her hands, S. can explore and process her thoughts and fears,” explains Mireille Gronner, ceramicist and art therapist. “She has tools to deal with her pain in the studio.” Perhaps the process that she undergoes in art therapy is important rather than the finished product, but at the end of all her hours in the Institute’s ceramic studio, S. has a creation that screams all of her anguish and pain – she has fashioned an erupting volcano.

Art therapy is an important part of the curriculum at the JIB, and Gronner has been helping students to express themselves through art for a decade. Based on the idea that

the creative process both heals and enhances one’s life, art therapy helps a person to deal with symptoms, stress and trauma. It also boosts self awareness and improves self esteem. Gronner works with her students in several mediums such as drawing, clay and sandbox creations.

The halls of the Institute are filled with colorful illustrations, framed tiles, and collages created by the students. They also work with clay on a potters’ wheel. Gronner explains that she oftentimes closes her eyes when working on the wheel, and she feels that this helps her with her concentration as well.

Recently students have created musical instruments that seem to meet an inner need. Perhaps they feel that the earth has a voice that they can release, and the ceramics studio is today filled with instruments that help them to express that voice. Recorders, flutes and bongo drums are carefully fashioned, and they have even been used in an impromptu concert. Most important, however, the students are learning to explore and process their thoughts and emotions in a creative and healing fashion.



*Concentration and creativity are stressed with the feel of clay under one’s fingertips*

# Summer Campers from Near and Far

The tradition of blind and visually impaired young people visiting the Institute during summer is continuing, and this year a reunion of Be-Yachad (Youth Together) teens of high school and junior high students was very successful. In addition to Israeli youth from all over the country who convened at the Institute for a week of learning and fun, two blind American visitors from California participated in the first pilot trip of Or Olam.

"I feel honored to be here, and I know that I would love to participate in this program again next year," says 19-year-old Shai Wolman of Northridge, CA. "I felt at home here from the first minute, and I have enjoyed meeting the Israeli teens. The staff at the Jewish Institute for the Blind is very professional and our experience on an army base for two days was incredible."

In California, Shai is already a first-year university student and hopes to pursue a degree in law. As he was born in Israel and moved to America as a

baby, he knows Hebrew which has been very helpful on this trip. Another Californian on the group, however, 17-year-old Michael Sher, does not know Hebrew, but that hasn't stopped him from making friends and enjoying the program. According to his mother Randi, he learned to read Hebrew for his bar mitzvah, and as he loves music, he might be interested in a career as a cantor.

Michael is enjoying the hands-on aspect of the program, explains his mom, Randi. "I only heard from him once during the first week of the three-week trip, so I'm sure that means he is doing well." She is very impressed with the professionalism of the program.



*Michael enjoys joint activities with IDF soldiers*

According to Program Director Shabtai Deutsch, the pilot program has been very successful, and he hopes to increase the number of participants from abroad in the years to come. "We see the importance of bringing these teens to Israel, and we will continue to reach out to blind groups around the world."

## Institute's Most Outstanding Employee

"The students at the Institute flourish when they can express themselves," explains veteran art instructor Mireille Gronner. Gronner began teaching art at the JIB in 1986, and she looked for techniques that would speak to each student. Of course different mediums appeal to different people, but Gronner has succeeded in brightening up the Institute as well as providing a creative outlet for each individual.

In addition to art studies in her native France, Gronner moved to Israel and later pursued art therapy as she saw just how art could help an individual express his or her emotions. "As the

Institute has an orientation towards therapy and helping each pupil, there are students that have been channeled to art therapy very successfully," she says.

Her classroom is bright and cheery, but a close look at the

works tells stories behind the scenes: delightful figurines with elongated arms and hands (vital to a person that doesn't see), and musical instruments for children who need to be heard. Gronner listens carefully to every pupil, noting the comments and explanations about their work. She is insightful, but most important is the infinite patience that she shows with each and every student.



*Mireille Gronner*



# Spotlights

✿ A successful sale of arts and crafts fashioned by students was held at the Jerusalem municipality this spring, and it was a sellout. The hand-fashioned jewelry and brightly printed knickknacks were a big hit, and almost every item was sold. In addition to their hard work which benefits the Institute, the students also fashion items to brighten up their dormitory rooms and family homes.

