



# NEWS FROM JERUSALEM HILLS

JANUARY 24, 2017

## BARAK GROUP REUNION

The aim of all of our programs is to rehabilitate the children so that they can reenter normative society. Jerusalem Hills has the highest success rate of any institution of its kind, close to 70%. The key to our success is creating an intensive, consistent and caring comprehensive support network so that these children can overcome their troubled pasts and begin to heal. The strong bond that develops and deepens between our staff members and the children over the four years of our care program is often one which continues in one form or another even after the children "graduate" and leave our care. This is the story of the Barak Group Reunion (children who graduated 9 years ago) as told by their then counselor Uri (who has continued to care for children at the Children's Home and is now a group coordinator):

*"Three months ago Omri, a former pupil of mine from the Barak group, called me and told me how much he misses everyone and that we haven't seen each other in a long time. We agreed that it indeed was time to arrange a reunion. I contacted the rest of the group's former staff members and we started tracking down all our former pupils.*

*We set a date for the 2nd of December. There was a great desire to see each other, staff and youngsters alike. We met on a Friday morning at the Children's Home and had breakfast together. We all sat in a circle and each youngster told a little about himself and his/her experiences since leaving the children's home. They talked about the places they'd visited and their experiences in the army.*

*One of the things that they all had in common was their memory of the Children's Home and the positive connection they felt to it. They spoke of their difficulties, and how they see now that this place gave them a second chance at a childhood. Some of them told us that after their time with us, around the age of 15-16, they felt they had a better understanding of their own and their parents capabilities and that they themselves requested to be placed in boarding school after they returned home. There were also those who returned home and managed to maintain a normative life, keeping up with school and even graduating high school. All but 2 of the youngsters that I spoke to individually are all working, studying or in the army and they are managing to stay in these frameworks and become integrated in society like other people their age. Still, their need for advice and support was apparent especially one on one, when after the small talk we dove into deep conversations about their situation and the current dilemmas that concerned them. I was glad I could still be there for them.*

*The whole experience was very moving for me. These were children that for 4 years, I raised and went through many crises with and our bond is very strong. Till the next time....which hopefully will happen."*



## ORR LODGE OF B'NAI BRITH ISRAEL AND OUR VACATION GROUP CHILDREN

For the last several years the "Orr" Lodge of B'nai Brith Israel has been volunteering at the Children's Home. This group of wonderful people adopted the vacation group and spends a special day with them during every long vacation. The consistency of their activities means that the vacation group kids have gradually begun to let their guard down around the volunteers and have built up a strong relationship with them. For our children, the fact that a group of people from outside the home invests so much time and effort in getting to know them makes them feel that there are people who care about them too. This past Chanukah they came for a special activity of decorating cupcakes with fondant, Chanukah candle-lighting and singing and dancing. When the activity was over the children excitedly asked when they would see them again. We would like to thank the "Orr" Lodge of B'nai Brith for their devotion and dedication. The recurring activities mean a tremendous amount to the children.



### FOCUS ON VACATION GROUPS

There are children in our care who have no family at all or whose family situation is too destructive or threatening to allow them to go home for even short visits (there is no caregiving parent; a parent may be in a mental institution or in jail; there is grounds to suspect the child may be in physical danger due to violence and extreme neglect). For these children the Children's Home continues its operations 365 days a year. A child who on the eve of a holiday must remain on campus while his friends leave, because there is no one who can take him in and offer love and security, is a child whose sadness never leaves his eyes. A child who begs a staff member to take her home with them because she too wants to feel, just once, what it is like to be in a family, is one in need of extra special care.

Since the beginning of the year there have been two school vacations; two weeks during Sukkot and one week during Chanukah, in which the Children's Home operated a special vacation group. We invest a lot of thought and effort in order to provide them with an exciting, embracing and supportive vacation experience that addresses the children's need to feel that they too are entitled to enjoyable holiday activities.

On campus, the children were offered a wide variety of activities, including computer workshop, drama, storytelling, arts and crafts, dance, movies, reading and writing. Over Sukkot the outdoor activities included soccer, volleyball, basketball, jump rope, or free play. During "day trip" outings the group was taken to a wide range of exciting and interesting places including a hike in a nature reserve with a BBQ, a "fun" day at the Neve Ilan Hotel, a visit to the Monkey Park in Ben Shemen with B'nai Brith volunteers, courtesy of the "Orr" Lodge of B'nai Brith Israel, and a visit to the Hava & Adam ecological learning farm, courtesy of the Olswang family. The visit to Hava &



Adam ecological farm is an annual activity in loving memory of Alon Olswang. The kids participated in different fun educational activities and ate lunch on the farm together with the Olswang family. Over Chanukah, the children went to see a play, had a "fun" day at the Neve Ilan hotel which included candle-lighting and dinner and many activities on campus, including a fondant workshop with the volunteers from "Orr" Lodge of B'nai Brith.



## FOCUS ON STAFF TRAINING



Working in a treatment center for severely traumatized children and youth demands of the staff to develop both professional and emotional skills that will help these children transform their unbearable feelings and memories into bearable thoughts and experiences that with time accumulate and become the basis of the child's integrated core sense of self. The children at JHTC are highly aggressive and violent and unable to regulate their impulses. Clearly, the caregivers must receive ongoing professional support and in-service training in order to provide a "secure net" and prevent burn-out. These staffers must have recourse to professional feedback and training that will renew their strength, patience and understanding, worn down by daily confrontation with the severely disturbed and acting-out children. The key to our successful rehabilitation of the children who come under our care lies in the constancy of the adult role models, and the staff's constancy on the job depends fully on the professional support and in-service training it receives in the course of its day-to-day work.

Without proper professional in-service training, few staff members would maintain their jobs for any significant length of time, because of the very harsh nature of the work vis-à-vis the children. A high turn-over of professional staff would cause instability in the children's long-term treatment program and would undermine any rehabilitative processes that may have begun. This, in fact, would render our work totally ineffective and we could not successfully rehabilitate any of the children coming under our care.

Our staff support and training program, developed over the years, includes: Individual training and supervisions of staff members (child care workers and special-education teachers) by senior staff; Group teaching of social workers and psychologists, provided by senior clinical psychologists with expertise in group dynamics; Daily conferences on child care, and; Seminars on theoretical and clinical issues.

Our professional training program has had a ripple-effect upon the professional community in Israel: many staffers, upon completing their work at JHTC, have gone on to become teachers and professors of social work, psychology, psychiatry and special education; directors of social-service facilities and treatment centers; supervisors and trainers of other professionals. The in-service training they each received over their long-term work period (usually 5-10 years) has provided them with the highest professional standards and skills, contributing to a consistent upgrading of the professional community in Israel that treats children-at-risk.

### A Privilege / Gabriel Cohen (Translation Dana Ben-Or)

We declare and we are certain –

We are privileged to work with children.

Yes, it is often a strife

But still, it's a part of life.

Love, care, patience and devotion, a riddle and a joke –

These are the tools with which we work.

\*Gabriel is a counselor at the school.