



Expressive Therapies Help Students at Jewish Institute for the Blind



Art can be a very important therapeutic tool for the blind and visually handicapped

Aliza can express herself well in conversation with her peers, but when someone asks her about her personal life and visual handicaps, she clams up, hiding her innermost feelings. On the stage, however, she finds the self confidence to confront her blindness and she exudes self confidence. Jacob, on the other hand, is a quiet and introverted 11-year-old, but when he is working on an art project at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, he can talk with animation, oftentimes opening up about his thoughts and ambitions.

As every child is an individual, each one can respond differently to various types of therapies. Perhaps verbal communication is still the main method of exchange in therapy, but as people have different styles of expression, the Jewish Institute for the Blind employs a variety of therapies. "We still use expressive therapies with an integrative approach, and hopefully every child is helped according to his or her needs," explains Rachel Skrobish, JIB school principal. Music therapy, for example, can be a wonderful trigger for a blind pupil, helping with communication, motivation as well as behavior

problems. "Music helps to open the channels of communication, allowing for a very rich dialogue," explains music therapist Hanna Tal-Or, music therapist at the Institute. Students that seemingly have trouble with verbal communication open up with music. Tal-Or explains that one pupil often heads for the music room whenever he feels the need to ponder over a problem. He knows that the drums help him with his frustration and anger, and the organ calms him down.

Another pupil, S. suffers from Usher syndrome and is losing both her hearing and vision. JIB ceramist and art therapist Mireille Gronner says that when S. has clay between her fingers she can explore and process her thoughts as well as fears, and she enjoys the creativity at the same time.

As school principal, Skrobish has been a firm advocate of the use of alternative expressive therapies to assist each pupil at the Institute to find his voice. Disciplines such as art, music, dance, drama, creative writing and animal assisted therapy are all utilized at the Institute with success. "We have found that the use of a variety of therapies enables every student to find his creative niche," she explains. "The variety of therapies also helps to effect positive change in the psychological and social functioning of our students."



Drama provides a great way to express feelings and work together

Game of Showdown is Fast and Furious at the JIB

Showdown is catching on in Israel as well as other countries as a fast paced and engaging game for the blind and partially sighted. The game is similar to table tennis, in that two participants face each other across a long rectangular table with a net in between, (usually the net is a transparent central panel) and goal pockets on each end.

Each player wears gloves and holds a bat or paddle and tries to score a goal while preventing the opponent from scoring in the pocket at his end of the table. If the game sounds confusing, it isn't... it's just fast and very noisy as the hard plastic balls that the opponents are hitting



Fun and active game of showdown

have metal bits inside so that players know where the ball is at all times!

Showdown has grown in popularity all over the world, and today the Jewish Institute for the Blind is becoming a popular venue to play the game. "We are looking forward to seeing Israel participate in Showdown matches all over the world", explains Shabtai Deutsch, Director of Community Services at the Jewish Institute for the

Blind. "This is a fun and fast moving game that will soon be represented in the International Blind Sports Federation as well as the Paralympics, and Israel will certainly be represented."

A Glimpse at One of the Institute's Employees Haya Plesner Shpiz

"Drama can be a very important therapeutic tool, and we have seen how useful it is on a one-to-one basis or with small groups at the Institute," explains Haya Plesner Shpiz, drama teacher and therapist at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Haya has taught drama and worked as a drama therapist at the Institute for eight years, and she realizes how role-playing as well as projection can help pupils of all ages at the Institute.

"Drama therapy can provide context for the participants to tell their stories, explain feelings and even move them to start



Haya Plesner Shpiz

solving their problems," she says. "Oftentimes students find role-playing even more effective than talking one-on-one." Drama therapy has joined the curriculum at the Institute with other arts and expressive therapies, and it is providing a real boon for those students it touches. "We are lucky at the Institute that we have the resources available as well as the staff to help every pupil find his or her niche," adds Haya. As an

actress as well as a drama therapist, she is glad to see drama touching the hearts of the students as well as helping them to express that which is most important to them.

Spotlights

❁ **New tourism initiative at the Jewish Institute for the Blind.** The next time you enter the Institute with a smart phone in hand, you can learn all about the more than 100-year history of the Institute. With the new tourism application at the entrance, you can see a film of the founding and development of the Institute or watch it on your telephone.

