

Update: Second Quarter 2009

Dear Friends,

In this Update, we feature selected achievements marked by our programs in recent months as well as personal acknowledgements of thanks received from children and parents participating in JDC-Ashalim programs.

Despite the current economic climate, JDC-Ashalim is continuing its efforts to address the pressing needs of children and youth at risk in Israel. Many are now facing further financial pressures and related stresses at home. Although we have had to make difficult decisions resulting in both reductions of program activity and staffing cuts, we nonetheless remain committed to our mission and to Israel's most vulnerable children and youth. They are our next generation; the future strength of Israeli society depends on their ability to grow and develop in safe, nurturing and supportive homes, schools and communities.

We thank you for standing by JDC-Ashalim and we wish you a safe and enjoyable summer.

*Charles Ribakoff
Chair*

JDC-Ashalim Sub-Committee

*Dr. Rami Sulimani
Director*

JDC-Ashalim



JDC-Ashalim's Health and Nutrition Enrichment Program produced a new 'Guide to a Healthy and Safe Summer Vacation' that provides families with tips and ideas for low-cost, healthy and family-oriented summer activities. The guide was designed with the concerns and needs of families with limited resources in mind.

The guide was widely covered by the Israeli media. It was distributed at no cost to all children in the Health and Nutrition Enrichment program nationwide, and was made available online at JDC-Ashalim's and popular Hebrew parenting websites.

Ribakoff Family in Israel

In June, Charles, Patty and their two daughters visited the Corky Ribakoff Center at Maalot Residential Facility in Jerusalem and introduced the girls to the Ribakoff family's personal investment in Israel's most vulnerable children.

Charles visited other JDC-Ashalim programs and attended the Multi-Mayda opening conference. He met with program staff to gain a deeper sense of the challenges facing vulnerable Israeli children and youth and how JDC-Ashalim works with Israel's social welfare and education systems on their behalf.



Charles and Patty Ribakoff with Corky Ribakoff Center graduates, Boaz and Inbar, who expressed their thanks and shared their personal stories with the Ribakoffs.

From the Field

Mayda Center Inaugurates "Multi-Mayda" Resources

Today's generation of children and youth are growing up in a world with constant stimuli, complete with sound, graphics and movement. Professionals who work with at-risk children

and youth often find themselves competing for children's attention. Many expressed their need to learn how to harness these same stimuli in their work. With the launch of "Multi-Mayda," JDC-Ashalim's **Mayda Center** expanded its professional development resources to assist professionals from all disciplines in integrating multi-media resources in their work with children and youth at risk. **Mayda** is now developing and selling kits to schools, afterschool centers and residential facilities on topics like "secrets in the family" or "eating for good health." The kits include: suggested relevant movies, books, artwork, or music; guidelines on managing discussions; and ideas for expressive activities.



Pictured: Well-known Israeli vocalist Si Heiman at the "**Multi-Mayda**" opening conference. The event, attended by 140 professionals, included sessions on using art, children's literature and song to connect with the emotions and conflicts of Israeli youngsters.
Photo: JDC-Ashalim

New Program: Girls' Space

This past school year, JDC-Ashalim launched a new program for girls at risk, this time in the venue where they spend many hours a day – their school. **Girls' Space** creates an in-school address for teenage girls who typically cope silently with issues such as low self-image, relationship conflicts or sexual harassment.

Girls' Space provides empowerment and leadership training for girls in the upper grades, and supervises them as they mentor and facilitate activities for younger female students. The program was in high demand in the first seven schools where it began, with almost 300 girls participating in the second quarter of 2009.



Each Girls' Space room is decorated by the girls to be a comfortable, welcoming and supportive space.
Photo: JDC-Ashalim

Run in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and developed as part of JDC-Ashalim's broader **Girls on the Map Initiative**, this new program sensitizes school staff to the unique needs of teenage girls and enables them to identify and assist girls in distress.

In their own words - older girls on mentorship training:

"This was like a safe space for us where we could talk about issues that are important to us at this age. Now I have an easier time discussing them, and talking about my feelings."

"I gained a lot from the training, I feel like I have energy and confidence and that I have something to give to the younger girls that I will be working with."

Visiting JDC-Ashalim Programs

Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation Delegation

Donn Weinberg, Chair of the Board, and accompanying professionals dedicated a number of days in May to learning about JDC-Israel's work with vulnerable populations, and as part of this visit they met with youth and staff in JDC-Ashalim's **Turning Point Youth Employment & Entrepreneurship** programs. The Weinberg Foundation delegation saw how the partnership between JDC-Ashalim and NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship, a U.S. non-profit organization supported by the Weinberg Foundation and introduced to JDC-Ashalim by Donn Weinberg) has blossomed over the past three years. The site visits to a vocational high school, a school for Ultra-orthodox teenage girls at risk, and an alternative program for high school dropouts illustrated how JDC-Ashalim adapted NFTE's entrepreneurship curriculum to address the needs of Israeli youth from different walks of life. Donn Weinberg took a genuine interest in the youths' new business ideas and made suggestions to improve their business plans.

Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation

Jay and Shira Ruderman joined the **A Friend to the Family** volunteer appreciation event held by the Rehovot program supported by the Foundation. Through **A Friend to the Family**, volunteers in thirteen cities offer support to families raising children with special needs who often are overburdened trying to manage the household, attend to other children in the family, and provide for their special needs child.

