

"Yeladim"

Summer 2001 Issue 2



The Hapoel Keter Tel Aviv Israel's Champion Football Club- Adopts the Children in Group Homes

In the course of the past year, Hapoel Keter Tel Aviv opened over 30 football schools in group homes. Some 1600 children are trained on a regular basis, twice a week, by professional football coaches from Hapoel Tel Aviv. In addition, each child received a "red" kit as a gift, including a full uniform, a bag and a personal football.

Aliza Olmert, chair of project development at the Council, initiated the special relationship between the team and the children in the group homes, and the moving force behind the project is Moti Ornstein, chair of Hapoel Tel Aviv.

As part of the project, the team invited 2,500 children and teenagers from group homes to Bloomfield Stadium, to cheer the Hapoel Tel Aviv players in a game against Hapoel Haifa. Vocalist Si Heiman surprised the children and the other spectators when she came onto the field during the opening ceremony and presented each player with a Make a Child Smile certificate, in appreciation of their personal volunteer work at the football schools in the homes.

*As we go to press, we have
received word of the death of
our dear friend*

Oded Messer

*We mourn his passing and share
in the family's sorrow*

His absence will be sorely felt

A Personal Message

We recently held a modest celebration at the Council's office to mark completion of the autobiography of Nehama (a fictional name), a Council volunteer who grew up in group homes and foster families from the age of 2 months. Two other graduates of homes attended the party, and they shared some of their memories of foster families and group residences, including incidents of physical and mental abuse. Most poignant of all was their description of the loneliness and helplessness they felt, a sense that they had no one to turn to, that nobody heard their silent cries.

Despite the improvement in the management of group and foster homes and their supervision over the last few decades, today there are still children that suffer deep distress, victims of abuse by adults or other children, whose voices are not heard. It is our job to try and reach these children, to allow them to express their pain and to make sure that wrongs are corrected.

Until now, the operations of the Council Ombudsman have been conducted without much publicity. We must make an effort to widely publicize this institution among the children in group homes, their parents and the educational staff, in order to ensure that cases of abuse are detected and handled. This depends largely on the awareness of Council staff and volunteers, on their sensitivity and ability to identify unusual incidents and situations and to call them to the attention of our Ombudsman. By doing so, we can safeguard the rights of children in placement today to personal security and a good quality of life.

Professor Shimon Spiro

Chair,

Yeladim-The Council for the Child in Placement

The Computers for Children Project-Going Strong

300 computers and dozens of new printers and scanners have been distributed by the Council for the Child in Placement over the last 2 years, to 29 group homes throughout Israel.

Over 1500 children have received professional training and guidance in using the computers that were installed in their rooms at the homes.

Zvi Reichman, director of a group home for girls, told the Council about the "revolution" that has taken place in the home since the computers were installed. According to Reichman, in addition to the good use of free time, the project has also contributed directly to the girl's progress in all respects - scholastic, social and emotional.

Even Aliza Olmert, who launched the project in June 1999, together with Tommy Lapid and MATAV Cable TV Company, didn't imagine that the project, "We Are All Children of the World", would be received by the children with such enthusiasm and excitement. "Economically, the picture is a bit less rosy", says Izzy Rahav, Council treasurer. "The initial financial resources have been utilized in full, and we have yet to find a source that is ready to support this important project on a regular basis, enabling all the other children living in homes an equal opportunity".

The President and his wife "adopt" the children residing in group homes.

President of Israel, Mr. Moshe Katsav, and his wife, Gila, invited some 200 children from group homes to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah in their home.

The president is personally familiar with life in the group homes, from his own experience as a teenager living at the Ben Shemen boarding school, and as former minister of labor and welfare. He willingly responded to the request of Yeladim -The Council for the Child in Placement to host the Bar Mitzvah children in his home, and the youngsters were clearly excited by the occasion.

And more from the President's House...

Mrs. Gila Katsav visited the AMIT group home in Jerusalem, and was moved to see the 180 young children, ages 5-14 living in this group home.

The visit to the home's library gave her the idea of telling stories to the children at bedtime, as she used to do with her children.

Yeladim Receives a Certificate of Appreciation

The Council for the Child in Placement was awarded a certificate of appreciation by the Adler Center for Research on Child Welfare at Tel Aviv University, for its unique activity in promoting the welfare of children in the State of Israel. The ceremony was held in May 2001, and the prize was accepted on behalf of the Council by Dr. Anita Weiner.

