



JIBsight

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind ,Jerusalem

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Working Together for Success



Father & Son in the Ceramics Workshop

One of the best ways to ensure success with students at the Jewish Institute for the Blind is to work in cooperation with their parents. Arranging a parent-teacher evening at the Institute is not an easy task as families live scattered throughout Israel. Just before Chanukah, however, a very special program at the Institute provided an important glimpse into the day-to-day lives of the students, and parents were welcome participants. "It was interesting to see the independence skills that S. has in his daily life," one mother quipped as she saw the ease with which her son worked in the kitchen chopping fruit and preparing a salad. Oftentimes, parents find it much easier to do everything for a child with special needs rather than giving the guided instruction needed for him or her to do the task alone. In addition to individual talks with homeroom teachers and educators, the parents took part in workshops with their children. The first grade pupils made Chanukah candles with their parents, starting with paraffin wax

and ending up with colorful candles. Another group spent an enjoyable afternoon in the Institute's well equipped kitchens, preparing desserts and holiday treats. Parents and students ended the evening with a communal dinner in the Institute's dining room. "It is very important for parents to visit the Institute to learn more about their children's successes as well as their difficulties in school," explained Rachel Skrobish, JIB school principal. Although it is oftentimes difficult for them to make the trip to Jerusalem for these meetings, the parent-teacher interchange offers a rewarding look at their children's independence and development. Those parents that came shared a wonderful afternoon and evening with their children at the Institute, enjoying their daily activities, and meeting teachers and staff members. And just as important, they gained a new appreciation of the developing independence that the students are gaining daily.



Preparing hand-dipped Chanukah candles was a treat for parents and students alike

Documentary Film Focuses on Life at the Institute

Israeli poet and author Erez Biton returned to the JIB last month for the first time in many years. As a student at the Institute for eight of his formative years from 1952–1960, Biton has since become well known in Israel for both his prose and poetry, and he has chaired the Israeli Writers Association. On his recent visit to the Institute Biton was accompanied by a filmmaker and lighting and camera experts as preparations began on a documentary film of his life. Born in North Africa in 1942, Biton immigrated to Israel as a young boy with his family. He was blinded by a stray hand grenade in 1948 at eight years of age, and after

his recovery, he moved to the Jewish Institute for the Blind where he was educated until he completed high school.

"We were lucky to study in small classes with first-class educators," Biton reminisces about his early years at the Institute. "From my years of experience, I can testify to the immeasurable contribution of the Institute in my development as a poet as well as a person who can face the challenges of reality, and to my optimistic approach to life and to the country."

We still have to wait to see the film, but it will surely be an eye-opener about

life at the Institute decades ago as well as revealing the fascinating story of one of Israel's most interesting and talented poets.



Israeli man of letters Erez Biton visits the Institute where he was prepared for life

A Glimpse at One of the Institute's Employees Aviad Yitzhaky

Aviad Yitzhaky majored in Business at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and during his studies he volunteered as a madrich or counselor at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. The rest is history, as today, at 28, he is employed at the Institute, co-ordinating a program called Shahaf (an anagram for shikum, hinuch and pnai or rehabilitation, education and leisure time) that has turned afternoons into a whirlwind of activity for blind and disabled students. As the program is open to all and cognitive abilities vary, the participants range in age from 7 – 20 years.

"Our students in Shahaf are divided into groups like a family setting," explains Yitzhaky. "The stronger students help out the weaker or those that suffer from greater disabilities, and everyone is involved in the process." The range of activities is amazing, and the afternoon program keeps the students active and involved from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. (two evenings a



Aviad Yitzhaky

week they have projects in the dormitories until 10:00 p.m.).

According to Yitzhaky, the participants do not all study at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, but they all insist on coming from as far away as Netanya or Ashdod for the empowering and enriching afternoon activities. "The students have gained so much, and they are so happy with their new independence and social outlets they would never give up Shahaf," Yitzhaky adds. Programming includes music, mobility, judo, sports activities, homework assistance, guided computer activities and participation in the Ariel youth movement framework.

"Our activities are extremely beneficial in both developing social independence as well as initiative for all of our participants," explains Yitzhaky. Today, both Yitzhaky as well as the project he has helped to create are opening new directions in the informal education of the students of the Institute.

