



# INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

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## Good Vibrations Music Therapy Promotes Wellness

"Music helps to open the channels of communication with our blind and partially-sighted students, allowing for a rich dialogue," explains Hanna Tal-Or, music therapist at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. "Students that have trouble expressing themselves verbally seem to open up with music... they make eye contact, their confidence expands, and the music serves as a great equalizer, helping in their social interaction." An active center, the music room at the Jewish Institute for the Blind is decorated with comfortable rugs and pillows, colorful drums of various sizes, and everyone is encouraged to enter, pick up an instrument or listen to the music of their choice.

"I always come to the music room when I need to think something through," explains T., who has been



blind since birth. "I can play the drums if I am mad, and that helps me to calm down. Sometimes I go to play the organ or listen to music." The Institute's music room is certainly a place where all the students feel comfortable. Although S. has serious visual as well as hearing impairments, he is beginning to recognize the world around him. When he feels Tal-Or's hand on his, before she even communicates in sign language, he immediately knows he is going to the music room and calms down.

Once in the music room, S. knows his way to the organ, and he knows which keys to push to change the rhythm or beat of the music. "We don't know what S. hears, but in addition to feeling the vibrations he can move to different rhythms, and he has definite opinions in what he likes to hear," Tal-Or explains.

In her classroom, music is a means rather than an end. "If a student shows great promise and wants to succeed with a particular instrument, that talent is developed, but our purpose is to use music to help the pupils therapeutically – to interact with a group and to express themselves.



*Making music at the Institute*

### Sounds of Success

"In one class we have a new immigrant from Ethiopia," according to Tal-Or. "Although he is very shy and has difficulties with communication, he shares some of his beloved tunes with us. We are learning different cadences in music, and the pupils are learning to appreciate each other's cultures. Although Tal-Or's training is in classical music, her style changes depending on her pupils and their needs. At present, a drumming group is being formed, and the students are very happy with this medium. Not only does it help their posture and rhythm, it is an energizing experience to hear them play together.

# Conversations Over a Cup of Coffee

Israel is not a country where a lot of alcohol is consumed, but coffee is a different matter altogether. Coffee shop devotees start early in the morning and they can sit over a 'cappuchino' until late at night. Not only are they sipping and snacking, but this forum is ideal for a heart-to-heart discussion.

Taking advantage of this fondness for coffee shops, the JIB has opened *Café Siach* at the Institute which actually means *discussion café*. At least twice monthly in this warm weather, young blind and partially sighted Israelis come into Jerusalem to meet at the coffee house under the stars to enjoy a 'cuppa' and conversation. At least five social workers also nurse their coffee as they meet with young people, giving them a chance to talk about life in general in a relaxed atmosphere.



*Café Siach provides a great social outing as well as a forum for airing problems*

## Hanna Tal-Or

### One of the Institute's Most Outstanding Employees

Like many members of the Institute's dedicated staff, Hanna Tal-Or started teaching as a young music educator at the Jewish Institute for the Blind 25 years ago, and she has never looked back. "Each year is a personal and professional challenge with the students I work with at the Institute", Tal-Or explains. Take N. for example... although he has lots of difficulties in all of his classes he is flourishing with music, and it is here that we are able to reach him and explore his talents while developing good work habits."



*Hanna Tal-Or*

Tal-Or has always loved music, and she trained in piano, but later she studied psychology in university. She continued her studies in music therapy, and she recently completed her master's degree at Bar Ilan University. Music can be a basis for teaching

most subjects, according to Tal-Or... just look at the rhythm in walking, playing the drums, the beating of the heart, high and low volumes. As a social catalyst, Tal-Or loves the way music can be used, helping a child to express his or herself, listening and responding to others. And if a child performs, perhaps there is nothing better for his self esteem!

Tal-Or succeeds in group work as well as therapeutic sessions with individual students. Oftentimes, she provides a workshop for blind families on vacation or the 'Yachad' students that oftentimes utilize the Institute's facilities. She is very proud of her well-equipped classroom, but she hopes to develop the usage of the computer for musical exercises with her students.

## Spotlights

❁ Summer activities were a busy hub of activity as 150 young people spent time at the Institute in Jerusalem as part of the 'Yachad' camp. Approximately 60 blind families utilized the dormitories and facilities of the Institute for their enjoyable vacations in Jerusalem.

❁ In an extra month of learning in July the students began focusing on the work force as well as occupational training. In visits to the Hadassah Medical Center as well as the Tnuva Dairy, they were introduced to different occupations. They also participated in arts and crafts, field trips and went to visit the informative Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv.