Tahel Ran Does Us Proud

Actress and artist Tahel Ran has been awarded the Prime Minister's Children's Shield prize for the year 2000, for bringing the issue of children at risk and those living in group homes to the public's attention. Tahel Ran recently published her volume of poems, *In My Dress*, which she dedicated to the Council.

Bank Leumi Contributes to Yeladim

Bank Leumi donated 15 computers, printers and scanners, as well as guidance in using them to children at the Tokair group home. In addition, the bank also financed the Council's programs at the home for the year 2000-2001.

Spotlight on the Resource Center

A Window of Opportunity for the Children

The first project of Yeladim-The Council for the Child in Placement was to establish resource centers or, as they are better known, educational enrichment centers. The founders of the Council understood from the outset that the "window of opportunity" for children taken out of severely troubled families begins with the concepts and values acquired in informal education, in the afternoon and evening. Thus, together with the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, they recruited the finest professionals in the relevant fields.

Twice a week, children who visit the resource centers encounter a world of pleasant experiences, accompanied by stories, games, music and conversations, offered by hundreds of colorful kits illustrated by the Council's professionals. Through games with attractive cards and other fun activities, the children learn how to brush their teeth, express feelings and cope with issues related to daily life, from prevention of social violence to the arts, science and nature. Aliza Bar, project coordinator, says that the resource center equips the children with a "toolbox" that helps them understand social rules.

Over 50 resource centers currently operate in group homes - 43 in Jewish homes and 12 in the Arab sector, serving approximately 4500 children.

In the course of the school year, the Council holds about 7 seminars, workshops and training sessions for center directors, who prepare detailed social activity programs for the young counselors that work with the children in the afternoons and evenings.

The project is supervised by a steering committee, headed by Shoshana Horev, vice chair of the Council, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Welfare and a representative of the group homes.

Nighttime at a group home. The air is filled with the scent of freshly-washed hair. 10 children in pajamas snuggle together on the rug, in a corner of the room, eagerly awaiting the words of Smadar and Shuli, two young counselors.

"Are there tasks today...?" 7-year-old Shahar asks Smadar. "Patience". she answers with a smile, "today we're going to talk about friendship".

"What is friendship?" Shuli, the counselor, asks them. 10-year-old Danny answers: "A boy who doesn't curse and who helps is a friend". Dorit, 8, adds: "Good friends love and take care of each other".

After a 10-minute discussion of the subject of friends and relationships, Shahar whispers again, "but what about the tasks...?" Shuli and Smadar take out boards and delightfully illustrated cards, dividing the group into two and explain the assignment. The children are absorbed for about 15 minutes in differentiating between who is good friend and who isn't and we hear Shahar again, "Are there prizes...?"

If you turn to us, it's a sign that someone needs help!

Anyone who has a complaint related to living conditions in a group home, the personal treatment of children, removal of children from group homes or any other issue that warrants correction can contact us in writing, at the following address: The Honorable Judge (Ret.) Amos Zamir, Ombudsman, Yeladim-The Council for the Child in Placement, POB 22801, Tel Aviv 61227
or by phone: 03-6481931

Making News...

Annual Convention of Yeladim-The Council for the Child in Placement

Held at the Sheraton-Moriah Hotel in Tel Aviv, the convention was attended by donors, volunteers and leading figures in the economy, the academic community and sports. **Galia Maor**, director general of Bank Leumi and chair of the Yeladim Friends' Circle, spoke about how she became personally involved in the issue of children in placement and noted the growing number of Israeli companies "adopting" residential group homes and the children who live in them. As part of the event, the Council held its annual general assembly, under the leadership of late Oded Messer, board member. **Two new members-Pnina Pecker and Irit Kolber - were elected to the board of directors.** The entire annual event was hosted by Mr. Eli Gonen, director of the Sheraton Moriah/Israel hotel chain.

Results of Fundraising Day

The national fundraising day for children at risk was held this year in February. As a result of extensive press coverage, some 200 individuals volunteered to participate in the campaign. Despite the rain, the cold and the security situation, the school children collected a net total of NIS 250,000. Our thanks to all those who visited the schools to tell our young volunteers about the Council and its work.

Dental Insurance for Children in Homes

Thanks to the persistent efforts of Dr. **Yoav Yaakovovitz**, the Council's dentist, 600 children from Hamifal - Educational Children's Homes have been included in the dental insurance plan. The policy provides them with regular check-ups and basic treatment. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Division of Dental Health of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education for their cooperation, and, of course, the Ministry of Labor and Welfare for assisting us all along the way.

