



Annual Report – 2010/11

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.

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.

IMPORTANT VISITORS AT THE HAIFA CENTER 2010/2011

- Orna Alshech – Glencore Foundation - February 14, '11
- Edna Zaritzky, Haifa Municipality - February 9, '11
- Pini Vagman and Hadas Rabinowitz from the Municipality - February 16, '11
- Educational Inspectors - Shaul Rotenberg from Petach Tikvah and Rivka Rotenberg from Arad - February 15, '11
- Pastor Gerd Rodewald with group of German tourists from Bible Believers Church - March '11

- Rachel Blumenfeld – Educational Psychologist
- Mr. Jalal Hatami – Deputy Secretary General, Bahai World Community – August, '11
- Mr. Marc Panchaud of Emouna Foundation, Switzerland together with Mr. Chappuis Francois, past ambassador of Switzerland to Israel and his wife – August, '11.

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 2010/11 ~300 children participated in the various programs offered at our center including:

- Didactic Remedial Treatments: treating dyslexia, dysgraphia and math difficulties
- 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 pita into quarters, while occupational therapists treat sensory problems when children knead dough and the list goes on and on.....

- **Dyadic Therapy:** We have increased the hours of Dyadic Therapy at the Haifa Center. This therapeutic model is gaining momentum. By joining children in therapy, parents are able to enter their child's world. Mutual understanding between parents and children, parental empowerment and the furthering of emotional and social development of children are only some of the achievements.

An integral part of treatment is involving parents in the process. Parents meet regularly with our staff – they receive updates on progress and when necessary parental guidance is provided. In addition we emphasize co-operation between our staff and the teaching staff in local schools. Meetings were held to brainstorm for solutions, the participants included Haifa Center staff, parents and class teacher where children learn. The results were both dramatic and interesting and provided new directions for treatment.

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, cancer patients and their families, and mothers suffering from post-partum depression.

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.
- 4.

Expanding Therapies at ECR Center:

Thanks to a generous grant from the Weinberg Foundation, the year 2010 was marked by the expansion of our therapeutic program at the ECR Center. Children received intensive paramedical treatments, fostering their development and emotional therapies which enabled them to overcome additional difficulties. Parental guidance was an integral part of the program.

Results of the program: Out of 9 children in the special ed kindergarten: 2 children are continuing in the program, while 7 have been mainstreamed: 6 to grade 1 and 1 to a regular kindergarten. All 7 are of a high cognitive level thanks to intensive treatments – leaving the framework "bematzav tov" – some to regular grade 1, some to "kitah mekademet". All will have reinforcement and help - some at The Haifa Center for Chi.L.D. in the LD Program.

"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.



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.

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. Thanks to a generous grant from the Sobell Foundation, England in 2009/10 we expanded this program, adding additional therapies and treating more children. A further grant from the Sobell Foundation enabled The Haifa Center to expand this program to include more children and to provide emotional therapies in addition to didactic reinforcement.

NEW PROJECTS:

- Therapy for Children Staying at Haifa Shelters for Battered Mums: Haifa has two shelters for battered women and their children. These children arrive at shelters with their mothers, traumatized by having to leave all that is familiar to them. Often mothers are overwhelmed by personal problems, poverty and uncertainty for what the future will bring and are not emotionally available to help children with school work or attend to their needs. Teachers, too, view them as temporary students. Problems manifest themselves in a variety of ways, including: violence, bedwetting, hoarding, lack of concentration and more. Our staff has risen to the challenge to help these children by providing them with didactic and emotional therapies. Before treatment begins, each child is professionally assessed. This is an integral part of the project, because their stay at shelters is short, and when going to their next station in life, an assessment enables new carers to continue working with the children. In addition, parenting workshops to help empower mothers to take care of their children's needs, in spite of the difficulties they face. Directors of shelters have praised The Haifa Center for the amazing progress children have made and are asking us to take more and more children into this program.
- Home Visitation Project: Based on a previous pilot project, and following requests from local community workers, we have launched a program to help families of children at our Center by providing parental guidance within the home as an approach to early intervention. Our aim is to provide families with coping skills before problems arise. This in turn will impact positively on



children. Some of the mothers receiving home therapy will be invited to take part in a support group at the Haifa Center run by two experienced therapists.

Project for Pediatric Cancer Patients and their Families:

Trauma treatments for pediatric cancer survivors in our Snoezelen Room: based on the "snoezi" model at the Schneider Children's Medical Center – we help children recovering from this devastating illness to overcome emotional problems and trauma. In addition, for those who have missed too much school work while undergoing oncology treatments, remedial didactic help is provided. This project is supported by Mr. Motti Vagner of Chevrat Chashmal – who donated equipment to the Snoezelen Room, JCD – England, P.E.F. - New York, and Bituach Leumi.