## Goalball Champs

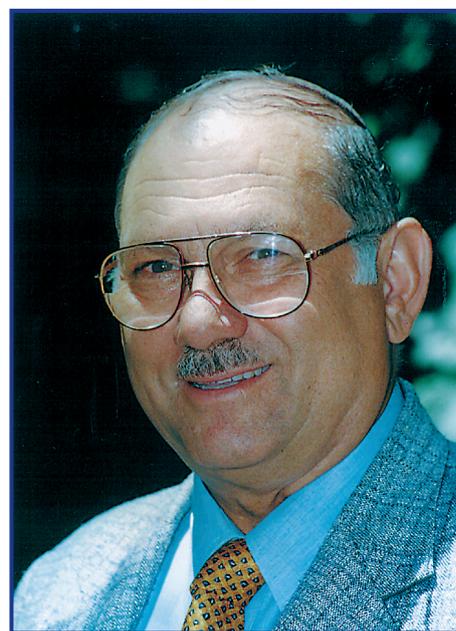
Bringing home the gold this year, the proud sportsmen of the goalball team sponsored by the Jewish Institute of the Blind were honored in a ceremony at the Israeli parliament under the auspices of Yitzhak Herzog, the Minister of Social Affairs and Services. Representing blind and partially sighted athletes from all over the country, these Jewish and Arab sportsmen exemplify the possible unity of the people of Israel. Playing hard and working as a team they brought home the first-place trophy in the European Goalball Championship after defeating both Holland and Russia.

Goalball is a unique team sport for the blind and partially sighted played by two teams of three players each. All players' eyes are covered so that everyone will be totally sightless in the games, relying on their hearing and their excellent instincts to locate a ball with bells in it. The object is to roll the ball over the opponents' goal line. In order to prevent a goal, the players throw themselves on the floor to prevent the ball from crossing the goal.

Fast and exciting, the games were played in Albufeira, Portugal under the auspices of the International Blind Sports Association. Kudos to the excellent sportsmen. Israeli women will also be represented in the goalball championship games in Munich which will take place in late summer.



*Israeli team brings home the European trophy*



## Director's Corner

This year as we go to press we hope and pray for a successful year as financial markets all over the world are struggling to recoup their losses. At the Jewish Institute for the Blind, we are trying to continue to meet all our students needs as we complete one academic year and start another. The Jewish Institute for the Blind has always operated many projects based largely on the donations of our many friends in Israel and around the globe.

Israeli funding covers only a minimal part of our operating budget. This year many institutions all over the world are fighting for their survival. Even those that seem to be on a firm footing are taking strict measures to keep on top of what looks like a long recession.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our supporters that give generously to the Jewish Institute for the Blind in good times as well as in times that are not so good. Your donations are helping us to provide important services to the blind and partially sighted community of Israel. May this New Year be a year of health, happiness and peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chaim Reshelbach".

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

# Recent Visitors to the Institute



COLOMBIA

Mrs. Margarita Bejman, Barranquilla  
Mrs. Miriam Bejman, Barranquilla



PANAMA

Mr. & Mrs. Jack & Tanya Bejman



DENMARK

André & Philip Rothschild, Copenhagen



SWEDEN

Mrs. Inger Glassman, Stockholm  
Group of 45 students from "Deshe" together  
with group leader Michael Lichenstein



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



UNITED STATES

Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Brinn, Silver Spring, Md  
Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Elese Itzler, Boca Raton, Fl  
Mr. William Kase, West Hills, Ca.  
Mr. Meir Ohebsion, Los Angeles, Ca



## 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



*Loving care for animals at the Institute*

## Insights from Abroad

The British Aid Committee is helping to sponsor a new animal corner at the Institute. Proper cages are being constructed in an airy structure that will enable students to care for the animals. We send our thanks to Prof. Gerald J. Goodhardt, head trustee of the Committee as well as Mrs. Ruth Starr for making this important project possible.

The giving of tzedakah is always an important mitzvah. This year we were thrilled to receive donations from Moises Abadi of North Miami Beach in Florida in honor of his bar mitzvah. Seven-year-old Esther Bensayag, also of the Miami area, addressed a letter to the JIB explaining how she collected charity in honor of her brother Jacobo's bar mitzvah, and she enclosed a check for \$500 to the Institute. A donation was also sent to the Institute by the pre-school class of Temple Solel in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California. It is indeed heartwarming to see that young people are being taught the importance of giving charity so early.



Bi-annual Newsletter

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and multi-handicapped  
over 100 years

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