Legislation on the Rights of Children at Risk

The law on the rights of children at risk, sponsored by Knesset member **Tamar Gozansky**, has passed the first vote. After the Knesset break, the Committee for Advancement of the Status of Children will discuss the details of the law. Esther Loboehinsky, chair of the Council Lobbying Committee, submitted the council's comments on the proposal to MK Gozansky and will be an active partner in all the discussions.

The YRF Excellency Project

The YRF Foundation for innovation in education, represented by **Ron Lubash**, together with the Council for the Child in Placement, have begun operating a project to promote the academic level of children in the Alumim residential home. The after-school program offers extra instruction in basic subjects - English, Hebrew and arithmetic - to 110 children from grades 4-11.

First International Bank Serving the Community

As part of its efforts on behalf of the community, a group of representatives from the First International Bank met with staff from the Neve Hadassah residential group home. The meeting, which was organized by the Council for the Child in Placement, was immediately followed by the announcement of a project to help children in electronics, computers, mathematics and other basic subjects. Fifty-six children who attend grades 10-12 in regular schools are participating in the project.

Aviva Jaffe Memorial Music Rooms

On 29 April, the Neradim residential home in Arad and the Ashalim home in Beer Sheva inaugurated music rooms in memory of the late Aviva Jaffe. The funds for the rooms were raised at the initiative of Shoshana Horev, Aviva's family and the Friends of Aviva Foundation, who chose to dedicate donations in her memory to a field that was particularly close to her heart. The Doron Foundation for Education, Culture and Welfare also contributed to this special project.

Father and Child Summer Camp

This year, the first summer camp for fathers and children in placement will open. The aim of the overnight camp is to strengthen the relationship between the fathers and children by sharing an enjoyable, fun experience. The camp will be in addition to the Mother and Child camps, which have been run for 10 years.

Finally... Sports for Children in Placement

Over 300 children are training and participating in competitive and social activities at 7 tennis centers throughout. The relationship with the centers was fostered by **Dani Yaka**, Council sports director. In April, an 8-session in-service training course for 50 counselors - men and women - from residential homes got underway.



Milly (a fictional name)

Confronts Her Mother's Death

The Guardianship Body

Milly, an attractive, talented and intelligent 15-year-old girl lives in a residential home in central Israel. She came to Israel about five years ago from the former Soviet Union. Her mother wandered around Israel homeless, her brother is addicted to hard drugs and she has no contact with her father, who lives abroad. Despite the difficult background, Milly integrated well into the residential home and she attends 11th grade in a regular high school, majoring in art. Milly is one of 30 teenagers under the care of the Guardianship Body operated by the Council for the Child in Placement. This organization was established approximately five years ago, at the request of the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, as a result of reports of children that are left without parents or anyone able and willing to care for their needs. It operates under the Law of Legal Competence and Guardianship.

Roni, the social worker appointed by the Guardianship Body to serve as Milly's "mother", told us about a chance telephone call that turned Milly's whole life upside down. "It's hard to describe what Milly went through when she heard of her mother's death and her burial as an "unknown woman from Beer Sheva", Roni told us. "The process of working through the bereavement was especially complex: Milly needed daily attention, in order to provide her with emotional support in all the different stages of the grief until the setting of the tombstone and the ceremony in the cemetery".

The Council "guardians" are professional social workers who serve as stable adult figures with whom the children can consult on any matter. They are also responsible for managing "their" children's property and financial interests. In practice, the work each of these individuals far exceeds the letter of the law - including keeping in touch with the children all hours of the day and night and trying to help them buy clothing, cosmetics and small gifts for holidays and special occasions.

The Guardianship Body is headed by members of the board of directors, Professor Dov Alexandrovich, a psychiatrist and Mrs. Dvora Fischer. Chamootal Itzhaky coordinates activities, together with social workers Roni Gal and Irit Kalamero.



The Friends' Circle

Evening at the Home of Japan's Ambassador to Israel

On 25 June, an evening in honor of the donors and volunteers of the Council for the Child in Placement was held at the home of Japan's Ambassador to Israel. A special recital was performed by the pianist couple Kanazawa-Admoni, and a dinner of Japanese and Western dishes was served. The event was sponsored by **Galia Maor**, chair of the Friends' Circle, who has invited leading figures in the Israeli economy that contribute to and work for the welfare of the children. The idea for the event came from **Dalia Ganor**, widow of Israel's former Ambassador to Japan, the late Amos Ganor, who has a close relationship with Ambassador Hiroshi Shigata and his wife.

