



INSIGHT

news from *Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem*

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Jewish Institute for the Blind Fosters Independent Living

Two apartments in the neighborhood near the Jewish Institute for the Blind are providing students with their first steps towards independent living. In this educational project for 18-21 year olds, the blind and sight impaired young adults are living on their own and learning how to care for themselves without the watchful eyes of their parents. Institute students come from the dormitories or their family home where everything has been provided, and like any other fledgling, they must flex their wings and fly solo.

The transition is made in Jerusalem at two well appointed apartments not far from the Institute where three young men and four young women are learning the basics of sharing a flat and taking all the responsibilities on their shoulders. "I was hesitant at first," explains Vika who moved in last year and has become experienced in getting around the neighborhood and shopping. Although the girls take turns with shopping, cooking and cleaning as well as financial planning, it seems that Mukat has culinary talents and she loves to prepare meals and bake. Families of the girls were amazed when they heard they were frying jelly donuts (*suvganiot*) in the apartment for a traditional Chanukah treat!



Mukat enjoys cooking for her friends at the Institute's educational apartment

"Our mobility training has been very intense, and now we are comfortable maintaining the apartment, walking and shopping in the neighborhood and going wherever we need to go by foot or public transportation," Mukat explains.

Both Vika and Mukat originally came to Israel as new immigrants with their families. Vika is from the former Soviet Union and Mukat comes from Ethiopia, but both are very Israeli in their tastes, and if all goes well in their preparatory courses, they will be university students next year. According to their apartment counselor Inbar, the girls can live in either specially equipped housing for the blind and partially sighted or an apartment of their choosing with other friends or students.

"Each person is an individual, and their needs have to be taken into consideration," explains Inbar. She works with the girls in their apartment to help them with daily activities, and oftentimes she is on hand if a problem comes up. There are also national service volunteers to help out. As Vika rushes to leave the flat for an afternoon class, Inbar reminds her to double check the grocery list. The girls have just finished a therapeutic art class, and now Inbar is

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History is Repeated

"In excavations done just a few blocks from here, a ceramic kiln was uncovered, giving clues about the 2,000 year old Roman civilization living here," explains David Felzenstein, a volunteer at the Institute who is helping students recreate ancient history. "We are building a similar kiln in the yard of the Institute." Mireille Gronner has moved her ceramics classes outside to the early Jerusalem sunshine, and the pupils are helping to dig a large hole for the kiln that they are building out of completely recycled materials.

"The important thing is that the pupils are getting their hands dirty, and they will build a wood-burning oven that can be used today for firing pottery and ceramics," explains Mireille. David volunteers at the Institute, and he was sure the pupils would enjoy the accomplishment of building their own kiln. "After all, a similar kiln was found nearby several years ago, so why shouldn't we use the same technology," David smiles.



Institute students enjoyed tour to the Judean Hills

Hard at work with spades and shovels, the students are learning quite a bit about archaeology and history. The new kiln should be ready to fire up by late springtime!

Most Outstanding Employee Tsvi Benziman

His has become a familiar face as he walks around the neighborhood, shopping, crossing streets and oftentimes even crossing town by bus with students from the Jewish Institute of the Blind. Zvi Benziman is a rehabilitative educator for the blind, and he is responsible for the mobility training for the blind and partially sighted population.

Benziman has worked at the Institute for eleven years, although a lot of his day is spent on the streets outside the Institute as well as walking through the dormitory buildings, offices and hallways. "A new student coming to the Institute for the first time needs immediate attention," explains Benziman. "He needs to internalize the layout of his dormitory room and the location of all his important items. He must know the proper route to take to the bathroom, and he must learn to get his bearings as soon as possible."

Benziman must evaluate every student and decide on his course of study. Despite other handicaps, he thinks that every pupil must experience that sense of



Tsvi Benziman is showing this student some of the most important skills he will need in life...the ability to go where he needs independently

accomplishment when he succeeds. "Until a sighted person covers his eyes and tries to do even the simplest household tasks, he has no idea what the life of the blind is like", Benziman adds. As a former history and civics teacher, he was drawn to the idea of

working in a more rehabilitative field and took a course which taught him the basics of mobility rehabilitation.

Since that time, he has worked step by step with students at the JIB. Imagine a busy traffic intersection. Occasionally noise sensors buzz when the pedestrian light turns green, and the blind and partially sighted can cross as easily as everyone else. Most intersections do not have this feature, however, and the blind learn to listen to changes in traffic in order to determine when it is possible for them to cross. Of course the blind can always ask for help, but independence is first and foremost. And according to Benziman, asking is not easy for everyone, and besides they have to know exactly what to ask. People sometimes have the best intentions, but oftentimes if a blind person has his landmarks memorized, a helpful passerby can confuse him with new directions.

Benziman has helped almost every student at the Institute, and perhaps his biggest pleasure is seeing his charges continue to lead successful and independent lives.