Treatment Center for Women and Adolescent Girls from Local Orthodox Community:

A center has been established to treat Orthodox women and adolescent girls suffering from a range of problems and mental health issues. Issues addressed in this center, taking a culturally sensitive approach, include: trauma resulting from abuse, post partum depression, anxiety, distress, personality disorders, issues relating to fertility, eating disorders, and more. Staff works in conjunction with local community workers, Rabbinical leadership and Social Services who all refer clients to The Haifa Center and work to reduce the stigma of receiving treatment. To accommodate treatments two therapy rooms and a waiting room were renovated.

Events at the Haifa Center – 2010/11

- Hot Line for one day to enable parents to ask all their questions on "Warning Signals in Child Development" took place prior to registration for the next school year.

Conference, Workshops and Professional Seminars '10/'11

Ate"m-Nefesh International Convention in Jerusalem - January '11

Haifa Center therapists presented two well attended workshops at this convention:

- Micki Schwartz, MEd and Animal Assisted Therapist together with Anat Geiger, MSW and Art Therapist on the topic: "The Meeting of Modesty, Creativity and Therapeutic Pets: A Therapeutic Group for Hareidi Girls". The topic covered their work together combining two kinds of therapy and dealing with issues in adolescence.
- Gail Suskin, MA and Dance and Movement Therapist – for women – on the topic: "From a Combined Perspective of Body, Identity and Emotion". Gail has worked extensively with women in the Snoezelen Room addressing issues of trauma, post partum depression, and more. She is a doctoral candidate at the Bar Ilan University in the Department for Gender Issues.

Fund Raising Events

6th Annual Walk – once again Ramat HaNadiv in Zichron Ya'akov was chosen as the site for the Annual Walk which took place on October 25, '10 – walking from Ramat HaNadiv to Shuni in Binyamina.

Purim Campaign – the proceeds of our annual Purim Campaign - March '11 will go towards our new project for children staying in battered shelters with their mothers. Sweet packages were distributed to children in shelters and in Oncology Pediatric Department of Bnei Zion Hospital.

New Members of Staff and Farewells:

- **Yael Keidar** was appointed Clinical Director of The Haifa Center for Chi.L.D. and has put the emphasis on expanding expressive therapies at The Haifa Center. She has put much effort into finding ways to improve standards of professionalism. She is in constant contact with Social Services and community workers finding sources of funding to provide more hours of therapy for those in need. She provides professional supervision to the therapeutic staff, she has students from the Haifa University doing their internship at the Haifa Center under her guidance, she has initiated a mentoring program for children who lack a father figure at home, and more. Her approach is preventative – to find ways to intercept problems before they occur and escalate. To this end she organized drama workshops in conjunction with the Jerusalem **Crisis Center for Religious Women** for the children in the ECR Center. She organizes lectures in the community in an effort to increase awareness on issues of abuse, treating mental health issues, and more.
- **Dr. Sonia Sonkin**, Psychiatrist has joined the ranks of our staff and plays an important part in the Treatment Center for Women and Adolescent Girls.
- **Rachel Blumenfeld** – Educational Psychologist will provide psycho-dyadic assessments and lectures to ECR Center staff and parents.
- **Riki Moadev** has replaced Rachel Eherenfeld as Director of Resource Development and Public Relations Department. We wish Riki good luck in her new job and hope that her with her past experience, and her capabilities, coupled with team work at the Haifa Center she will make a great contribution to the Center. Good Luck Riki!
- **Rivka Nir Shafrir** – Bibliotherapist
- **Orit Beni** – Cognitive Behavioral Therapist, Psychotherapist
- **Mira Zeltzer** – Movement and Snoezelen Room Therapist
- **Hilit Nachmias** – Movement Therapist specializing in Dyadic Treatment
- **Efrat Dagan** – Speech Therapist
- **Orit Tiferet** – Occupational Therapist
- **Malki Yakobowitz** – Kindergarten teacher – Language Intensive Kindergarten
- **We bid farewell to Sima Metzger who has retired after many years of dedicated work at the Haifa Center for Chi.L.D.**
- **Chani Meshi, Remedial Teacher, has left the Haifa Center and taken up a new post as School Principal in a new school in Rechasim catering for learning disabled**



children. Chani – thank you for your years of service at the Haifa Center and good luck in your new job.

- Rachel Ehrenfeld, Public Relations Director has left for the U.S.A. – good luck in all your endeavours!

