



Association for Planning & Development of Services  
for Children and Youth at Risk and their Families  
Established by JDC-Israel and supported by the Government of Israel,  
JDC-Israel and UJA-Federation of New York

## Update: Fourth Quarter 2007

January 2008

*Dear Friends,*

*As we begin 2008, we reflect on Ashalim's achievements this past year. As we continue to meet the needs of Israel's at-risk children and youth and their families, we are seeing Ashalim's programs and methodology taking root in different forms.*

- Recently a Masters Degree program that will train Israel's future educators on the challenges and best practices in addressing the needs of at-risk students was approved by Israel's Council for Higher Education. The curriculum for this degree is based on the approach that Ashalim has developed over the years based on our field experience with educational interventions (p. 3).*
- Programs to expose youth at risk to the real world of business are gaining momentum (p. 4).*
- The IDF is beginning to recruit young people with special needs (p. 5).*
- Our programs in Sderot and surrounding areas are helping schools become safe and supportive havens for children, youth, and parents dealing with ongoing security-related trauma (p. 2).*

*What awaits us in 2008? On a promising note, the Israeli Government will begin implementing its new national strategic plan to care for children and youth at risk, a plan based on the recommendations made by the Prime Minister's appointed Schmid Commission. The Government has approved funding for three years that will ensure greater investment in prevention activities with an emphasis on early childhood. On a sobering note, our emergency-related efforts are far from complete. In the north, we continue to strengthen and assist local cities' education and welfare services so they can care for children suffering from post-trauma and be prepared for future crises (p. 3). In the south, the needs continue to grow as the shelling of Kassams continues.*

*We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to our dedicated staff for their unending efforts to implement Ashalim's work-plan, all the while taking on additional emergency-related tasks. We wish them continued strength as we embark upon a new year and take on new challenges.*

*During this year we will mark Ashalim's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We look forward to sharing information about the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with you in future updates.*

*Dr. Rami Sulimani  
Director-General Ashalim*

*Ken Witover  
Ashalim Sub-Committee Chair*

## Children under fire in Sderot and around the Gaza Border

As 2007 came to a close, the children of Sderot and the Gaza border communities could only hope for a better year in 2008. Yet, as we go to press, the number of Kassam hits in January of 2008, has already surpassed the monthly average for 2007. The United Jewish Communities (UJC)'s Israel Emergency Campaign (IEC) announced an additional allocation of IEC funds for Sderot and the western Negev that will enable Ashalim to help the children, the parents and their helpers.

Ashalim is heavily involved in a variety of programs that are helping children, parents and professionals cope with this tragic situation of ongoing violence, stress and trauma. In the early childhood educational system, our **Hibuki "huggy dolls"** have been distributed widely and children who care for the dolls gain feelings of control and exhibit lower anxiety. Similarly, the **Red Color Song**, developed by Ashalim and sung by children during a siren and after the fall of a rocket, has become second-nature as children and their teachers run for shelter without panic. In schools, the **Havens of Calm** spaces are central in providing outlets for children and staff to express fears and worries and coordinating emotional support via school services. In Sderot, the Ashalim established **Parent-Child Center** has expanded its services to respond to the added distress of families because of the continued crisis. Given the tremendous need in Sderot and nearby communities, Ashalim has provided therapeutic equipment as well as additional psychologists and expressive therapists to help children in the region.



**Drawing from a Havens of Calm art therapy session.**  
**"Fear" written in black letters on left;**  
**"Kassam" written under rocket.**

Families of children with special needs are under particular extreme pressure. Ashalim is responding to their challenges through several initiatives, such as: **A Friend to the Family** which provides volunteer support to families in their homes, and **Continuity** which provides social and extra-curricular after-school activities for children with special needs. Ashalim's **From Risk to Opportunity** program mainstreams toddlers with special needs in a normative daycare facility in Sderot, fostering their inclusion and changing attitudes in society. In addition, a second branch of the **Mechina L'Chaim** post-high-school residential program was set up in Sderot back in 2006 to help 18 to 22 year olds with special needs from the region make a successful transition to adulthood.

Many families in the region turn to their local welfare departments for support, and thus Ashalim works closely with the Sderot and western Negev welfare departments to improve the quality of care provided to families in crisis, children in foster care and youth in distress. Ashalim has also organized training sessions for welfare staff and upgrading of equipment in various facilities for at-risk children and youth.

## Rebuilding the Galilee

Ashalim is working to ensure continuity of its programs launched with UJC-IEC funding following the second Lebanon War. Ashalim aims to strengthen the education and welfare service infrastructures so that they will better care for their local populations in times of crisis and in their aftermath.