Michal, whose son has special needs, expressed the gratitude felt by all the families, citing how much they welcomed the program's social activities since they did not have the option of participating in normative social events. She noted how important the weekly visits by the volunteers were. *"On the day when my son's volunteer would arrive he was so happy, and truth be told, so were the rest of us. It truly gave us relief and help."* In her greetings, Shira Ruderman commented: *"We are just at the beginning; there is much work ahead of us. We must remember that we can take responsibility for change and that all of us must work to live in a better society."*

The Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation has just made a four-year commitment and become a founding partner in JDC's new *HaMasad* partnership with the Israeli Government, which aims to improve services for people with disabilities in Israel.



Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation, and his wife Shira at the **A Friend to the Family** event.
Photo: Tamar Geva



Dorothea Gould Foundation Trustees on a home visit: (pictured from left) Ms. Shira Herzog, Professional Advisor; Mr. Denis Weil, Trustee; Rivka Ebragimov, Community Activist; Mr. Thierry Bollag, Chairman; Eti Abadi, Community Activist; Ms. Donna Soble Kaufman, Trustee; Yaffa Cohen, Director of KM Welfare Department; Rachel Ben Harush, KM Neighborhood Coordinator.

Dorothea Gould Foundation

The trustees of the Dorothea Gould Foundation saw firsthand the impact that the **Better Together** program in Kiryat Malachi is having on the children and youth growing up in the city's most distressed neighborhoods. Teens and parents who met with the trustees described how **Better Together** has changed their lives for the better, involved them in the decision-making process, introduced suitable support and extra-curricular programs, and generally brought new hope to the most difficult neighborhoods in this peripheral city.

Kiryat Malachi is the first city in which JDC-Ashalim began the **Better Together** program for children and youth at risk in distressed inner-city neighborhoods. The Foundation was instrumental in nurturing this particular pilot program, and worked with JDC-Ashalim on a strategy for turning this program into a model of service for Israel's poorest neighborhoods. Today, **Better**

Together is in various stages of operation in twelve cities, of which nine are supported by the Dorothea Gould Foundation.

JDC Hosts Jacksonville Jewish Federation Executive Director

As part of a full week of mutual learning with JDC-Israel, Alan Margolies, Jacksonville Jewish Federation Executive Director, met with JDC-Ashalim staff and visited a number of program sites. Alan gained a wider understanding of the scope of JDC-Ashalim's programs for children and youth at risk and the professionals who attend to their needs. He felt the impact of JDC-Ashalim's work in the field. He also shared his experience and knowledge in the Federation world, particularly with regard to exposing Federation missions to the needs of Israel's young at-risk populations and to JDC-Ashalim's innovative and effective responses.

"Thank you!"

This was the resounding message in the many letters received recently from children, parents, principals, and even mayors. Here are selected quotes from the participants themselves:

Ofek Bagrut Participants, upon their High School Graduation

"I arrived in Israel when I was in the 10th grade. Adjustment to a new country was particularly difficult- because of the new language. When I entered high school, I was very afraid that I wouldn't achieve high grades. However, I was comforted and helped by the awesome teachers' staff from the Ofek Bagrut program, which helped me succeed."

Shelly, Bukharan-Israeli participant in Or Yehuda for three years

"In 11th grade I moved to a new school since I did not enjoy learning at my previous school. I did not have friends, I did not succeed in school and I felt that the teachers didn't care about me. At my new school, I had a lot to catch up on. At first, when I was offered to join the Ofek Bagrut program I was not excited, but went anyways to see what it was about. Slowly, I began to understand that this place would save my life... I want to thank Ofek Bagrut for the past two years. I truly don't know what I would have done without this program."

Eliezer, Ethiopian-Israeli participant in Petach Tikva for two years



These **Ofek Bagrut** participants in Kiryat Malachi volunteered to paint, plant and brighten up the local PACT after school center for younger Ethiopian-Israeli children during their Passover vacation break.

Youth Excellence Program

"I am not sure I can adequately describe the wonderful experience that I had over the past three years. It was a long and at times difficult journey, but I can say that I was privileged - privileged to be a part of a theatre project that so many youth would have loved to join. I am privileged to have benefitted from everything that the Youth Excellence project offers."

Almog, 9th grader, participant in Akko for three years

Health & Nutrition Enrichment

"I must tell you about the big change in our family as a result of the Health & Nutrition workshops. Not only are we all trying to adopt proper nutrition habits as part of our daily routine, but we have also started to follow our dental health and brush daily. Now my two children go happily to the dentist and are no longer afraid to sit in the dentist's chair."

Elinor, mother of a kindergartner, who participated in the program in Afula this past year.

Turning Point - Youth Employment & Entrepreneurship Program

"It was just three years ago when the only thing that interested me was to wake up as the sun set and to go to bed when it rose. With a TV on the right side of the bed and half a bottle of vodka on the left. I didn't care about my parents' concerns. I never saw them. They were always asleep at night. I couldn't bear the sunlight, it annoyed me..."

It seems that the changes began small and made all the difference. With a little help from the right people and the chance to participate in JDC-Ashalim's employment and entrepreneurship program.

I am so happy that I am where I am now, even with all the difficulties I faced, I don't regret a thing. I owe a huge "Thank You" to JDC-Ashalim and the people who helped me feel as though I'm worth something. That I am capable of doing what everyone else can and more. I can study like everyone else and succeed in the matriculation exams I once never wanted to take. At work and at JDC-Ashalim's BizCamp I saw that I also have talents, I'm also special...I can succeed...In fact I already have! Thank you to you all!"

Rinat, 18, participant in Ashdod for three years