NEW VENTURES AND HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Students from the Haifa University** who are studying to be expressive therapists are able to do their internship at the Haifa Center, under the professional supervision of Yael Keidar, Clinical Director.
- The **Jerusalem Crisis Center** ran **interactive workshops** for our kindergarten children to promote awareness on abuse and the importance of child protection. The kindergartens were divided into three groups according to age and cognitive development and watched a **puppet show** portraying how to behave when in danger. Children learned how to recognize when an adult is overstepping accepted boundaries; they practiced saying "**NO**" and learned that they must run home immediately to telling a parent or older sibling if something happens to them. They also learned not to keep unpleasant secrets to themselves. The kindergarten staff, who was present during the workshops, has continued working with the children to reinforce the important messages portrayed. The workshops were part of our program to address important issues in the local community.
- Yael Keidar, Clinical Director of the Haifa Center, met with Iris Yosef of the Social Welfare Services in Rechasim. Together they planned a series of lectures by our staff for the Rechasim community on issues of interest. The first lecture planned is scheduled to take place soon after the beginning of the school year on the painful topic of abuse in the community and how to increase awareness in order to protect children and adults alike.
- **Amutat Kivunim** – an organization that trains disabled persons and helps them join the workforce - asked us to enable Elinor Azriyah to receive practical experience at our center. Elinor is almost completely blind. She participated in a training course to learn how to use a special computer program with sound and is now doing her internship at our center. Elinor thank you for your contribution to the Haifa Center.

- **Mentoring Program:**

A mentoring program for children who lack a father figure at home was launched in conjunction with "Big Brothers Big Sisters of Haifa" and "Sherut Ezrachi". Children from dysfunctional families have been assigned a mentor to help with homework and spend leisure time together. This new venture fills a void in the community and is warmly supported by local community leaders.

- Another important venture at our center is to provide counseling for parents who are in a situation where they have a child with a myriad of problems and need guidance. When faced with a situation where parents are confused, have tried different options, including alternative treatments, and don't know who to turn to, the Haifa Center staff will meet with parents and explain how to go about tackling the problem and what the treatment options are, starting off with a professional assessment, and then progressing to a treatment plan that takes all problems into account; including: remedial problems, behavioral problems, developmental delays, family problems, and more. We are able to refer children and their families to a range of experts including remedial teachers, emotional therapists, occupational and speech therapists. In addition, there are times when a neurologist or child psychiatrist can be consulted.

Consider this scenario: Michael (not his real name) is 6 years old a number of problems: at home he has difficulty getting dressed, his school bag is a mess, at school he has behavioral problems and his reading is not at the same level as the rest of his class. His parents are at a loss what to do with him, they have been given different advice from all sorts of well meaning friends, relatives and neighbors. The truth is they have other problems as well. They have tried a number of alternative treatments, without any success. At a visit to their local family doctor the mother expressed some of her concerns. Michael's teacher decided to step in and try to help – she approached the Haifa Center for Chi.L.D. and suggested they work together. The Haifa Center staff has experience working with a multi-disciplinary team. The school teacher, school principal, family doctor and Haifa Center staff met together to try and find a solution for Michael. The first step is to have Michael professionally assessed to ascertain exactly what his difficulties are, after that a treatment plan can be built. This might include didactic help, emotional therapy, paramedical treatments, social skills workshop, and more. In addition, the entire family can be helped – parents will receive parental guidance, other children can receive help if necessary. Some mothers are eligible for guidance within the arena of

the home, to provide help on the spot at real time. This project will include social welfare workers as part of the team when necessary.

- End of year activities included:
 1. Language Intensive Kindergarten had an end of year party for children with the participation of mothers and grandmothers.
 2. Special Ed Kindergarten had an end of year party that began a month earlier with the children preparing all aspects of the party by themselves. They made gifts for the mothers, prepared decorations for the kindergarten, baked cookies, and prepared the food. The day started off as a regular school day, children arrived on time. The children set up for the party and at 10 am their mothers arrived. This was followed by a workshop with mothers and children participating together making an arts and crafts memento. After an audio visual show, a van came to fetch everyone and took them to a park for an outdoor happening. A day to be remembered by all.
 3. Anat, art therapist at the Haifa Center worked very hard during the last few weeks of the year. Each child spent his last session showing off his art works to his parents, siblings, and any other guests he wanted to invite. This entailed setting up a special exhibition for each and every child. Anat went to a lot of trouble to make sure that each child felt special.

Some success stories:

Mrs. Cohen* is the daughter of a holocaust survivor – her mother went through the camps in Europe. Her mother never told her two children – a son and a daughter – what she experienced. Mrs. Cohen only recently heard from a cousin, that her mother's sister also survived the holocaust and they were reunited after the war. Tragically the sister passed away soon after as a result of typhus.

As a young child, Mrs. Cohen realized that her job in life was to protect her mother. She had to protect her from further suffering, because her mother had already

suffered enough. Her mother used to worry about her excessively. So Mrs. Cohen never went on trips with her school friends, she never went to a summer camp, she never went swimming alone. When Mrs. Cohen married and started raising her own children she found herself repeating patterns of her own mother's behaviors. When her children went out, she would be worried sick until they came home. She had great difficulty allowing them to do regular activities that most other children did, and which she herself had missed out on as a child.