Spotlights

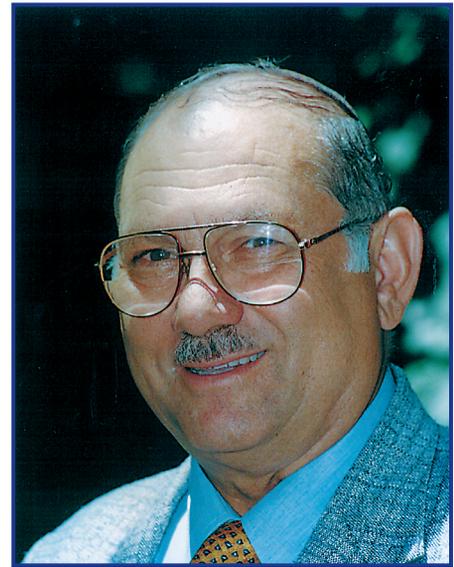
❁ Chanukah celebrations were filled with light and song at the Institute. The second channel of Israeli television came to film the heartwarming candle-lighting ceremony at the Institute, and the singing and joy revealed the true spirit of the light of the Chanukah season.

❁ Purim activities were filled with fun and costumes this year, and the Institute celebrated with a large carnival and parties, parties, parties! Also the Institute's Yachad program hosted a large costume party which was attended by young people from all over the country.

❁ A special project of the Jewish Institute for the Blind sponsors a girls' goal ball team with participants from the Yachad groups. The girls practice at the Institute's Sports Center as well as Beit Ha'Lochem in the Tel Aviv area, and they play extremely well as a team. In January they participated in the European championships in Finland, taking fifth place. They played against the USA, Sweden and Canada, playing excellent games. Keep up the good work!



Purim excitement and fancy dress overtakes the JIB



Director's Corner

In schools all over the world, the staff constantly works on honing and improving methods of education and teaching. A school that manages to also involve parents in the pedagogic process has an influence far beyond the classroom. It isn't always so easy for the staff or the parents to shoulder this responsibility, but when it happens, the students are the real winners. At the Jewish Institute for the Blind, students board at the Institute, and their parents feel the separation keenly.

A good relationship between parents and JIB staff members is extremely important to both sides of the equation. Oftentimes medical conditions arise and both home and school need to be very aware of what is going on in the life of the pupils. Recently, the relationship between the two was further cemented at an important parent-teacher workshop held at the Institute (see cover story).

Although the Jewish Institute for the Blind pursues all of the advances of the 21st century, we are proud of the fact that our educators (as well as volunteers and counselors) know every student personally and are involved in helping them grow and develop. Everyone still has time for a kind word, an exchange of greetings and the personal relationship that helps every student know that he or she is valued. Sometimes it is good to remember that the good old things like personal relationships still count.

Wishing you a pleasant spring and summer!



Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



ENGLAND

Mrs. Ruth Starr, London



GERMANY

Mr. & Mrs. Ekkehard Fobbe, Berlin

SOUTH AMERICA

A delegation of 30 teachers of blind and visually impaired children representing their respective South American countries



SWEDEN

Mr. & Mrs. Bertil Rossel, Stockholm



UNITED STATES

Rabbi & Mrs. David E. Lapp, Fair Lawn, NJ
Mr. Carl Guterman, Monsey, NY
Mr. Alex Kranz, Monsey, NY
Mr. Aaron Sanders, Lakewood, NJ



This is My Life

Art, music, and creative writing are all very important tools which can help the pupils at the Institute come to terms with their lives and handicaps. Udi Davidi, a well known Israeli musician was recently invited to the JIB, to speak to students and teachers, sharing his life story and the story of the birth of his son N., who is a student at the Institute. Accompanied by his wife, Udi told of the birth of their son early in the pregnancy at only 26 weeks. The doctors

in the pre-natal unit gave the Davidi's little hope, but the family never had any doubts that N. would thrive. Not only has their faith grown over the years, but they have found the courage and perseverance to fight for N. throughout all of his struggles. Udi's heart-warming performance at the Jewish Institute for the Blind touched every student. Moreover, one of his biggest fans N., sat proudly in the audience surrounded by his classmates and friends.



Udi Davidi visits the Institute



Insights from Abroad

-  This is the season to take out a bicycle built for two and enjoy the beautiful Israeli spring. A wonderful project of tandem cycling has been initiated through the British Aid Committee and in conjunction with the family of the late Arie L. Handler. A former trustee of the British Aid Committee, Handler's tireless work for the Institute will be memorialized with this project which pairs off sighted and unsighted cyclists for fun and spirited activities.
-  The Danish Friends Committee enclosed a letter by well known historian and journalist Bent Bludnikow in their Chanukah correspondence. Not only did he compliment the work done at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, but he encouraged the support of the Danish community. It is heart-warming to be remembered in such a nice way!
-  A new web site of the Institute and activities will soon be launched by the New York office of the Jewish Institute for the Blind. Upon completion, the site can be reached at www.ivrim.com. With its new graphics and up-to-date information, we are sure the site will inform many new people about all of our activities.



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Jewish Institute for the Blind

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