This past year the groundwork was laid for the launch of **Better Together** in five cities in Northern Israel in 2008. This expansion is thanks to the generous support of the Dorothea Gould Foundation. **Better Together** addresses the needs of children and youth in a particular inner-city neighborhood by connecting city services with community residents and local organizations who together identify unmet needs and develop solutions for these challenges. The Better Together approach presents a unique organizational platform for sustaining numerous IEC programs in the long-term.

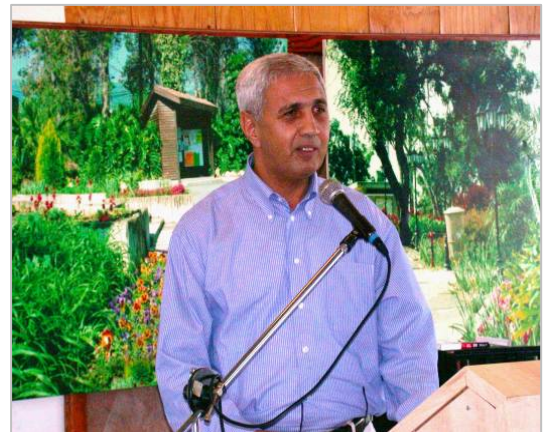
Other examples of Ashalim's activities that are intended to generate systemic change are the **Merhav** and **Maleh** school-based programs that were started in 37 northern schools in the aftermath of the second Lebanon War to bolster students' emotional and academic well-being and prevent them from dropping out of school. These programs have reached some 4,000 children and youth, many of whom were already considered to be at-risk students prior to the war.

Emergency funds also enabled much-needed equipment and renovations, a major source of comfort for populations who witnessed the physical destruction of the war.

## From The Field

### Ashalim's Educational Approach Becomes Part of Israeli Teachers College Curriculum

After many years of collaboration between Ashalim and the Oranim Academic College in Northern Israel, a new Masters Degree program in Education and Teaching for Students at Risk was launched this year. The basis for the curriculum is the vast accumulated knowledge in addressing the needs of disenfranchised and alienated students that has built up in Ashalim in the past ten years. This pioneering program, approved by Israel's Council for Higher Education, will train Israel's next generation of teachers and principals, thereby helping to disseminate Ashalim's educational approach towards assisting students at risk throughout Israel's educational system.



**Dr. Rami Sulimani at the Oranim ceremony**

During the inauguration of the program, Professor Yair Karo, President of Oranim, reflected on the collaboration with JDC/Ashalim to address the problem of alienated and disenfranchised students in Israel's schools: *"Seven years ago we embarked on a visionary path... and succeeded in establishing a praiseworthy center in the North that guides, directs and nurtures teachers and school principals about everything relating to students at risk... Our path was not easy, but finally the program exists. The Council for Higher Education that checks each and every detail found our proposed program to be of a high standard and worthy. And so a dream took shape and became a reality."*

Dr. Rami Sulimani, Director-General of Ashalim, described the challenges of bringing disenfranchised students back into the fold, noting that "*many pay attention to those students who leave the educational system, but few turn their attention to those that have given up while remaining in the system. An estimated 50% of students in Israel get in the way of the system's achieving matriculation results. Many teachers lack the cognitive and emotional munitions to work with these students, and instead ignore them.*" Other speakers described how many struggling students ultimately move to the fringes as they develop feelings of low self-worth and incapability, become alienated and lose hope.

## The Turning Point Program is Showing Youth New Directions

Ashalim's **Turning Point** program which promotes youth employment and entrepreneurship is quickly growing and since its launch in 2007 has exposed an increasing number of at-risk youth to the world of business through a variety of new responses. From 300 youth participating in early 2007, **Turning Point** extended its reach to an additional 800 teens in 64 program locations by year-end. This year the number of beneficiaries will continue to grow as new components of the program will be rolled out in the coming months.

**Turning Point** is an umbrella program that comprises four elements: the successful **It's A Deal** network of youth-run business ventures for high school dropouts, **business curriculum for high-risk students**, **job training for the workplace** and **on-the-job placement with mentoring**. **Turning Point** has enlisted several Israeli and international partners from the business and non-profit sectors, including the U.S. based NFTE-National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, FIBI-First International Bank of Israel, Israeli philanthropic organizations Zionism 2000 and Matan-Your Way to Give (Israel's United Way). These partnerships are accelerating the expansion of **Turning Point**.