She approached the Haifa Center and asked for treatment. She was assigned a therapist who works using CBT – cognitive behavioral therapy - and underwent a series of treatments. Today she claims that the treatment has helped her immensely. She is more relaxed with both her mother and with her own children. Certain aspects in her life haven't changed – and it seems never will. For example her mother has an extreme aversion to boots. To this day, no-one in the family wears boots, including grandchildren. Mrs. Cohen can be quoted saying: "I never read holocaust literature; I grew up confronting the holocaust daily."

David* is 6 years old, from a family who's functioning can be described as moderate. They live in a village outside of Haifa and after experiencing a range of difficulties with two of their six children were referred to the Haifa Center for treatment. In spite of the distance and having to travel on two busses each way, Mrs V. brings her two children here regularly. They don't miss a treatment! Little Rivka* is a story in itself and for the present we will not describe her. David started off at the beginning of the year and gave the impression of being mildly retarded. Not only was he behind in his learning, but he had a very short concentration span and was impulsive – qualities that make learning very difficult. David came regularly to a remedial teacher who worked on his reading and writing and tried to teach him basic learning strategies and skills that can be applied both at school and at home when



doing homework assignments. Attention span improved and by the end of the year he could concentrate for 30 minutes – an entire lesson! His school teachers also reported improvement and his social skills improved – he now has some friends in class. David will continue for another year at the Haifa Center. He will receive occupational therapy to address problems in coordination and fine motor skills. He will take part in a social skills workshop and will continue with his emotional therapy. We hope that by the end of a second year here he will no longer need treatment. At the end of the school year his teachers wished him luck and said "keep up the good work"! Today we can say without a doubt that David does not suffer from any kind of retardation.

The Blau* family is an esteemed and respected family in the local community. The father has an important position in one of the local organizations and the mother is well known for her charitable deeds and hospitality, helping all in need. Their eldest child – let's call him Pinchas – had many problems at school. The parents left no stone unturned to help him. They went to two psychologists, alternative doctors, and more. They sent him for music lessons and swimming lessons. Nothing helped. Pinchas had a problem that no-one seemed to be able to solve. In fact, no-one knew exactly why he didn't want to learn, why his school bag was always a mess, why he never had a pencil, why he fought with the kids at school and with his siblings at home. His parents were so embarrassed by his behavior. In addition, his mother started to become depressed. Some of the professionals they met blamed them for making mistakes with their son and causing him to behave in such a way. They were in a state of despair. They realized that the way things were going their son had no future. The school principal suddenly had an idea – why not try the Haifa Center for Chi.L.D. They had nothing to lose, they came, and they are still here. When the Blau's came to the Haifa Center, they were interviewed by the Clinical Director – Ms. Yael Keidar. She did an in-depth intake and then sent Pinchas for a specialized assessment. The root of the problem

came to the fore. Pinchas has a sensory problem that directly affects his moods, his ability to concentrate and learn, and his ability to interact with people. The multi-disciplinary staff built him an individualized program. He has a remedial teacher, an occupational therapist, and pet therapist, who are all dedicated to his well being. In one year he has made dramatic progress. His parents also received guidance from our staff. His parents say they now have a new son. There is still much work to be done with Pinchas, but at the end of the tunnel glows a strong, bright light!

* To ensure privacy names have been changed.

Thanks to our ongoing volunteers:

Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, for 22 years of volunteer work in the community and at the Haifa Center.

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

Zehava Litovsky for once again leading the Annual Walk

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

Stav Rekedson who volunteered in the special ed kindergarten and was sent to us through the **Haifa Council of Voluntarism**.

Laya Zryl for continued professional counseling, writing and translating services.

Haifa Civic Society, on their day of Volunteerism in the community, sent us a team of workers from Netvision 013 who renovated, painted and planted in our ECR Center.

Carmel Olefins, Ltd continue to upgrade our outdoor areas. In the past they built and installed new cages in our pet corner. At present they are concentrating all their efforts on rebuilding the entrance to our ECR Center by building new steps. Their contribution to the community in general, and specifically to The Haifa Center, is admirable.



Our donors:

Weinberg Foundation, Sobell Foundation, P.E.F., Helen Bader, Keren Yemin, JCD, Ballas, Reuben Meyer, S.O.F.T., Emouna Foundation, Keren Haifa, Rotary, Haifa Boston Connection, Tikun Olam, Baha'i, Silver Family Foundation, Levi Lassen, Haifa Chevra Kaddisha, Keren Nefesh Kol Chai

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