

Annual Activities Report – 2008/9

Background:

The Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities (Chi.L.D.) is a dynamic therapeutic center founded by Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, MD, in 1989, as a non-profit, with a vision to provide vital educational and social services for the local community in areas previously lacking. Located in the heart of the community, the Center serves over 3,000 families mostly in the lower socio-economic strata. Our aim is to provide unique caring environments for those with special needs and ensure improved quality of life. **Opening doors to opportunities, early assessment and optimal treatment ensure success in future careers, family life and social relationships instead of being doomed to a life of failure and frustration.** The dynamic nature of the Haifa Center allows for projects to be established as the need arises. This year we proudly celebrated our 20th Anniversary.

Prizes:

In April 2001 we were awarded the prestigious **William Trump Recognition Award for over a decade of "outstanding commitment to children with developmental disabilities"**.

In December 2008, our reading expert received a prize for **"Excellence in Education"** from the Israel Teachers' Union. This method, called "Musima" developed at the Haifa Center, uses musical notes as cues to help dyslexic pupils learn to read.

Major Ongoing Programs:

The Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities

LD Program for Learning Disabled Children

The Center takes a holistic approach, looking at each child as "a world unto himself" and not only his specific learning disability. Each child is provided with an individually tailored program using a variety of methods. In addition to intensive didactic treatment, paramedical treatments and expressive therapies make each child's visit to the Haifa Center a unique experience. During the school year of 2008/9 ~180 children participated in the various programs offered at our center including:

- Didactic Remedial Treatments: treating dyslexia, dysgraphia and math problems
- Snoezelen Room Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- **Expressive Therapies:** Dance & Movement, Art, Drama, Music, Animal Assisted Therapy, Gardening Therapy

- **Musima:** developed at the Haifa Center – overcoming dyslexia using musical notes as cues
- **Social skills:** In working with LD youngsters it came to our attention that children with learning disabilities do not develop **social skills** naturally. Recognizing the vital need for social skills, a multi-disciplinary team runs innovative workshops to teach social skills in a group setting.
- **Learning Skills** taught in small groups to enhance the ability of children to apply practical skills to learning
- **Therapeutic Kitchen:** A multi-purpose kitchen which enhances self-esteem by giving children positive experiences – children who experience failure in their studies, low grades and frustration are thrilled to take home delicious cookies for their families which they made themselves! In addition math can be taught by looking at the quantities of ingredients and cutting a pitta into quarters, while occupational therapists treat sensory problems when children knead dough and the list goes on and on.....

Treatment Center for Trauma & Anxiety:

In wake of the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006, and in view of previous experience treating trauma after terrorist attacks in Haifa, we launched a project to treat war trauma for those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress. The **Snoezelen Room**, a multi-sensory room with a non-threatening environment was used extensively to help alleviate the symptoms of stress and anxiety that affected so many of the citizens of northern Israel. This ambitious project is just one example of how the Haifa Center caters to the needs of the community as they arise. Treatment to alleviate trauma has been expanded to include victims of car accidents, sex abuse victims, patients suffering from cancer and their families and after birth mums suffering from post-partum depression. To date 10 clients are receiving treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in our Snoezelen Room.

Early Childhood Rehabilitative Day Care Center (ECR): 60 Children

1. **Side-by-Side Nursery** for **developmentally delayed** youngsters ages 0 – 3 years who are integrated with their **typically developing (TD)** peers. Toddlers with developmental delays receive full paramedical attention – all under one roof, while benefiting from interaction with their TD peers. This set-up is mutually beneficial as TD kids learn to accept those who are different from them and in addition are exposed to an enriched environment.
2. **Special-ed Kindergarten** for children ages 4 - 6 is a continuation of the nursery program for those as yet unable to be mainstreamed in the regular school system. A team of highly professional staff caters to the needs of the children and in addition to a regular kindergarten schedule, provides both paramedical and expressive therapies.

3. **Language Intensive Kindergarten** was inaugurated in September '08 for children ages 4 – 7 challenged specifically in the area of speech and language. Staff includes a kindergarten teacher, speech therapist, occupational therapist, psychologist and pet therapist. In addition, the children have a gardening project – growing their own plants, vegetables and flowers – a fun activity that enhances personal development. The highlight of this program was a day of interactive workshops for parents and children together.

