



JINsight

news from *Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem*

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Graduation Days at the Jewish Institute for the Blind

The theme of the evening was 'The Road to Happiness', the name of a popular Israeli song, and the graduates certainly radiated the self confidence and excitement that comes with youth as well as a job well done. Accompanied by their beaming parents and friends, the Jewish Institute for the Blind's graduating class of 2006 exuded the anticipation of a life of happiness and success.



Students perform at graduation ceremony

"This has been a wonderful school year for Reut, according to her mother who represented the parents in thanking the teachers, administration and volunteers who have been so supportive of each student at the Institute. "Not only has Reut matured, but this year she was able to reach out, and she volunteered for a year of national service." Like most of the graduates, Reut is 21 years of age, as special education students qualify for a lengthened period of study, and today as a young adult she is ready to take her first steps of independence in society.

Despite their visual impairment as well as other handicaps which are oftentimes even more serious, each JIB student is prepared for a life of independence. "Now that our students are in the Institute's framework for a longer period of time, we are able to help them develop skills for the job market or assist in their preparation for further academic training," explains Institute principal Rachel Skrobish. "And of course, they are learning the skills of daily living in the Institute's apartments."

In a skit performed at the graduation ceremony, each graduate's strengths were highlighted in song and verse. Just as Roi likes new gadgets and loves to grasp the latest in technology, Eitan loves music and performs with confidence that matches his talent. Karen's creativity is admired by her classmates, and despite Moshe's quiet personality, he is

popular with all of his classmates. It is this dedication to each and every student that impresses the Cohen family about their son's experience at the Institute.

"Every person at the Institute, from the principal to the kitchen staff is so connected to the students and responsive to their needs," explains the father of an Institute graduate, Yair Cohen. "Every education student in Israel should spend a few days at the Jewish Institute for the Blind just to understand the relationship that can be developed between a pupil and his teacher".

In addition to the dedicated staff, volunteers abound at the JIB, and special thanks were given to the national service volunteers that spend so much time with each student in the classroom, during extra-curricular activities and in the dormitories. They received round after round of applause for their hard work which is well appreciated by staff and students alike. "This was a great year at the Institute, and we are looking forward to even better things to come," says Reut, excited on her graduation day.

Students Tackle Technology in Computer Department

Years ago, who could imagine that the blind and visually handicapped could adapt to computers like fish to water. Today, computers are an important part of the curriculum of every pupil at the JIB. "Computers are a part of our life, and we use them in three ways at the Institute," explains Nehama Lev-Ari, the co-ordinator of the computer department at the Institute. "First of all, the computer is a vital tool for education, it is necessary to help pupils adapt to existing technology, and of course it is a lot of fun."

One interesting project that each student prepared on the computer this summer was a tee shirt with his own message. Not only did each student learn to utilize the computer to search for designs and ideas, but each shirt was an individual creation, and each expressed the student's own message! Lev-Ari helps each student individually to achieve his goals with the computer. "Not only are computers a tool that will be useful their entire lives, but The Jewish Institute for the Blind has invested in outstanding equipment," she explains. Lev-Ari works with small groups as she can access to every pupil with his individual needs, but the technology includes screens with enlarged print, technology that enables access by Braille or speech output. A scanner is also available that outputs in Braille.

"Our pupils learn through doing, and the computer is an ideal tool to help each student to realize his or her potential," she says. Skills that are developed include cognitive, integrative and organizational, and one girl with serious handicaps in addition to her blindness was helped in actual



Students adapt to new technology

product development. "With the computer, she chose a product and made labels and packaging to help 'market' it," explains Lev-Ari. "We can see the increase in her interest and her efforts as every class session actually brings her closer to the realization of her goals." While succeeding in their mastery of computer skills or simply 'surfing the web', the students are mastering new skills, and their self esteem is soaring.

Communicating an Extra Month

As the special education timetable has an extra month of classroom study, this year the JIB utilized wide resources to
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One of the Institute's Outstanding Employees Nechama Lev-Ari

Nechama Lev-Ari has been at the Institute for 23 years, and her classroom is probably the most popular at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. As the director of the Institute's computer department, she doles out computer time and lessons to the eager pupils. "Of course the students love using computers for fun as well as education," Lev-Ari smiles. "What pupil isn't attracted to the computer?"

Under her tutelage, the JIB has acquired state-of-the-art computer equipment over the years, and the computer terminal can be an exceptional teaching and learning aid for the blind and partially sighted. In addition to teaching and guiding stu-



Nechama Lev-Ari works with pupil

dents in her early days at the Institute, Lev-Ari is also certified through the Center for Development of Human Potential in Jerusalem as a Dynamic Assessor.

