



# INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind ,Jerusalem

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## Ten Years of Togetherness: 'Yachad' Celebrates a Decade

The Jewish Institute for the Blind was recently honored to invite hundreds of young blind and partially sighted adults to the Institute this summer to celebrate the tenth anniversary of 'Yachad', a national project that unites sight impaired teens from all over Israel. 'Yachad' (or together in Hebrew), they experience courses, seminars, tours and lots of laughter. Programming was developed to help sight impaired young Israelis that are mainstreamed in junior and high schools, and subjects that are touched on in 'Yachad' seminars include higher learning opportunities, volunteering in society, as well as workshops in art, drama, sports, personal grooming and computers.

"The minute I arrived in the Jerusalem bus station, I was met by counselor Odelia and embraced with her enthusiasm," writes Ortal of her first 'Yachad' seminar at the Institute. Students are divided according to their age groups, and the social aspect of 'Yachad' is very important, helping to build self esteem as well as helping these young people to meet other teens that share many of their same issues.

Hillel Altschuler joined 'Yachad' as a counselor to help visually impaired young people his age. "I have been the one that has grown up and matured after my experiences with 'Yachad'" he says. "It is great to see



Enjoying summer sports



Yachad campers cooling off in Emek Hamaayanot natural springs

how these kids deal with every problem thrown in their direction. I'm truly hooked!"

At the tenth anniversary celebration, dozens of former active 'Yachad' participants came to the reunion at the Institute to see each other as well as to reconnect with an equal number of volunteers and staff members that have worked with them over the years. "The Jewish Institute for the Blind is able to provide vital services under one roof for blind and partially sighted young people living all over Israel," explained Institute Director Chaim Reshelbach in a welcoming speech to the assembled audience. "We now see that 'Yachad' is an innovative experiment that has succeeded beyond our expectations."

# Beautiful Synagogue Still in Use at the Institute

The synagogue at the Jewish Institute for the Blind is a well preserved gem, and it has been lovingly restored as it looked when dedicated at the Institute over seventy years ago. The synagogue has been used for years by Institute students as well as neighboring Kiryat Moshe residents that find comfort in the chapel. Adorned with plaques from donors to the Institute from all over the world, special signs also commemorate the visit of Israel's first chief Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook as well as the American Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen Weiss.



*Rabbi Gazit at the historic synagogue at the Jewish Institute for the Blind*

Today, all Institute pupils can find a warm welcome by Rabbi Chaim Gazit, rabbi of the synagogue and a spiritual leader with a warm word for every student. "Even the blind thank G-d in their morning prayers for 'opening the eyes of the blind'", explains Rabbi Gazit. "Perhaps they are not able to see, but they thank

the Lord for the sake of those that can help them to see." After almost three decades at the Institute, Rabbi Gazit feels privileged to have been a part of the lives of so many of the students. "There is nothing more heartwarming than seeing former students come back to the Institute to visit or sometimes even to work."

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

Everyone needs the skills as well as the self assurance to stand up and explain 'who I am', and it is Ahuva Suissa, therapeutic special education instructor at the JIB who enables students to express their personal narrative. Helping her charges to develop organizational and research skills, Suissa also challenges them to write expressively, sometimes revealing surprising talent.



*Ahuva Suissa*

She gives the students the tools as well as the confidence to come to terms with who they are and where they are going in life. "Not only are students developing oral and writing skills, but they are gaining the confidence to speak in front of others," explains Suissa. Many pupils have

unlocked a place deep inside of themselves, and oftentimes, they turn to literature or journalism to express their inner thoughts. Pupils that were very shy and closed are learning to write through her therapeutic classes. Individual research projects are also presented orally to the class after weeks of research and preparation.

Students are developing an important skill in Suissa's classes, and she has even found material that warrants publishing. "We have been very pleased with the progress of the students," she adds. "Not only are they more comfortable in oral presentations as well as writing, but they are developing skills that will serve them well in their lives."

# Spotlights

❁ Many students are involved in volunteer work helping to reclaim Lifta, a biblical village at the entrance to Jerusalem. Their work entails moving stones and clearing the land – just like the early Zionists!

❁ The JIB hosted a large conference of support teachers for the blind this summer. Over 200 teachers participated in a one-day seminar at the Institute, and they were given assistance in how to further help their charges.

❁ The graduating class of 2010 at the Jewish Institute for the Blind celebrated with friends, family and educators as they said their final goodbyes to each other and the Institute which has been their home away from home for so many years. We wish them luck and lots of success in their coming ventures.

❁ Rabbi David Lapp, Chairman of our New York Committee (left) and Institute Director Chaim Reshelbach uncover a plaque dedicated by the Executive Board of the Jewish Institute for the Blind, USA in honor of the late Miriam Reshelbach.



## Director's Corner

We were recently excited to welcome hundreds of young people to the Institute to celebrate the successful work of 'Yachad' founded a decade ago. The Jewish Institute for the Blind is proud to forge a home for the myriad activities of the blind and partially sighted young people from all over Israel. We have provided a home and office space for lots of activities of 'Yachad', and take pride in seeing the development and empowerment of the young visually handicapped of Israel.

Three months of vacation time during the school year is difficult for any family to weather, and these spare hours are even harder to fill for the blind and partially sighted. At the Institute we realized we could utilize our facilities and staff to benefit kids from all over Israel in supplemental courses, seminars and tours. Not only are we able to build self esteem and facilitate social ties among these young people, but the families are happy to see their youngsters independent and happy. As in its name, 'Yachad' has proven to be a real project of togetherness, helping visually impaired teens and young adults all over Israel.

Since its inception, the 'Yachad' project has been financed in full by a very generous donation to the Institute. We are very grateful to the donors for their partnership in helping to turn this project into a major success.

We wish you and your family  
a happy New Year holiday.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Chaim Reshelbach".

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

# Recent Visitors to the Institute



CANADA

Mr. Mitch Reiss, Toronto



SWEDEN

Group of 35 students from 'Deshe' accompanied by Group leader Michael Lichtenstein



PANAMA

Family Zebede



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



UNITED STATES

Rabbi & Mrs. David E. Lapp, Fair Lawn, NJ  
Mrs. Aida Politano, North Miami, Fla



ENGLAND

Mr. Daniel Burger, Executive Director of Jewish Child's Day School, London  
Mrs. Ruth Starr, London



COLOMBIA

Mr. & Mrs. Pinhas Gabay, San Andres Isla

## 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

*The Jewish Institute for the Blind regrets to announce the death of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel. He was a dear friend of our Institute, participating often in our celebrations. Rabbi Eliyahu is photographed here in an archival photograph affixing a mezuzah to the door of the new Sports Center at the Institute in Jerusalem.*



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Jewish Institute for the Blind

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

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## Insights from Abroad



We were recently happy to host Mrs. Aida Politano presently of Florida. She remembers the days that her mother, Mrs. Sofia de Mishkin, was president of Tormei Or in Caracas, Venezuela. (Tormei Or was the Friends organization of the Jewish Institute for the Blind in South America). Politano was not surprised to find plaques in her mother's name as well as projects that had once been initiated through her mother's involvement at the Institute.