Maon Shachar" for Special Needs Children:

Initiated in 2007 in conjunction with **Elwyn Israel**, this is an intensive day care program for severely handicapped children ages 6 months – 3 years from orthodox families. The need arose within the community to establish this framework and as usual, Dr. Lubasch seeing the families suffer, rose to the challenge. Previously no suitable framework existed for these children in Haifa, causing some families to move to other cities, and others to care for children at home. Situated on the premises of Elwyn Israel, children are provided with all necessary paramedical treatments to ensure maximum development. The coordinator of the program is a member of the Haifa Center staff. At present, due to a long waiting list to be accepted to this program, the administration of Elwyn Israel is considering opening a second group.

Programs for New Immigrants:

Following the influx of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia to Israel with many of them settling in Haifa within close proximity to the Haifa Center, we realized that much could be done to help these two specific population groups.

- **Bridging Educational and Cultural Gaps for Ethiopian Immigrant Pupils** – a project established to provide intensive didactic help in core subjects, especially Hebrew Language and emotional support for children studying at the Yavneh School near the Haifa Center. Our aim is to help Ethiopian Immigrant pupils integrate smoothly and become fully participating and contributing citizens in Israeli society. In 2008/9 – 15 children received didactic help. The plan is to double this number, with the generous help from the Sobell Foundation, England.

Events at the Haifa Center – 2008/9

In the ECR Center – parents were invited to an end of year **Parents Day** with exciting activities that gave them a hands-on feeling of what goes on during their children's school hours. Parental involvement has become a major priority in the last year.

Open House – to celebrate our **20th Anniversary**: we were honored by the participation of friends and supporters including members of the Haifa Municipality, Foundation representatives, supervisors from the Ministry of Education, Rabbis, parents and friends, and members of the local community. Workshops, lectures and a guided tour by our teachers and therapists gave visitors a close-up view of activities and services at our Center. A day to be remembered by all!

Conference, Workshops and Professional Seminars

Eshkol – Integration of New Immigrants in the Community – conference run by the Haifa Municipality and attended by Haifa Center representatives.

In conjunction with **Nefesh Israel** a seminar on the topic of "At-Risk Youth" was run for educators and key members of the local community at the Haifa Center.

The staff was invited to participate in a one day seminar on the topic of ADD/ADHD at the **Rambam Medical School**.

Dana Baron, "**Eyal**" representative, gave an informative presentation on the topic of Epilepsy.

Dr. Nitai Melamed, psychotherapist, gave the staff a professional seminar on the subject of culturally sensitive treatments.

Gila Spira, occupational therapist, specializing in sensory awareness presented her techniques at a well attended one day seminar at the Haifa Center on the topic of SPD assessment. Professionals from other organizations in Haifa were also invited to attend.

Gail Susskin, our Snoezelen Room therapist and the head of our trauma unit, is invited once a year to lecture at the **International ISNA Snoezelen Room Symposium**, last year in Germany and this year in Holland. Her work treating trauma in the Snoezelen Room is a unique approach which evolved at the Haifa Center.

Gail Susskin ran a workshop in Jerusalem at the **9th Annual Nefesh Israel Conference** sharing her knowledge on trauma with other professionals and experts. She will be presenting again in January 2010 on the topic: "When Motion meets E-motion".

Conference of **Social and Civil Organizations** in Haifa dealing with the advancement of dialogue between organizations was attended by Haifa Center representatives.

Merkaz Hapa'ot ran an in-depth course on Snoezelen Room Therapy which was attended by staff members from the Haifa Center.

Haifa-Boston Connection 20th Anniversary Convention at Dan Carmel Hotel was attended by our representatives.

Dr. Shmuel Weinstein, psychologist, gave a series of lectures to our staff on "Intake: The Significance of Initial Assessment".

This year, the staff of our Side-by-Side Nursery is attending a 6 month training course, under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor.

Festivals

are celebrated at the Haifa Center in the traditional way. On **Chanuka** children prepared latkes in our therapeutic kitchen and took them home to proudly share with their families.

Tu B'Shvat, a time to emphasize nature and growth – children presented their families with the fruits of their labor – a pot plant they had planted, nurtured and looked after.

Purim – was celebrated by fun and games, dressing up and putting on plays. In addition, we distributed Mishloachei Manot to children hospitalized in the Oncology Unit of Bnei Zion Hospital to cheer them up on this special day. Ethiopian pupils learning at the local Yavneh school received sweet packages from our pupils – bringing a smile of joy to their faces.