Spotlights

✿ Special education professionals from South America visited the Jewish Institute for the Blind and were given an explanation and tour of the facilities. Encouraged to visit the Institute by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 35 visitors were very impressed by the facilities and the attention given to each pupil.

✿ Students at the Jewish Institute for the Blind took a spring tour to the Judean Hills, reliving the history of the Roman fortress at Masada and the heroic story of the Jewish zealots who fought to preserve their Jewish faith centuries ago. In addition to enjoying the cable car which whisked them up the mountain and exploring the site, they walked up to the waterfall at Ein Gedi, cooling off in the springs.

✿ After last year's successful Or Olam Summer Camp, plans are underway for a repeat performance. This endeavor will bring blind and partially sighted teens from abroad to participate in their first trip as well as experience Israel from a rehabilitative camp experience.

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trying to assist Mukat with her psychometric studies which will enable her to qualify for university if she succeeds.

Although there is a preparatory course for the blind, there is no Braille translation or voice tapes of the thousands of words she will be responsible for defining. "We are constantly trying to ensure that the students get as much help as possible, enabling them to study and prepare a career for themselves." They are entitled to free tuition charges in pursuit of a college education, so Inbar recommends a realistic course of study that will enable them to find employment.

Just like any roommates, these girls can have their issues with each other in the dynamics of their living arrangements. Cleanliness is rarely an issue, however, and the educational apartments are usually neat and tidy. "We have to be neat," smiles Mukat. "If one thing is out of place, it can throw off our entire daily routine." Perhaps life is not easy in the transitional apartments of the Jewish Institute for the Blind, but these girls are certainly getting a taste of what is waiting for them in the outside world.



Vika washing up after dinner



Director's Corner

The Book of Exodus tells us that the children of Israel were protected and guided by the presence of the Almighty during their sojourn in the desert: "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel day and night." At the Jewish Institute for the Blind, we invest a great deal of time and effort in mobility and rehabilitative training, hoping to instill a measure of security in our students. Like proud parents, we relish their accomplishments in the educational apartments that enable them to live independently, prior to going on to educational and employment pursuits.

Our 18 – 21 year old students are learning how to function in society in special flats that have been appointed just for their needs. A group of four girls are succeeding in making their nest, and in another apartment three boys are learning to cook and clean for themselves. Students live in the flats for two years before ensuring that they are secure and self sufficient enough to move on to another rental or independent situation. Every one of our students has his own level of development, but we hope to see that they are as independent as possible.

May you and your family have a wonderful Passover season.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors from Abroad



ARGENTINA

Mr. Tobias Kostzer, Tucuman



CANADA

Prof. Arnold Ages, Toronto



ENGLAND

Mr. Ronnie Khan, London



FRANCE

Mr. Moise Franck Douieb, La Varenne
Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



NORWAY

Mr. Oysten Egeland, Skien



SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Ricky Lomey, Johannesburg
Rabbi Menachem Sosnovik, Johannesburg



UNITED STATES

Mr. Martin Cohen, NYC
Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Mandelbaum, Oak Pk,
Mich
Mrs. Brenda Tawil, W. Long Beach, NJ



VENEZUELA

Mr. & Mrs. Ran Cohen, Caracas



Educating for independence at the Institute

With great sorrow, the Jewish Institute for the Blind received the news of the death of

Prof. Arié Gilon

of New York after a long illness. Prof. Gilon was a longtime friend of the Institute and served with devotion as vice-president of the N.Y. Friends of the Institute. Our warmest condolences to his wife Léa and the family.

Insights from Abroad



**In a pre-Chanukah greeting sent to the Scandanavian community, Arne Melchior, former Danish minister and parliamentarian urges the Danish community to support the Jewish Institute for the Blind or as it is called in Danish – Venner af Blindeinstituttet i Jerusalem.

“In order to create light in darkness, we are called on to help those less fortunate than ourselves,” writes Melchior. “In this time of year as the days are getting a bit longer, we remember the blind that don’t enjoy this comfort.” Melchior adds in his appeal that the skilled and loving staff of the JIB give excellent assistance to the blind and partially sighted students. Chairman of the Danish Friends of the Institute is Milton Rothschild joined by Birte Bune Smith.

**A big welcome to Arie L. Handler of London, England who just made *aliyah* at the age of 91! He recently moved to Israel with his wife Henni, and they also have children and grandchildren nearby. A former trustee of the British Aid Committee and a longtime friend of the Institute, we wish him good health and continued community service. Martin Goodman has been elected to replace him as a trustee, and he joins Ruth Hollander and chairman Prof. Gerald Goodhardt as trustees of the British Aid Committee.

**The annual gala event was held in La Varenne, France in March under the stewardship of Myriam Nathan. The many friends and supporters of the Jewish Institute of the Blind joined in to contribute to the success of this evening, expressing their respect to the memory of David Eddy Nathan. Institute Director Chaim Resehlbach brought artwork from the students, and an auction of the ceramics, jewelry and handicrafts brought a huge response.



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and multi-handicapped
over 100 years*

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