



# INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind ,Jerusalem

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## Developing Independent Life Skills

"We have been striving to ensure that our students can lead independent lives for over 35 years," explains Chaim Reshelbach, the charismatic director of the Jewish Institute for the Blind. He illustrates this with a tale of one of his first days at the Institute in 1975 as he visited residents of two sheltered apartments housing the elderly blind. "I realized at the outset that we needed to educate our visually impaired and blind students for independent living and not feed into a sheltered facility," states Reshelbach. At the helm of the JIB, he has never looked back, and today the *raison d'être* of the Institute is to help students thrive in society and not just survive.

Independent living skills are emphasized at the JIB regardless of the pupil and any handicap that he or she may have in addition to visual difficulties. "Our large and varied staff helps to evaluate every student ensuring that no facet of their development is overlooked in planning their personalized curriculum," according to Reshelbach. Perhaps the most concrete example today of education for independent life skills are the three apartments that have been adapted for older students and graduates ranging from ages 18 -22, helping to ensure that they are prepared to live independently upon graduation from the Institute.

Today the three apartments provide a 'home away from home' for students and recent graduates who are involved in various activities: a year of national service, educational pursuits, and work-study programs. They are all occupied outside of the apartment in the mornings, but they come back in the afternoons to a variety of activities and courses. Extra-curricular activities are rich



*Institute graduates have hands-on preparation for life at the JIB's educational apartments*

and include piano lessons, judo, carpentry, ceramics as well as help with university preparatory courses.

Of course the household duties are shared in the apartments, and all of the residents enjoy shopping in the neighborhood, and they are improving both their cooking and serving skills in the well appointed kitchens. According to one former resident, the transition from the dormitory to an apartment was not an easy one: "We were a bit spoiled at home as well as in the Institute dormitory where everything was provided for us," explains Yossi. "It took some time and a lot of work to begin planning our budgets and running a household on our own," he says. "We made some mistakes, but this is the way of the world." Although everyone develops at their own rate, the Institute strives to ensure that every pupil will feel secure and develop skills for a life of independence.

# Students Visit Israeli Police Training Facility

The Israeli Police force has made a new friend...lots of them in fact. Recently, the entire JIB student body went to visit police training headquarters near Netanya for a full day of learning and hands-on activities. Not only did they hear all about police training and state-of-the-art capabilities, moreover they met with mounted police and saw how the horses were cared for. They learned how a mounted policeman maintains a presence as well as assisting in crowd control in areas that are teeming with people.

The students also learned how to take fingerprints, and they even had a demonstration of shooting with paintball 'weapons'. Of course they were also very interested in the dogs that assist the police force in detection of both drugs and explosives.

The visit to the police facility was only one meeting in an ongoing contact between police recruits and the Institute students. The police trainees visited the JIB on Chanukah in full force, pairing up with students to build a large Chaunuka menorah and bake 'sufganiot', the jelly doughnuts that everyone loves.



*Israeli policemen have formed bond with JIB students after many meetings and joint activities*

## *Hassie Warhaftig* A glimpse at one of the Institute's Employees

"Our participants range from 18 – 24, and most are experiencing the excitement of apartment living for the first time," explains Hassie Warhaftig, a young social worker who co-ordinates the apartment projects for the JIB. Twelve young people are living in three neighborhood flats (2 apartments for guys and one for girls) near the Jewish Institute for the Blind, and they are gaining experience and social skills from each other as well as from the experience. "We all came from home or the Institute dormitory, but basically we were not prepared for the day-to-day shopping, cleaning and budgeting needed in our own flat," notes Yonaton, one of the apartment's residents. According to Hassie, the maturity and responsibility on the shoulders of the young graduates has taken a surge forward as they are learning to live and socialize with one another.



*Hassie Warhaftig*

"One of our oldest participants (24 years of age) is leaving her family home to live on her own for the first time," explains Hassie. "Although she studied at the Institute as an external student, her parents catered to her every whim at home, and now she is learning to care for herself -- the hard way." And just like any flat with new roommates, the girls occasionally have disagreements, and they are learning to work out their issues together.

Before co-ordinating the apartments for the JIB, Hassie worked with Yachad participants all over Israel, and today she is helping to encourage more and more young people to make the move to the instructional apartments. Hassie gives a lot of the credit of the project's success to her excellent staff and support system. In her patient and quiet way, however, it is obvious that Hassie is the guiding force helping to instill self esteem and maturity in these young adults.

# Spotlights

## ❁ Purim Activities Take Over Institute!

As the Hebrew month of Adar approached, the topsy-turvy feeling of Purim was in the air, and it is hard for everyone to concentrate on the studies at hand! This year the Purim activities took over the Institute with fun and surprises for the entire month preceding the holiday. Not only were the halls decorated and the parade and party planned, but the costumes added a joyous feeling to the entire holiday atmosphere.

