



INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind ,Jerusalem

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Birthday Bash Celebrates 110 Years of Jewish Institute for the Blind



Institute graduate Eli Schlush entertains guests at the festivities at Jewish Institute

Over 350 former students visited the Institute on the Hebrew festival of Lag B'Omer, a day of celebration between Passover and Shavout, as the Jewish Institute for the Blind observed its 110th anniversary. "Many young students have grown up after the formative years they spent at the Institute and each has moved on in their own directions, but we are always happy to see how many of our graduates as well as educators and former volunteers come back to visit when we celebrate a happy occasion," says JIB Director Chaim Reshelbach. Not only was there a great turnout of people, it was interesting to see how their former school still excited so many of the otherwise staid adults. Everyone had a particular story to tell about a pupil that added a little excitement to the classroom or even a teacher that inspired fear when pupils heard footsteps in the hall. Not only was the anniversary celebration full of entertainment and music, moreover good food and even better company marked the occasion. Class reunions always

bring back old memories, and this day was filled with laughs and recollections of years that have flown by. People saw classmates and teachers they haven't set eyes on for decades, enjoying their afternoon in the garden of the Institute. Old friendships were rekindled and teachers that inspired students 45 years ago were greeted with joy. Educator Esther Saraf is today ninety years old, and she hasn't taught at the Institute in years, but students still remember the classes she taught and her influential presence in school. "It is always a treat to see the changes and developments going on at the Jewish Institute for the Blind," explains Saraf. "You have to remember that decades ago boarding students came to the Institute at a very young age and oftentimes spent as much time here as they did in their own homes," she adds. "It is heartwarming to see how they have grown up and developed and to meet their families." Here's to many years of success at the Jewish Institute for the Blind....great lifelong memories and an education that promotes independence.



Former Institute students enjoy their reunion at the Institute's 110th anniversary celebrations

'Blind Day' Activities in Israel

Normal human vision is 20/20 and the metric equivalent (used in Israel) is 6/6. In order to acquaint Israelis with the difficulties of imperfect vision and blindness, the day 6/6/2012 was set aside for activities at the JIB such as cooking, café in the dark, mobility with a cane, and as well as explanation of new technological advances for the blind and partially sighted.

Even the Israeli Knesset took a break and the game of goal ball was played in between government sessions contesting Israeli parliamentarians against blind participants who have mastered this athletic sport of making sure the ball goes through the goal (despite their not being able to see). Not only does the ball have a bell to help in its location, but the sighted participants are blindfolded to give the players an equal chance, and the game was fast and furious. In the evening at the Jewish Institute of the Blind's



'Blind Day'

auditorium, a play was performed entitled **Blind day**. Not only was it a strong production, but it drove home the problems faced by the blind as well as the skills and advances which help them to function so well in the 21st century.

A Glimpse at One of the Institute's Employees Orly Simani

If you have any questions about the Institute, just ask Orly Simani. Although she is reserved, she exudes responsibility and efficiency, and she certainly has her fingers on all the pulse points at the Institute. Perhaps not all of the students know her by her first name, but it is Orly that makes sure everything behind the scenes at the Institute flows smoothly. As secretary to the Institute's director, no job is too big for her to handle, and yet she is willing to offer assistance when needed with the small things too.



Orly Simani

After high school, Orly volunteered in the Multi-Service Center for the Blind as part of her national service or *sherut leumi*. After

completion, she stayed on to work as a secretary. With her knowledge of the blind and partially sighted world as well as her administrative capabilities, Orly came to work at the JIB in 2001 as a young secretary. Within a few months she met Nadav who also worked at the Institute, and they were married. Today with her own daughter Reut to keep her busy, Orly is still part of the glue that keeps the Institute functioning at the highest levels. Everyone turns to her for her computer expertise,

but she is always hoping to learn more and add more to her job description. On your next visit to Israel, Orly will be glad to arrange your visit to the facilities at the JIB.

Spotlights

✿ What child doesn't light up when he sees a teddy bear. Visitors from Texas surprised the students when they arrived at the Institute laden with teddy bears. Many thanks and happy smiles to Beth and Lee Boncher and Charlynn Johns who visited from the Macular Degeneration Foundation. Thanks also to the Houston Low Vision Club!

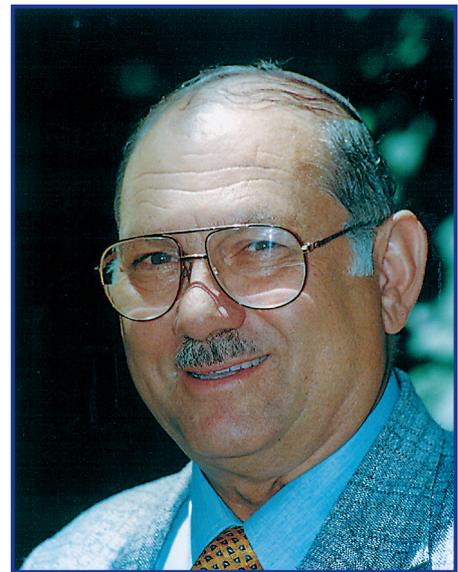
✿ The Israeli women's goalball team played exceptionally well in Malmö, Sweden at the European championship games. Although the Israeli team won fourth place out of fourteen teams, they missed the Paralympic games in London by the skin of their teeth.

