



INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

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Animal Assisted Therapy at Jewish Institute for the Blind



Animal assisted therapy is calming and very enriching for the blind and partially sighted

Certainly a dog is known as man's best friend, and for the blind, a dog can be much more... a trusted pair of eyes, a steady and alert presence, and a stepping-stone to independence. Animal-assisted therapy is important for people of all ages with varying mental and/or physical conditions. Therapeutic animals are brought to the Jewish Institute for the Blind, weekly for participants of Kol Ha-Lev, and they are making quite an impression on this group of Orthodox boys who visit the Institute in a program tailor-made for their needs.

The Kol Ha-Lev program for the Orthodox population provides enrichment for young people that are blind and partially sighted. They meet four days weekly in separate classes for girls and boys, and they are also divided according to age (6 -21) and cognitive abilities. Participants are mainstreamed in schools in and around Jerusalem, and transportation is provided to the Institute where they are taught mobility, home independence skills, computer education as well as art and music.

"The decision to provide animal assisted therapy with this

group was not a given as animals and pets are not common in the Orthodox community", explains Tsvi Gants, Kol Ha-Lev coordinator. "We undertook the project with the agreement of the parents, and we even required the fathers to be an integral part of the pilot". Not only did the fathers participate in the sessions with their sons, but they were very supportive and were impressed with their sons' response and communication with the animals.

Children's Response to Animals

After several months of weekly visits, the pilot project has been completed and was considered to be a big success by students and staff alike. In letters at the end of the project, the participants expressed their feelings. Y wrote that he was happy to hold the hamster and feed him, and then he began talking about surgery that he will soon undergo. N said that it helped him to hold his father's hand until I got used to the bird's pecking and jumping.' "I'm happy that I learned to take care of the animals and feed them," he wrote. Gants shared the enthusiasm for animal therapy, and he hopes it will be repeated with all of the Institute's students.



Parents played an active role when the animals came to the Institute

Mercaz Keshet Provides Rehabilitation as well as Learning Skills

The Hebrew word for rainbow is 'keshet' and the new Keshet Center at the Institute brings light and color as well as the promise of a new beginning for our pupils. In addition to their academic studies, it is vital for our students to learn good work habits, perform their tasks neatly and efficiently. These skills are put to use, assembling parts, packaging items and making gift boxes.

"In the early days it was a challenge to find interesting work for our students, but gift packets for birthdays or synagogues have proved to be popular, and small dolls and magnets are sold at craft fairs", explains Lilach Emanuel, director of Mercaz Keshet (an acronym in Hebrew of the words employment support). Offices are also starting to take an interest in out-sourcing work to us as well". At first Emanuel had to develop ideas that could be marketed, but today there is quite an interest in our products whether they are to be used for offices or even as birthday treats. "Not only do the students learn skills



and proper work habits, but today there is even a bit of money left over to be shared among the students!"

A Glimpse at One of the Institute's Employees Tsvi Gants

Tsvi Gants has been a valued addition to the Institute for five years. Gants spent years in yeshiva study and after the birth of his first son who has severe handicaps including blindness, he began studying special education while also working as a counselor at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Today he co-ordinates the Kol Ha-Lev program which brings Orthodox boys and girls to the Institute for extra-curricular activities four times weekly in the afternoons.

"The students I work with all attend schools and yeshivas in the Orthodox community, and they are brought to the Institute several afternoons weekly for special



Tsvi Gants

emphasis on enriching programs that they would not be exposed to in their local schools", Gants explains,

"At present, boys come to the Institute four times weekly and girls twice a week and the program is extremely successful". The patience and guidance that Gants demonstrates with each student is part of what makes Kol Ha-Lev so popular. "The JIB is excited to open its doors to these students, and the kids are happy with their new challenges", adds Gants. "One boy recently told me that

with the exception of Shabbat, the afternoons he comes to the Kol Ha-Lev programs are the best part of his week!"

Spotlights

❁ Parents Day at Institute

Lots of activities were enjoyed by parents of students from near and far as the entire Institute was turned into a giant 'Escape Room', and students were the guiding light trying to help their parents navigate through the area. A musical performance by Meir Barabi, a well known Israeli performer, who is also blind since birth, was enjoyed by all. Not only is Barabi, an excellent musician, but he was very inspirational as he studied at the JIB decades ago.