Recent **Turning Point** accomplishments include:

- Introduction of business curriculum to 24 educational frameworks beginning in September 2007. These include vocational schools and alternative high school equivalency programs.
- Opening four new **It's A Deal** youth-run business ventures, bringing the total of ventures to 32.
- Collaboration with Bar Ilan University's Gender Studies department and the Ministry of Education's Youth Advancement Service on the design of a new work preparation program.
- Recruiting FIBI staff to serve as mentors to high-risk youth as part of new job placement program.

## ECHAD Partnership Invests in Professionals

Training and guidance of professionals continues to be a focus of the **ECHAD Partnership**, a joint effort with the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, and Sonoma Counties to improve early childhood services in the Arab-Israeli community. Recently, the **ECHAD Partnership** brought together representatives from each of the **ECHAD** communities to learn from one another and

work together on improving the quality of care for children aged birth to three years. This group, under the guidance of Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute staff, created a new child assessment training program for early childhood caregivers in the daycare system and family-based care that will upgrade caregivers' knowledge and skills. In November 2007, five groups of daycare and family-based care caregivers in three ECHAD communities (Umm el-Fahm, Haifa and Raine) began a 90-hour training course initiated through the **ECHAD Partnership**. Training in Lakiya is scheduled to begin in 2008.

## Winning Combination:

### IDF Opens Ranks to Youth with Special Needs

Through the **Winning Combination** program that began in early 2007, 45 young people with special needs are now serving their country as IDF volunteers in a variety of units, including the Air Force, the Education Corps, Army Intelligence as well as in elite combat units. These young people who are physically disabled or are visually or hearing-impaired, were integrated in mainstream high schools, and the **Winning Combination** program allows them to benefit from the formative IDF experience like their peers.

Another promising indication of the program's success can be seen during the Army's draft process. While in the past these youth with special needs were dismissed from serving in the IDF, today when a teen with special needs receives a standard exemption letter at the age of seventeen, they also receive an invitation letter to enlist in **Winning Combination**. The program is being developed by Ashalim with the National Insurance Institute, the Ministries of Defense, Social Affairs and Education, the IDF and the Etgarim association.



## Better Together: Hanukkah Brings Light and Hope

A number of celebrations took place this Hanukkah in the **Better Together** inner-city neighborhoods, and we share highlights here with you of these memorable and fun holiday events. At Ashalim, we recognize that these are more than just enjoyable parties



for the many children and youth in our **Better Together** neighborhoods. They also signal neighborhood revitalization and the hope it brings for a better future.

The community camaraderie that the **Rosh Haayin Better Together** program, supported by the Dorothea Gould Foundation, has been developing in the Aviv neighborhood shone through in the two successful holiday celebrations that local residents organized together with community center staff. The family party attracted some 200 parents and children who enjoyed appealing art workshops and interesting activities about the Hanukkah holiday. The women's club, established through the **Better Together** parent's council, organized a Chanukah party for 50 women in the neighborhood on the theme of light. Leaders of the women's club ran workshops on candle making and women's empowerment.

This Hanukkah also brought the children of **Migdal Haemek's** Western neighborhood a miracle that will last throughout the year. A local recreation center opened its doors to the neighborhood's children on Hanukkah. Through the **Migdal Haemek Better Together** program that is supported by Michael and Judy Steinhardt, the center will offer a range of informal educational, sports and enrichment activities five afternoons a week. Mayor Barda who attended the celebration, stated: "*the clear goal is to benefit the residents of the Western neighborhood by strengthening the neighborhood.*"

## The Power of Poetry

Many Ashalim programs use expressive means such as art, drama and creative writing to help children and youth at risk share and process their feelings. The following poems, translated to English, illustrate how putting our feelings into words can be both therapeutic and empowering.

The **Reim** program to provide social settings for youth and young adults with communication disorders inspired this poem by seventeen-year-old Yuval.

### I am a Person

I am a person  
and why am I a person  
Because I  
am like everyone else  
always looking for other people.  
What is a person without others?  
He is like a bench that no one sits on  
He is like a broken bulb in a place  
where no one passes  
that just lights up a tree...  
For one to feel like a person  
he needs another person  
to travel with him, to be on the watch.  
Because it is important for a person  
to be a person  
Because after all  
he is just a person.

Young students in the **Maleh** dropout prevention program were taught to use the concise, straightforward structure of Japanese Haiku to describe a feeling.