✿ Hearty congratulations to Arieh Handler who recently celebrated his 90th birthday in his London home. Handler, a longtime friend of the Institute is well known for varied Jewish communal activities and his lifelong endeavors for the State of Israel. And today, Handler is the last man alive to have been present when David Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel in 1948, and we wish him many more years of communal activities.

✿ A sports camp for blind and partially sighted teens from throughout Israel was held at the Institute this summer, and participants enjoyed therapeutic horseback riding, tandem bike riding, goal ball, competitive swimming and judo. Interesting lectures also helped to promote a healthy diet and the importance of sports activities in general among the blind and partially sighted.



## Director's Corner

This year even during the month of August when our pupils were on vacation, the halls were full of excitement. Students from all over Israel including Israeli Arabs enjoyed summer activities and retreats at the Institute, and we are proud that so many blind and partially sighted young people from all over the country feel so connected to the Be-Yachad activities that have become a focal point of their lives when they are on vacation.

We had three full weeks of summer camp at the Institute, including two days spent volunteering on an Israel Defense Forces base in the center of the country. The participants were issued army uniforms and they underwent rigorous training and enjoyed learning about civil defense programs.

In our first Or Olam pilot program, two American 'campers' took part in the summer activities together with Be-Yachad. Despite their visual handicaps, Shai and Michael, both of California, flew to Israel to take part in this exciting program that is designed to include visually handicapped Jewish teens from all over the world.

At the Institute, we look forward to a successful year, and we hope to continue being an or olam, or 'light to the world'. May you and your family celebrate a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director



*Rappelling  
in the Nes  
Tziona forest*



*Be-Yachad campers  
cooling off in Latrun's  
water park*

# Recent Visitors from Abroad



## COLOMBIA

Mrs. Margarita Bejman, Barranquilla  
Mr. & Mrs. Pinhas Gabay, San Andres



## ENGLAND

Mrs. Eva Clifton, London



## FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



## PANAMA

Mr. & Mrs. David Chocron, Bella Vista  
Mr. & Mrs. Avraham Cohen, Bella Vista  
Mr. & Mrs. Jose Zebede, Bella Vista



## SWITZERLAND

Mr. Robert Equey, Geneva



## UNITED STATES

Mr. Dan Itzler, Boca Raton, Fla.  
Mr. & Mrs. Alex & Evette Kranz, Monsey, NY  
Mrs. Sonya Loeb, NYC  
Mrs. Rivka Seiden, Los Angeles, Ca.  
Mr. Stevan Seiden, Los Angeles, Ca.  
Mrs. Randi Sher & Michael Sher, Rancho Palos Verdes, Ca.  
Mr. Shai Wolman, Chatsworth, Ca.



*Campers join forces with soldiers at an Israel army base*

## COME TO VISIT US

On your trip to Israel we would like to welcome you at our campus situated in Kiryat Moshe, 8 Degel Reuven Street at the entrance of Jerusalem.

To arrange a visit please call:  
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## INsight

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

### Bi-annual Newsletter

Editor: Janet Mendelsohn Moshe  
**Jewish Institute for the Blind**

*servicing Israel's blind, visually impaired,  
and multi-handicapped  
over 100 years*

P.O.B. 925 Kiryat Moshe  
91008 Jerusalem, Israel  
Tel: (02) 6599555  
Fax: (02) 6512186  
E-mail address:  
office@jewishblind.org  
www.jewishblind.org

## Insights from Abroad



Karin Grest and her husband Han Schenk visited the Institute this year as guests of the Jewish Institute for the Blind, and they could be seen taking photos and filming students in all of their activities. All of these photos and films were later turned into an excellent promotional film about the JIB.

A national meeting of the American Friends of the JIB was held this spring in New York, and it was attended by Rabbi Yehoshua Pollack of Jerusalem, Chairman of the Institute's Board of Directors and Chaim Reshelbach Director General of the Institute. They were introduced to the participants by Rabbi David Lapp, Chairman of the American Friends of the Institute and Eric L. Loeb, Administrator of the N.Y. office.

The Los Angeles Group for the Blind of Israel recently held their 40th annual fundraiser, raising money for the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Lots of hard work by Jeannette Cameron Nadell, Marcia Fink, and Janice Berger resulted in a successful program as in past years. The brunch was held in memory of Jeannette's father Louie Shiell.