❁ **Tu B'shvat**, the Jewish holiday of the trees, was celebrated this year in February at the Institute with tree planting and ecological awareness tours. Students and teachers enjoyed their outing and planted saplings in a Jewish National Fund tree-planting center in a forest near Jerusalem. Earlier this autumn other challenging tours and wilderness trips were also enjoyed by the student body.

❁ **Ethiopian students proudly shared traditions about their festival of Sigd** which was celebrated this autumn in Jerusalem. In the traditional festival, the Jews of Ethiopia met on a mountain facing towards Jerusalem and prayed for their return to the land of Israel. Today they meet in Jerusalem and enjoy traditional foods.

❁ **Visits by the Jerusalem police department to the Institute** allow students to meet the men and women in blue and understand their jobs. The police department also enjoys seeing the Institute and its array of activities.

❁ **The Israeli Women's Goal Ball team** is preparing for the Paralympics in Tokyo in September 2020. As we go to press a week-long training camp is scheduled at the Jewish Institute for the Blind in late March. On the roster are both the Brazilian and British national teams.



Benny, a student at JIB shares injera bread with principal and educator on Festival of Sigd

Director's Corner



When the Jewish Institute for the Blind was founded 118 years ago in Jerusalem's old city, the stated goal was 'to help raise a student's self esteem so he will not depend on others for help but will himself be a helpful member of society'. Today, our goals and motto are still the same.

We strive to provide the best that we can offer to those students that enter our gates, and this year has already marked successful projects that have enabled the visually handicapped to empower themselves, earning praise for the Institute from professionals in all fields. This year we instituted community service projects that help to enrich the lives of hundreds of children and adults that are blind and partially sighted.

I would like to personally thank each and every member of the staff and team that works so hard to help add to the lives of the blind community in Israel. May we at the JIB continue to go from strength to strength.

Wishing you and your family a happy and kosher Pesach Holiday!

Shabtai Deutsch, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



AUSTRALIA

Alan Lachman, Victoria



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



NORWAY

Norwegian fact-finding group including Beathe Berkstom and Arnt Holet



CANADA

Leslie & Sara Breiner, Ontario
Leonard Kerzner, Ontario



GERMANY

Luis Patrick Low, Frankfort am Mein



UNITED STATES

Zev Berman, New York
Stanley & Dianne Bekritsky, New Jersey
OU Friends from Israel and U.S.



COLOMBIA

Alberto Betesh, Barranquilla

COME TO VISIT US

On your next trip to Israel
we would like to welcome you
to our campus,
situated at the entrance to Jerusalem

8 Degel Reuven Street
Kiryat Moshe

To arrange a visit
please call: 02-6599501/11

Yachad Acting Director Awarded Prize by Israel's President

In a recent presentation at the President's residence, Adva Hori, acting director of Yachad was presented a prize for future educators. A long-time member of the Yachad Youth group, Hori has been visiting the Institute for extra-curricular activities since her childhood. Today as acting director, she works with three groups of young people from 11-21, and although she was exempted for military service due to her blindness, she volunteered and even completed officer's training. Hori is presently completing her psychology degree.



*Adva Hori awarded prize at
President's Residence*



Bi-annual Newsletter

Editor: Janet Mendelsohn Moshe

Jewish Institute for the Blind

serving Israel's blind, visually impaired,
and multi-handicapped

For over 100 years

P.O.B. 925 Kiryat Moshe

91008 Jerusalem, Israel

Tel: (02) 6599501/11

Fax: (02) 6512186

E-mail address:

office@ivrim.org.il

www.jewishblind.org



Insights from Abroad



Visitors from Norway hope to promote friendship and co-operation between young adults from Israel and Norway. In an initial visit, the Norwegians learned about projects at the Institute. We hope in the future there will be more activities and meetings between members of Yachad and the Norwegians.



In a recent tour of the Institute, active English-speaking visitors enjoyed seeing the Institute from the inside with Rachel Skrobish, Deputy Director of Pedagogical Development. Although most of the visitors live in Israel, they did not know the variety of work that is done at the Institute with visually handicapped from all over the country.