



INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

Insight – Volume 42 Number 82 Spring 2018

Educational Trip to Poland Turning a Dream into Reality



Students standing at entrance to Auschwitz

The Israeli Ministry of Education helps to send thousands of Israeli students to Poland every year. These educational trips are practically a rite of passage for young people to strengthen their Jewish and Israeli identities while learning about the genocide of European Jewry and the recent history of the Jewish people. With very rare exceptions, the blind and partially sighted do not participate in these field trips. In the autumn of this academic year, however, a large group of the visually impaired helped to turn this dream into a reality. Twenty-seven visually handicapped students through Noar Yachad or the Youth Together movement, with 23 sighted companions comprised the group, and they were part of a larger framework with sighted students from the Reali High School in Haifa.

"The enormity of this trip is that we could experience it together," explains Ortal Mahlouf, the co-ordinator of Noar Yachad. Mahlouf is visually impaired herself, and sharing this trip with the young people she works with was a ground-breaking endeavor for her. "Not only did we learn from seeing and experiencing the concentration camps,

but being together was a very powerful experience for us all." Shabbi Deutsch, Director of Community Services at the Institute was also full of admiration for this group and praised them for their maturity and preparedness.

"A tremendous amount of effort went into the preparation for this group and all of the hard work was realized," expressed Deutsch. "Not only did they prepare and study for the experience, moreover they behaved with maturity and seriousness rarely seen in young people of their ages. They have certainly paved the way for more groups of the visually impaired to visit Poland." Not only did the Jewish Institute for the Blind help to initiate and sponsor the trip, moreover they worked hand in hand with the Israeli Ministry of Education.

JIB history teacher Shoshi Cohen accompanied the students on their trip and says that visiting with the group enhanced her experience, leaving her full of appreciation of their close relationships and the caring they showed for each other during a very difficult but educational week.



Israeli students marching with Israeli flag in Poland

Learning History by Hiking the Land

In addition to classroom study, traversing the land of Israel is a great way to learn and experience nature as well as history and Bible studies. One of the many educators that develops projects in the field is Tamar Tawill who helps to teach a Shelach curriculum at the Institute that promotes educational touring, team building, commitment to the Land of Israel and just plain fun under the guise of learning! Shelach is a Hebrew acronym for fieldwork, nationality and geography as well as a Ministry of Education project that prepares almost 700 teachers to impart many subjects in the classroom and in the field. As Israel is a small country, with temperate weather and great hiking trails, why not learn about Jerusalem's history by walking around the walls of the city or understanding the intricacies of defending a site by walking up and down its hills and vales?! The Jewish Institute for the Blind takes its educational responsibilities seriously, and despite the students' limitations,



Sifting through archaeological findings at Jerusalem's City of David excavations

they are full participants in all activities and even take leadership and guide courses to work with other students around the country. Recently Tawill accompanied a group of students to an archaeological tour at the City of David excavations, where not only did the students learn the principals of archaeology and how it helps to understand history, they also helped with sifting through finds and shards. "We were surprised to realize that some of our blind pupils were the first to feel and identify a coin or scarab," says Tawill. "Oftentimes the naked eye sees a dirty pebble, but the sense

of touch of some of our students is so sensitive that they could be of assistance in discerning ancient artifacts from rubble." Despite varied levels of physical abilities, students visit all over the country in their Shelach classes, learning the history of the Land of Israel as well as having fun. "No tour is too difficult for our students, and we adapt activities to the physical level and educational abilities of our student body."

A Glimpse at One of the Institute's Employees Tamar Tawill

The Jewish Institute for the Blind is well known for its education at the Institute, and more and more it is becoming renowned for its educational endeavors outside of the walls of its Jerusalem campus. "We take students on tours weekly in a Ministry of Education program called Shelach, which emphasizes study in the field as well as educational opportunities in nature and historical sites", explains Tamar Tawill, a longtime educator at the Institute.

Not only has Tamar worked in all facets of education at the Institute, she is a firm believer in experiential activities in nature and walking the Land of Israel. She is also a homeroom teacher to a class of 13



Tamar Tawill (right) and student prepare for rappelling tour

year old boys who will celebrate a group class bar mitzvah this year at the Institute. Their parents will join them in Jerusalem for a festive celebration as they reach this milestone.

Tawill's students attend classroom study as well as taking advantage of all of the touring opportunities. "Students are divided by their physical and educational levels and everyone enjoys appropriate activities for their abilities. Recently Tawill took a group on a two day tour to Akko where they enjoyed Israel's north, walking on the walls of the city and exploring the Crusader subterranean ruins. Another group did not venture quite as far, but they had a great day in the field, baking pita bread and experiencing group building activities.