Adoption of Residential Group Homes and Children

A group of businesspeople recently volunteered to help children in residential homes. The members of the group visited homes in northern Israel and decided to personally commit themselves to projects to improve the children's quality of life. **Yossi Morag**, director general of Hutzot Hamifratz company, undertook to set up a computer and study room and build a stage at the Ahuzat Yeladim home in Haifa. **Dani Dankner** of Bank Hapoalim, Attorney **Yoram Rabad**, Yehuda Levi and others volunteered to construct a playground and special "calming" room for children at the Renanim group home in Zichron Yaakov. Here too, the initiative came from Yossi Morag of Hutzot Hamifratz.

Irit Kolber and **Yehudit Nusbaum** have volunteered to serve as "matchmakers" between factories and group homes. They meet with directors of industrial and hi-tech firms and form ties between each enterprise and a home located in its vicinity. Thus Agan Chemicals of Ashdod has "adopted" the Nave Galim residential group home, Telrad has "adopted" the children at Beit Scandinavia in Lod, and so forth.

Yael Moritz Tuchler of a law office, has offered to assist the Council's "guardianship children". Just before Sukkot, she gave each of 30 children a gift of pocket money, to buy themselves and their families a gift for the holiday.

Journalist **Smadar Bat Adam**, a long-standing volunteer for the Council, has headed the friends' circles for two Or Shalom family units in Holon for the last year. Thanks to this activity, the children in these units enjoy various cultural and educational activities.

Ilana Porat, a Council volunteer who has "adopted" the children of the Alumim group home in Kfar Saba, held huge parties for the children at the beginning of the school year and on Purim, which included shows, activities, refreshments, gifts and candy.

Foundations and Contributions

For the third consecutive year, the Barecha Foundation, through Shoshana Horev, has made a contribution to the remedial teaching project. Stanley Chase, another friend of Shoshana Horev, is assisting this project for the sixth year.

The Buxebaum Neta Foundation is helping fund the Mother and Child Summer Camp for the fourth year. Matan (United Way Israel) also contributed to the Mother and Child Summer Camp held in 2000. The Israel Children and Youth Foundation continues to assist the remedial teaching project.

The Lieberman family of Argentina donated \$100,000 for computerization, through Aliza Olmert. The Los Angeles Federation also contributed \$10,000 for training related to computerization of the homes.

The Schocken Family Foundation of the US has pledged \$10,000 a year for three years to the Dental Hygiene project.

This year, the Charles Clore Foundation, through Galia Maor, again contributed \$25,000 to the art therapy project.

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Cause for Celebration

(Scholarships for Gifted Children in the Arts)

The visitors to the Renanim group home, in Zichron Yaakov, were welcomed by the beat of African drums, played by 17 children who live in the home and attend an African drum class, partially funded by the Council for the Child in Placement's project, Scholarships for Gifted Children in the Arts.

The project has been given a great boost in recent years, with Rami and Yehudit Nusbaum setting a trend with their traditional Rosh Hashanah party, guided by the motto "celebrate and give". This year their guests' donations exceeded NIS 160,000, which was applied to scholarships for 120 gifted children in different fields of art.

Ruthi Ginossar, appointed by the Council to coordinate art activities in group homes, told the story of Lili, a 14-year-old girl from Ethiopia living in a home in central Israel. With the help of a council scholarship, Lili has been playing piano for four years. Her exceptional musical memory and creativity are expressed in improvisations and composition of complex musical passages. "Lily is an excellent example", Ruthi says, "of talent that would not have been recognized without the Council scholarships". Yehudit Nusbaum, who is already planning next year's Rosh Hashanah party, said she hopes more people will adopt the idea of turning their celebrations and birthdays into occasions to offer gifted children in residential homes the opportunity to realize their talents.

The cost of a scholarship for a gifted child is estimated between NIS 1500-2500 a year.

For those interested in "adopting" a child by granting a scholarship to promote and develop their talent, details are available from the Council staff, at 972-3-6475075.

The NEW YEARS GREETINGS Project Gets Underway!

Yehudit Nusbaum and Irit Kolber have again begun to market greeting cards to the business sector for Rosh Hashanah 5762 (2001). Last year, many companies purchased the greeting cards to wish their customers, employees and friends a happy holiday. Among the firms that purchased over 1000 cards last year were: IBM, Ashdar, Ashtrum, Eitanei Mor, Hahevra LelIsrael, Teva, Telrad, Mivnei Taasia, Motorola, Meitav Communication Consultants, Neshet, Somech Haykin, Cellcom, Promedico, Keltnick Insurance, Raba Madrizo, Readimix, Even Vesid Industries and others.

Companies interested in joining the project by sending new years' greetings to their customers while enjoying the good feeling of contributing to the community, are asked to contact Yehudit, phone number **052-232710**.