### Apathetic (By Rachel, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

Rain  
Don't care  
Don't care that it rained  
Don't care that it's fun  
Rain

### Sadness (By Ruti, 4<sup>th</sup> grade)

Mocha  
The dog Mocha  
Dog I love  
Dog I love that they took  
Mocha

### Lazy (By Daniel, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)

Lazy  
Don't want  
Don't want at all  
I don't want to work  
Lazy

## Ashalim in the News

Reaching youth at high risk, giving them hope and teaching them skills to re-integrate in mainstream Israeli society requires innovative approaches and non-traditional opportunities. Some of Ashalim's programs for adolescent boys and girls in distress were featured in the following news articles.

### From a good home: Girls in distress run a quiche bakery

Ynet ([www.ynet.co.il](http://www.ynet.co.il)), Yoel Zohar, November 5, 2007

"For you it's a taste of home – for us it is home" is the slogan of the young bakers who partner in running a small quiche business. Hence the name of the business "**Quiche from Home**" that began to operate half a year ago as part of the **ADI Day Center** for girls in distress in Rehovot. The girls at **ADI**, each with her story, have been struggling with life challenges since they were little....

"We have a secret recipe" says M, who allows herself a broad smile after two hours of hard work in the kitchen..."Our secret is a lot of love, and because we prepare the quiches they

are tasty. This work gives us satisfaction, honesty, caring and openness. We like it here because this is something of ours."

(**Quiche from Home** is an **It's a Deal** youth-run venture. Program partners: Ashalim; Ministry of Social Affairs; National Insurance Institute; Zionism 2000; Applied Materials)

## Sharing the burden: An at-risk youth helps to rehabilitate a donkey – and the donkey has helped to rehabilitate him



Jerusalem Post, Michele Klein, December 14, 2007

"The teenage boys who shelter and nurture the seven donkeys in the **Wing of Love** park are, like the donkeys, in full-time care and undergoing rehabilitation. Both they boys and the animals are scarred by life, victims of neglect or abuse. Both boys and animals were brought to our park to heal and gain strength for a new life."

(**Wing of Love** program partners: Ashalim; Ministry of Social Affairs; Wing of Love association)

## Professional Development

Ashalim's efforts in the area of professional development are taking on increasing importance, supporting the internalization of successful Ashalim programs, methods and approaches in Israel's social services. As the learning opportunities that took place in the last quarter of 2007 illustrate, Ashalim and its program partners make knowledge accessible to the Israeli professional community through a range of forums and in various locations around the country.

### MAYDA - The Ashalim Center for Knowledge & Learning

MAYDA, which opened as an interdisciplinary center in early 2007, began the new academic year with more than 200 professionals enrolled in courses in a variety of subjects. They join the ranks of many other Israeli professionals who are regular participants in MAYDA's activities. In December, a regular bi-monthly newsletter - "MAYDA News" - was launched which describes the main activities available in MAYDA and is sent to over 700 professionals. Several peer groups were established and are currently engaged in ongoing learning. MAYDA expects to expand both the variety of learning activities it offers, as well as the realm of disciplines and professions from which participants come, during 2008.

### October - December: Conferences, Seminars & Professional Training

#### Reim Conference

The national conference presented the **Reim** program (meaning 'friends' in Hebrew) initiated five years ago by Ashalim with the Israel Association of Community Centers and the National Insurance Institute to offer youth and young adults with communication difficulties (such as Asperger's Disorder or complex learning disabilities) a setting where they can develop social skills and build peer friendships. Over 200 professionals, community center directors, program coordinators and facilitators, participants and their parents attended the conference.

**Reim** has succeeded in replacing the loneliness and social exclusion experienced by many with friendships, an active social life and improved self-esteem. As one mother observed, their family can divide their lives into "before **Reim** and after **Reim**."



Reim participants

### Protection Center Conference

The Protection Center Conference was the first in Israel to focus on a multi-professional approach to initial investigation, diagnosis and treatment for child victims of abuse, and highlighted the potential of this approach to benefit other areas of work with children and youth at risk. In Israel, this model was first piloted at the **Beit Lynn Protection Center** in Jerusalem; a second center will



**Pictured from left:**  
Frada Feigelson, Schusterman  
Foundation-Israel; Revital Almog,  
Ashalim; Dr. Libby Ralston,  
National Children's Alliance

open in the Tel Hashomer Hospital complex in 2008. The two-day national conference was co-sponsored with the Haruv Institute of the Schusterman Foundation-Israel and was attended by over 250 professionals from various fields.