## ❁ Chess Tournament Played at Institute

In a recent chess tournament held at the JIB, 25 blind and partially sighted players matched wits and skills in a three-day tournament held at the Institute. The chess sets enabled the blind and sighted to compete against each other and the games were an interesting match of wits.

## ❁ Goalball Games

The Israel Paralympic International Goalball Tournament will be held at the JIB in early July this summer. This will be the follow-up game after the goalball game played in Denmark last September. The Israeli national team is partially sponsored by the Institute had a good showing in Essens, Denmark last fall. Let's hope the tournament here this summer will also be a large success. May the best team win!!



*Israel's national goalball team participated in European championship in Essens, Denmark in Sept. 2010*



## Director's Corner

In addition to the myriad of activities at the Jewish Institute of the Blind, we at the Institute pay special attention to the blind and partially sighted community in our midst. Dozens of activities are open weekly at the Institute community center, offering classes in carpentry, art, computer instruction, and music lessons in addition to the courses and swimming pool available at the Sports Center. All of these activities and lessons are offered free of charge to the blind and partially sighted of Jerusalem and the surrounding suburbs.

Those that have not been absorbed in the work force are oftentimes gainfully employed at the Industrial Training Center which is a joint venture of the JIB and the Israel Department of Social Welfare. Not only is this center important as a place of employment, but it requires good mobility skills and it enables the workers to socialize and spend productive hours in the company of other people. Many people who have passed retirement age still find ways to come to work in the Training Center as it fills their day with meaningful activities.

This year as every year the JIB is proud to help dozens of people celebrate Passover with a financial gift of the traditional 'Kimcha d'Pischa'. In addition we have also arranged that a hotel will host several blind people who do not have families with whom they can celebrate the holiday. Needy blind also receive financial help to cover dental bills.

As spring approaches, I would like to wish you and yours a very happy Passover season -- a time of independence and freedom.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

# Recent Visitors to the Institute



ARGENTINA

Mr. Tobias Kostzer, Tucuman



COSTA RICA

Mr. Leo Eisen, San Jose



FINLAND

Mr. Emanuel Schapira, Helsinki



AUSTRALIA

Mr. Max Kaltmann, Melbourne  
Mr. Harry & Mrs. Elly Mainzer, Melbourne  
Mr. Norman Rosenbaum, Melbourne



ENGLAND

Mr. Raphael Gee, London



SWEDEN

Dr. Rennart Ryberg, Stockholm



UNITED STATES

Mr. Moises Frastai, Aventura, Ca.  
Mrs. Brenda Tawil, W. Long Branch, NJ



## Insights from Abroad

Renovations of the zoo project and zootherapy workshops at the Jewish Institute of the Blind has been completed! The structure is now called the 'Jimmy Starr Zoo' and was made possible by the family and friends of the late Jimmy Starr of London. A legacy in the name of Frances and Miriam Elek as well as General Funds of the British Aid Committee chaired by Professor Gerald Goodhardt have also helped to make this dream a reality

The Canadian Friends of the Jewish Institute of the Blind have donated new classroom furnishings and equipment which brighten up the Institute. The generous donation was given in memory of Smuel Feig, of Ottawa, the former president of the Canadian Friends organization, who worked tirelessly to benefit the blind of Israel. Mr. Leslie Breiner was instrumental in bringing this project to fruition.

We have translated several excerpts from an article about the Institute in Jodisk Orientering, a Danish publication: "It is vital to help the blind and partially sighted to integrate into society, and this has been one of the slogans of the JIB since the day it was founded. The state of Israel funds only 15% of the budget of the Jewish Institute for the Blind, and the remainder is donated through private contributions and fund-raising campaigns from over 45 countries.



*Purim activities bring joy and cheer to the Institute*

"Denmark is one of those countries that helps to raise money for the blind of Israel, and a handful of people have been at the forefront of fundraising for the Jewish Institute for the Blind through the Danish organization 'Venner Af Blindeinstituttet I Jerusalem'. According to chairman, Milton Rothschild, informative news bulletins are sent out to prospective donors in the summer and before Chanukah to help to keep in touch with people and report on news from the Institute. Over 150 birthday cards are sent out annually for the same purpose, and oftentimes people donate money in honor of birthdays and other happy occasions. Money is also bequeathed through estates, and over 80,000 Kroner is raised annually in this small Jewish community. Over the years, almost 5 million Kroner has been sent to the Institute from the Danish Friends." The article concludes by saying that 'even though the light may not be restored to a person's eyes, the work of the Jewish Institute for the Blind illustrates that much can and is being done to help benefit a person in need.'



*Logo of Danish Friends of the Jewish Institute for the Blind*



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**Editor: Janet Mendelsohn Moshe**

**Jewish Institute for the Blind**

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

P.O.B. 925 Kiryat Moshe

91008 Jerusalem, Israel

Tel: (02) 6599555

Fax: (02) 6512186

E-mail address:

office@jewishblind.org

www.jewishblind.org