❁ **Israel's national women's goal ball team is on the map.** Early this summer, the Israeli national women's team made Israel proud. They are presently ranked as sixth place in the world after their difficult matches in Helsinki, Finland. The team was led by JIB Sports Director Shabtai Deutsch, and the outstanding team of twelve players excelled in games of goal ball.

❁ **Opening soon.** The new recording studio of the Jewish Institute for the Blind will open soon after being totally refurbished. This new state-of-the-art facility includes a recording studio and offers classes to train blind and partially sighted radio technicians. One of the specialties of the studio will be the recording of Bible studies. This important project has been made possible by the generosity of the late Prof. Yitzhak Wahl of Rehovot through Mrs. Naomi Leitner.

❁ **Blind Day Parade.** This year, June 19th was the day that allows total identification with Israel's blind and partially sighted population. The Israeli Blind Day parade was kicked off this year by hundreds of participants in the Ben Shemen Park. In addition to the blind and sighted participants, politicians joined the crowd. Hikers were happy to welcome Meir Cohen, Israel's Minister of Social Affairs and Yair Lapid, Israel's Minister of Finance.



Taking aim at summer camp



Director's Corner

An active summer was kicked off this year at the Jewish Institute for the blind. Before our students began their summer vacation, missiles rained down on southern Israel with the central part of the country also within firing range. Israel was under fire and soon Operation Protective Edge was underway with more than 80,000 soldiers drafted to Israel's southern border with the Gaza Strip. Although all Israelis suffered during this month of Hamas terror, perhaps one of the most vulnerable populations were the blind and partially sighted of southern Israel who were attacked with dozens of rockets daily.

We realized that the Institute could play a vital role to help many of our former students, and we immediately opened our doors to these acquaintances that were at a loss and without the security of a safe place. In addition to a protective environment at the JIB, they also had the activities of the Institute to keep busy and productive. We pray for the souls of the brave soldiers that lost their lives in this battle, and also the civilians that were killed by senseless terror. We also pray for the health and refuah shlema of the injured soldiers and civilians. May we all have a quiet year, a year of health, happiness and peace.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



AUSTRALIA

Mr. Avi Olshina, Victoria



CANADA

Mr. Leslie Breiner, Ottawa



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, LaVerenne



HOLLAND

Mr. & Mrs. Wilfried Muller-Smit
Han & Keren Schenk



ISRAEL

Mr. & Mrs. Philip Leitner, Jerusalem



SWEDEN

Yvonne Blaustein, Malmoe
Elin Brandes, Stockholm



UNITED KINGDOM

Mr. Boris Ben-Ari, London



UNITED STATES

Mr. Zev Berman, NY
Mr. Leo Brandstatter, NY
Rabbi David & Mrs. Ruthi Lapp, NJ
Mr. Isaac & Mrs. Shulamit Safdeye, FLA
Diane & Steve Tobin, CA



URUGUAY

Mrs. Esther Sitt and daughter, Montevideo



Climbing to the top is a challenge to be surmounted at summer camp

Summer Camps Provide Young and Old with Vacation Fun

Sixty-five Yachad participants were hosted for a wonderful camp retreat at the Jordan River Village this summer in northern Israel. As part of the SeriousFun Children's Camp Network, founded in Israel by well known Israeli actor Haim Topol and through the auspices of the late actor Paul Newman, the camp was a wonderful retreat of sports, horseback riding, camping under the stars and just plain ole' fun. Other vacation opportunities were opened up at the

Institute for young and old, and the summer of 2014 (despite the danger of rockets falling in a large part of the country) will be remembered as one in which the participants had a breath of fresh air from the terror which rained from the sky.

Camp activities and the retreat at the Institute for the older blind and partially sighted participants encouraged an atmosphere of enjoyment and creativity and was appreciated by all.

 **INSight**
news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

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Insights from Abroad



The playground of the Jewish Institute for the Blind will be refurbished through the assistance of the Canadian Friends of the Blind. On a recent visit to the Institute, Canadian chairman Leslie Breiner toured the area and realized that the installation of a new playground with proper shade and ground covering will reinvent this space as one of the most popular spots at the Institute.



Once again, congratulations to the Los Angeles Group for the Blind of Israel for their 49th Benefit Affair for the Blind held in May. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Jeanette Nadell, president, and Marcia Fink, treasurer, continued health and strength for all of their continued efforts for the visually impaired and blind of Israel. We look forward to the Jubilee celebration affair in May of 2015.