Children and their education is constantly changing, and never static, according to Lev-Ari and education is modifiable. In a 'mediated learning experience' in which she has been trained, Lev-Ari constantly works to ensure every pupil is developing to the best of his or her own individual ability. Her dedication to each student is appreciated by the pupils themselves who are encouraged to work hard. Not only does she see computers as a tool which is vital to every pupil, she knows that computer time also must be limited to open other avenues of curiosity and exploration.



Spotlights

❁ Sports Camp Unites with Fun and Games

Squeals of fun and laughter, and the excitement of sport united 45 blind and partially sighted Israeli youngsters in a sports camp this summer at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Participants included Jewish, Christian and Moslem youngsters from all over Israel including the beleaguered northern section of the country. According to Shabtai Deutsch, Director of the Department of Community Services, the sports camp was a great success, and he was proud to see the high level of sportsmanship and healthy competition displayed.

❁ Summer Fun and Games

This summer included widespread activities and trips. Perhaps one of the most exciting was the walk through Jerusalem's ancient water supply. Although the place is dark, one walks through knee-deep water in the cavern! Flashlights were on hand, but the blind students were the leaders on this action-packed tour!



Arts and crafts fun



Riding in tandem



Director's Corner

As we go to press, the State of Israel is trying to adjust to the horrors of the war that was imposed upon us by the Hizbollah guerillas in Lebanon. In just over a month, the northern third of the country was lobbed with hundreds of rockets daily, killing and maiming innocent civilians and paralyzing part of the country. Not only were people forced from their homes into shelters, but many fled the north completely, finding refuge in central and southern Israel.

We are proud that we were able to operate our summer schedule at the Institute as planned, inviting Jews, Moslems and Christians to participate in all of our activities. In our sports camp, the sense of sportsmanship and excitement was in the air, even though the participants did not always have a common language in which to communicate.

In addition, we opened our doors at the Institute, inviting families with blind children from the north to temporarily live in a quiet, protected place. Even though they slept in the classrooms and teachers' lounge, they were away from the shelters and the fear of the falling Katyusha rockets. This year at the Institute, we are dealing with a difficult financial reality, and we hope that our friends abroad will remember this as they begin their preparations for the Jewish New Year. Thank you for your concern and support at this time. We are doing our utmost to ensure that our students and all of *Am Yisrael* will have a prosperous year of success and peace.

Have a wonderful and peaceful year!

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors from Abroad



ARGENTINA

Mr. David E. Kostzer, S.M. de Tucuman



CANADA

Mr. & Mrs. David & Judith Jelen, Toronto



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



PANAMA

Mrs. Lisa Schwartz, Panama City



ROMANIA

Dr. Tatania Floresku, Bucharest



UNITED STATES

Mrs. Angelita Galvan Freeman, Santa Ana, CA
Mr. Robert S. Friedman, Stamford, Ct.
Mrs. Robin Grossman, Stamford, Ct.

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teach the important theme of 'communication'. Perhaps the highlight of this month was a visit to a Jerusalem broadcasting studio where the students took part in a radio interview. The students also devised a sound track for a television program, and they learned how radio broadcasts are prepared.

"The entire month revolved around communication," explains Rachel Skrobish, school principal and Deputy General Manager of the JIB. "Not only did the students learn what this means in their own lives, but they were able to take the concept even further. Hopefully we will continue to utilize this as a teaching elective in the upcoming academic year." During the summer program, war was raging in northern Israel as well as parts of the south of the country, and the students were able to talk and air their fears. In several instances, they had family members that were living in shelters as Israel's northern cities were barraged with rockets.



Summer sports fun

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:
02-6599501

Insights from Abroad

This year, a letter from Lt. General Kjeld Hillingso (retired), the former head of the Danish army, was sent out as an appeal to Venner af Blindeinstituttet I Jerusalem, the Institute's friends organization in Denmark. This letter was written at the initiative of Milton Rothschild, chairman, joined by Birte Bune Smith. Here is a translation of his meaningful words:

Unfortunately, I have never been to Israel, but I have closely followed the developments in this remarkable country. I have also followed areas related to the military and security policy. I particularly admire the will of the Israelis to establish their own land, defend it and stand united despite internal political disputes.

My admiration for Israel, however, goes back to my childhood through the high esteem and veneration I had for the Jews. Not only was my godfather Jewish, but I know so many warmhearted and knowledgeable people of the Jewish faith. Perhaps they have not always agreed with the policies of the State of Israel at all times, but they have always supported the country as well as Israeli institutions.

I therefore hope that this letter will remind all recipients that both Israel as well as the Jewish Institute for the Blind in Jerusalem needs economic support - especially this summer. Thank you —

Kjeld Hillingso
(Translated from Danish by Jakob Melchior)



Bi-annual Newsletter

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

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