

Each year throughout the month of Elul, leading up to the fall feasts of Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot the people of Israel set aside time to reflect on their actions over the past year. On the one hand, it is a time to repent, ask for forgiveness and make things right if you have wronged anyone. It is also a time to express appreciation or acknowledge the good deed of others.

ICEJ AID has received various expressions of appreciation over the years especially at this time. It warms our hearts to know that what is done to bless the people of Israel not only impacts lives, but also does not go unnoticed. In the spirit of the month of Elul, we'd like to draw your attention to the good deeds of others helping to those in need.

INDEPENDENCE FOR THE BLIND

Beit Yael is a unique program in Tsfat that offers rehabilitation and recreational programs for the vision impaired, blind, and newly blind. Established in 1976 by Dr. Yael Ben-Dor, Beit Yael's many programs include summer and holiday recreational camps for kids aged 9-18 as well as programs for university students and a month long residential rehabilitation program for those over the age of 40 who are newly blind or going blind.

The loss of sight limits independence and cuts down on the individual's quality of life. A few years ago, there were 31,025 people with vision impairment problems living in Israel. However, the number of blind in Israel is growing due to illness, an aging population, accidents, and as a result of the ongoing conflict. Beit Yael provides a social and educational environment for people of all ages and backgrounds who often are overlooked by other social services.

Participants of the programs offered are the best ambassadors.

Gideon is a father of three from Haifa. At age forty he quit his job as a customs-clearing agent because he suffers from Retinitis Pigmentosa and has been gradually losing his vision. After attending the recent month long residential program, he had this to say, *"Something amazing is happening to all of us here. We're being exposed to technologies, tools, new skills, group therapy and simple fun activities. The program offers me a comfortable environment to acquire new techniques that allow me to live as a newly blind person. Now blindness is less frightening because we are being taught to be more independent."*



Each one who passes through the doors of Beit Yael comes with their own set of worries and fears, but the center has proven to be a place of refuge and hope. Shlomo was afraid that he would have to give up his factory employing 30 workers who produce electrical conductors. He gained so much confidence through the Beit Yael program that he enlarged his business. Simcha is a children's nurse at a well-known hospital. Before the course, she was sure that she would have to leave her job, but she is still working today.

Through your generous giving, ICEJ AID was able to provide funding for the residential rehabilitation program to aid the newly blind. Rena Cohen, director of development, expressed her thanks to us, *“We were delighted to receive your donation. As I’m sure you are aware, the normal funds have not been arriving the past few months because of all the financial problems in the USA. We weren’t sure how we would be able to continue some of our programs. Please express our most sincere thanks to all who made this donation possible.”*

REFUGE FOR THE CHILDREN

Through no fault of their own, many young children must find refuge from their parental home due to abuse, neglect or particularly difficult family relationships. For them, Beit Singer is a place of refuge. Located in the Jezreel valley in the north of Israel, Beit Singer is a home for children aged 6 – 18 that provides a loving and supportive atmosphere for severely traumatized children.

While most of the children maintain contact with their families and go on regular weekend visits, others are orphaned and without family or have limited contact because family relationships make it difficult.

Miriam is one child who enjoys the care of Beit Singer but has limited contact with her family. Her mother suffers from drug and alcohol addiction as well as depression and mental instability. Her inability to properly parent Miriam left her exposed to unsuitable and vulnerable situations.



From the age of 3-6 Miriam attended a regular kindergarten. Described as a bright and talented child, she also suffered from significant psychological distress and violence. Her exposure to sexual abuse by a family member and sub sequential abuse of a younger child resulted in her placement in a boarding school from first grade.

Miriam’s father made a few visits at a previous school but has not maintained contact. Conversations with her mother are difficult. On various occasions she threatened to commit suicide and is often institutionalized. Though contact with her mother can be warm and loving, visits must be carefully supervised. Fortunately, an older married sister and grandmother welcome Miriam for occasional visits in their homes, but holidays are not spent with them.



For those children who must remain behind while others go away to be with family on the weekends, ICEJ AID has helped provide funding for special activities to brighten their days. The principal of the school, Yehuda Amsalem, told us, *“Your generous support has greatly assisted in giving these children more opportunities to smile and enjoy special moments. We consider you true partners in rehabilitating and furthering the education of our children. Your help paves the way for a brighter and safer future. You are a significant part of the family and friends of Beit Singer.”*

Today Miriam is in 5th grade. Outwardly, she seems to be settled and has begun to make friends in her new home. She has managed well despite the turmoil in her life. The support she has received at Beit Singer has given her a chance to begin to heal and grow. Thank you for your generous giving that enables us to help children like Miriam.

For more information about how to get involved with projects such as these contact us at:

icejaid@icej.org or visit our website at www.icej.org/aid