Conference highlights included guest lectures about the place of mental health treatment in the care of child abuse victims by Dr. Gerard Pulver, Director of the Bnei Brith Residential Treatment Center, and Dr. Libby Ralston, board member of the National Children's Alliance (the coordinating organization for the U.S. network of Child Advocacy Centers) and Director of the Lowcountry Children's Center in Charleston, South Carolina.

### Regional Conferences: Helping Parents Cope with Children's Trauma

Two regional conferences – in Sderot and in Acco – were held for psychologists and expressive therapist to expand their abilities and enable them to work with parents whose children experienced trauma. The focus on helping parents stemmed from research results indicating the need for further development of interventions with parents in addition to the direct interventions with students, as well as from a flood of requests from the field for help to parents. The conferences were attended by 300 professionals working in the North, Sderot and the Gaza border region.

### Seminars: Providing a Treatment Response to Sexual Abuse

Advances in the treatment of child sexual abuse were presented at two seminars co-sponsored by Ashalim with the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Education, the National Insurance Institute, Rashi Foundation and the three treatment NGO's ELEM-Youth in Distress in Israel, Meital- Israeli Center for Treatment of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse, and Eli. Two hundred professionals attended the seminars – psychologists, social workers, child protection officers, art therapists and psychiatrists. The seminars focused on:

- Work of the twenty local steering committees established thus far through Ashalim's **Treatment Response to Sexual Abuse** program, with representatives sharing how they adapt to the characteristics of their communities and work in coordination with welfare, treatment, educational professionals and community leaders to guarantee the victim's safety and optimal treatment.
- Legal aspects of child abuse and protection, including discussion of progress in thought and practice relating to the treatment of children with sexually abusive behavior problems.

### Mind-Body Medicine Skills Training

In December, 75 professionals from the Ministry of Education's Psychological Counseling Services Northern and Southern Divisions completed the advanced stage of training in Mind-Body Medicine Skills (MBM) for stress reduction and trauma relief. The two-part MBM training prepared these professionals to launch their own small groups (up to 12 people in a group) of students or school staff and to help group participants develop the use of Mind-Body stress reduction techniques. Through this training course and the resulting groups, Ashalim has created the potential of reaching almost 1,000 people almost immediately.

### Group-Work Training for Social Workers

In order to strengthen local welfare department competencies and enable them to serve their clients more effectively, social workers from local welfare departments in the north and south of Israel were trained in running group therapies (such as parent groups, adolescent and children groups, parent-child or parent-adolescent groups). Starting in December, the social workers began running some 20 groups themselves in the north and in Gaza border communities, during which they will receive ongoing weekly supervision.

## Ashalim Publications



### A Home with a Window: Emergency Centers for Children at Risk and Their Families - Second Edition.

*Edited by Shlomith Cohen*

A Home with a Window is the product of work with children at risk and their parents, and describes work methods that have developed over the years at Emergency Centers. Through case studies, it presents a complex model of multi-system diagnostic-treatment work that operates in close connection with the community. Throughout the book, the reader is exposed to emotional experiences of children, their parents and their therapists, as well as to the professional and human dilemmas inherent in work that centers on finding better opportunities for children who have reached a crisis point.

### Nutrition and Families

*By Bilha Bachrach, Hila Haim-Zweig, Adina Friedman, Yael Chopin*

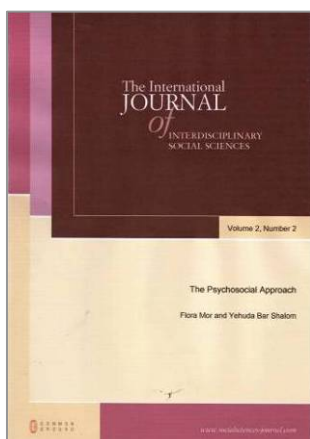
This booklet offers a holistic approach for understanding the situation of individuals and families, and bridges knowledge from the disciplines of social work and nutrition. The booklet presents intervention guidelines, based on this approach, which were developed and implemented through the **Body and Soul** program – a joint effort of Ashalim and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Schools of Social Work and Nutrition.



### The Psychosocial Approach: A Case Study in School Intervention and in Teacher Training

*By Flora Mor and Yehuda Bar Shalom.*

*Published by The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*



This article describes an innovative model for effective educational intervention with students in processes of risk and dropout. In the first section, Mor describes the development of this approach through ongoing dialogue with the field; in the second, Bar Shalom presents data relating to the application of this method in the framework of teacher training in the special education track at David Yellin Academic College of Education in Jerusalem. The psychosocial approach can be seen as belonging to an emerging trend of school change in Israel in the context of at risk youth.