Fund Raising Events

5th Annual walk at Ramat HaNadiv in Zichron Ya'akov – Monday 4, '09: In spite of the heat and strong winds, a group of walkers set out on a trail in Ramat HaNadiv, situated on the slopes of Zichron Ya'akov. This was followed by an explanation on ecological building, a movie about the Rothschild family and lunch.

Charity concert organized by Stuart and Hadassa Palmer at the Japanese Museum in Haifa – "Follow the tune of every child" was the slogan at the concert. Dr. Ronald Jacobowitz, renowned pianist (and mathematician) entertained us with his musical performance.

Plans for the future

To purchase a therapeutic hothouse and expand **Gardening Therapy** program

To renovate existing pet corner, purchase more pets and expand **Animal Assisted Therapy** Program

To open a second class in conjunction with **Elwyn Israel** situated on their premises
To open up a center treating ADD/ADHD in conjunction with **Yad Sarah**, Jerusalem
To expand parental involvement and parental guidance programs
To expand group therapy teaching learning strategies to include "Learning Strategies through games and play"
Joint research project on trauma therapy in the Snoezelen Room in conjunction with Beit Issie Shapiro, Ra'anana
To upgrade our website and post Auditor's Reports and Annual Reports on the site

Guests

Mr. Paul Isaac and family – P.E.F. Treasurer
Mr. Zachary Harris – Helen Bader Foundation
Mr. Michael Mohnblatt - Sobell Foundation
Sophie Kuo – from Taiwan TV Broadcasting
Estelle Gomolko – Gateways, Boston - Board Member
Prof. Rabbi Daniel HersHKowitz – Minister of Science & Technology
Zehava Litovsky – Yemin Foundation Director
Mr. Nahum Leder, Director - Rotary, Carmel Haifa Branch
Ms. Yulin Goldberg - Rotary Representative
Mr. Anthony Vance - Deputy Secretary General of the Bahai International Community
Eti Ben Ziv – member of I.A.O.D., Haifa University lecturer
Daniella Menachem- Ezer MiZion representative

In memory of:

Towards the end of the school year, one of the pupils in our special-ed kindergarten passed away, as a result of a terminal disease. We express our sincere condolences to the family – May you be comforted amongst the mourners of Zion.

ELECTIONS FOR THE BOARD OF HAIFA COUNCIL for VOLUNTARISM – once again Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, MD, and founding director of the Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities was elected for another term of service.

Thanks to our ongoing volunteers:

Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, for 20 years of volunteer work in the community and at the Haifa Center.

Yehuda Romm for photography courses for Ethiopian pupils and for planting a garden in the Language Intensive Kindergarten

Diane Romm for help with the website

Stuart and Hadassa Palmer for your ongoing help in organizing the Annual Walk, Charity Concert, bringing so many guests to our Center, and more and more.....

Elza Mervin for being the dedicated House Mother at the Center and taking care of all the pets, plants and whatever else is needed.

Shula Rotenshtreich for volunteering at the Special-ed Kindergarten and helping organize the Charity Concert.

Batya Segal for volunteering at the Special-ed Kindergarten and helping organize the Charity Concert.

In conjunction with:

Ezer Mizion, Beterem, The Israel Cancer Association, Lev Chash, The Crisis Center for Religious Women – Jerusalem, Yad Sarah – Jerusalem, Beit Issie Shapiro – Ra'anana, Nefesh Israel, Elwyn Israel, Haifa Council for Volunteers, Haifa-Boston Connection, Merkaz HaPa'ot, Haifa University, Health Services, Gan Hayered, Leo Beck School, Yavneh School, Gateways – Boston, Solomon Schechter Day School - Boston

Our supporters:

Haifa Municipality, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, Ministry of Absorption, National Insurance, Inheritance Funds, Chinuch Ha'atzma'i, Ma'ayan Hachinuch Hatorani

Our donors:

Helen Bader, P.E.F., S.O.F.T., J.C.D., Silver Family Foundation, Ballas, Reuben Meyer, Yemin Foundation, Tikun Olam, Bahai, Levi Lassen, Haifa-Boston Connection, Haifa Foundation, Rotary, Haifa Chevre Kaddisha, Emouna