Spotlights

✿ Shabbi Deutsch, Director of Community Services at the JIB, recently participated in an international scientific and practical conference in Moscow. He was invited by Lidia Abramova, President of the All-Russian Sports Federation and delivered a lecture on sports and rehabilitative programming to the international conference participants.

✿ Good Deeds Day is observed this year in Israel on March 13, and JIB students were invited to Ahuzat Beit HaKerem, a nearby Jerusalem home for independent living where the students performed an entertaining musical interlude with residents, and enjoyed refreshments.

✿ Today digital advances are a big boon to people suffering from visual disabilities and text-to-speech technology makes a difference in quality of life. The Israeli company Mobileye is partnering with the Jewish Institute for the Blind and working with our students.

✿ Purim activities at the Kfar Batya High School in Ra'anana included a holiday carnival and fun with the Institute's students. In addition to Purim frolic and food, the Institute students showed the sighted students how they use a Braille typewriter to read and write with ease.



JIB students meet with Betar Jerusalem soccer players on the playing field during practice session in Jerusalem

✿ Once again this Passover, at least ten elderly blind Israelis without family will spend two nights of the festive holiday together at a Jerusalem hotel. As in previous years, the Jewish Institute for the Blind invites them to spend the festival together with the camaraderie of friends and not to remain alone in their homes.

Director's Corner



This year the state of Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary of independence and the Jewish Institute for the Blind is completing its 116th year as one of Israel's most outstanding educational and rehabilitative institutions. In addition to the academic instruction received here, the students as well as the entire Israeli visually handicapped community receive therapeutic as well as social support from the JIB.

We oftentimes have visitors at the Institute from all over the world that express admiration at the academic standards here, and the happy atmosphere in the air at the Institute. Not only do we have state-of-the-art facilities, but we have a staff that is both professional and caring and gives their all to the visually handicapped of Israel.

In addition to the blind and partially sighted students who live and study at the Institute, young people come to the JIB daily for after-school activities, and there is always a hub of activity here. We invite you to come visit us in either your professional or personal capacity, to see how our efforts at the Institute are being realized. On this Passover holiday, the festival of freedom, we continue striving to help our student body to acquire the utmost in independence.

Independence is freedom, and after 116 years we are still trying to help provide the self reliance that our students will need in their future lives. Thank you for helping to support our efforts.

Wishing you and your family a happy and kosher Pesach Holiday!

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



FRANCE

Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne



HOLLAND

Mr. Hans Schenk, Zeewolde
Mr. Iddo Schenk, Zeewolde



SWITZERLAND

Mr. Robert Equay, Geneve



UNITED STATES

Mr. Zev Berman, New York
Mrs. Robin Grossman, Connecticut
Mr. Leo Brandstatter, New Jersey
Mrs. Edie Goldman, New York
Mr. & Mrs. Stan & Dianne Bekritsky, New Jersey
Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Carol Goldstein, Jerusalem
Mr. & Mrs. Haim & Sheila Dayani & daughters, California
Mrs. Shahin Ohebsion Dayani, California

COME TO VISIT US

On your next trip to Israel we would like to welcome you to our campus, situated at the entrance to Jerusalem

8 Degel Reuven Street
Kiryat Moshe

To arrange a visit
please call: 02-6599501/11

To Receive is to Give at the Jewish Institute for the Blind



Student explains how she learned to read and write with a Braille typewriter during visit to Kfar Batya

The Book of Deuteronomy teaches that "every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He has given you". This message is always internalized at the JIB, but this year it has become a pedagogical tool used in all classes and daily activity, helping to develop the students' social awareness, independence and empathy. Perhaps charity begins at home, but so does empowerment, and the students at the Institute begin their day with small things that help to build a community such as mutual responsibility and chores. "A student's individual tasks might seem to be small, but they teach

responsibility and help to increase self confidence," says Rachel Skrobish, school principal.

In addition to the chores that are assigned in the dormitory and classroom, student volunteer work outside of the Institute is also a very important educational tool as well as helping in the community. This year the Institute volunteered at a rehabilitative school for children with severe intellectual and developmental difficulties. Not only were close relationships formed, but the Institute students saw how they can make a difference in society by helping others.



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Bi-annual Newsletter

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Jewish Institute for the Blind

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

For over 100 years

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Insights from Abroad



This year we were happy to have visitors Hans and Ido Schenk at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. An excellent photographer, Hans Schenk was the former photographer of the Dutch royal family. At the Institute he voluntarily photographed many projects and students, helping to provide us with an even larger data bank of recent photos and activities that take place under our roof.



The JIB sent individually packaged blue and white candles for Chanukah to the Jewish community of Finland this year to be sold for the holidays. The Fins were happy to receive the blue and white candles and to see that they were the exact colors of their national flag, as well as the Israeli flag. In the past, this project was initiated by the late Manuel Schapira, and this year it was continued by Mrs. Boel Dondysh.