✿ A wonderful sport day was held at the Wingate Institute, Israel's National Center for Physical Fitness and Sport in May. Sponsored by the Jewish Institute for the Blind, the sport day included participants from all the rehabilitative workshops for the blind in the country. Including tandem bicycle riding, relay races, goal ball and all types of sports, the games were fun for all. A special massage room was also staffed by expert blind masseurs.

✿ The Israeli chess championship for the blind was held at the end of July at the Institute. Twenty-five participants from all over the country competed for the national championship in several days of rigorous matches. All the competitors and their companions enjoyed staying in the facilities at the Institute during the matches.



Enjoying Summer field trips



Director's Corner

We started a great tradition a decade ago as the Institute celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2002. This year, ten years later, a large happening was held on the grounds at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, as the 110th anniversary was observed. Not only did dozens of graduates come to the celebration, but many brought their spouses and children. The weather was sunny and beautiful, and it was a delightful reunion and picnic with over 350 people in attendance. The theme of this year's anniversary was music, and a host of blind musicians performed for the crowd. Especially popular was Armand Sabach, a Moroccan born musician who immigrated with his family to Israel in 1965, and has succeeded internationally with his Andalusian music. Other musicians and former students at the Institute who were favorably received were former students Meir Barbi and Eli Shlush who entertained the guests.

This year the anniversary celebration was attended by people from all walks of life...we are proud to see our graduates are responsible citizens: government officials, police officers and proud folks that have attained positions of responsibility in their fields despite their blindness. May we continue to educate and provide a life of independence for Israel's blind and partially sighted community. As the Jewish New Year approaches, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a happy and healthy holiday and a wonderful year.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



AUSTRALIA

Mr. Fred Mainzer, No. Caulfield



CANADA

Mr. Leslie Breiner, Nepean, Ont.



COLOMBIA

Mrs. Margarita Bejman, Baranquilla
Mr. & Mrs. Pinhars & Diana Gabay,
San Antonio Island



PANAMA

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph & Malka Zebede



SOUTH AFRICA

Ms. Illois De Goede, Worchester



UNITED STATES

Mr. Avraham Bichler, Fair Lawn, NJ
Beth & Lee Boncher, Houston, Tx
Mr. & Mrs. Jony & Lisa Gessow, Berkeley, Ca
Charlynn Johns, Dallas, Tx
Mrs. Ruth Lapp, Fair Lawn, NJ
Mr. Matthew Meisels & Son, Valley Village, CA
Malky Wieseberg, Miami, Fla

Summer 'Yachad'

This summer 'Yachad' groups braved the Israeli temperatures with several sessions of camping and action-packed activities. For two weeks in August dozens of blind and partially sighted young adults met at the Institute for two days of workshops and touring and then were bused to northern Israel where they pitched tents, camping in the Golan Heights.

"The summer is a busy one, and dozens of 'Yachad' participants



Having fun

enjoyed lots of water sports and kayaking as well as camping in the north," explains Rakefet Ozeri, the national service volunteer who has worked with 'Yachad' all year. "In Jerusalem the pace was a bit slower with all types of workshops as well as instruction at the Institute in sports, music, computer workshops and art." Participants ranged from 12 years of age to early 20's and were divided into sessions according to age level.

End of Year Activities

This academic year ended with a bang, and farewell parties took place weekly at the Institute. Most impressive was the school's final party and graduation that included heartwarming performances by the students. According to school principle Rachel Skrobish, all the parties and performances summed up the independence that has been fostered this year. "In the graduation exercises the students themselves were responsible for the entire performance and they excelled in the task."

Other notable end of the year farewell included the "Col Ha'Lev" group of young ultra-Orthodox pupils who are blind and partially sighted, and although they are mainstreamed in local schools, they visit the Institute for enrichment programs. According to Skrobish many of these children performed on stage for the first time. Not only were the participants proud, but their parents were thrilled to see the growth and change that has taken place with their children. "Messages were beeping on my cell phone as the parents wanted to share their excitement at seeing their kids take center stage and perform!" she says. "The students have come a long way this year." In short, the academic year of 2012 ended with the display of a year of newfound skills. Summer vacation provides a brief respite, and the students will be back in their frameworks at the end of August.

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Members of Israeli parliament play goal ball at the Knesset in honor of 'Blind Day'
Standing on the far left is Reuven Rivlin, Chairman of the Knesset