

## Annual Report – 2009/10

### 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, 21 years ago, 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.

### 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 2009/10 ~200 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### "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 we have been able to expand this program, adding additional therapies and treating more children.

**Results: Some success stories:**

- Angudaito\*, a sixth grade pupil, was assessed by the special ed teacher as having a reading level of grade 1 at the beginning of the school year. By the end of the year, following intensive reading lessons, she had reached the level of grade 4. In addition, her spelling and vocabulary had improved tremendously. And there is still more work to be done to help her reach classroom levels!
- 8 year old Desaline\* was born in Ethiopia. His mother died when he was four years old, and his father remained in Ethiopia. He was brought to Israel by his grandmother, who does her best to provide a home for him. She doesn't speak Hebrew and is unable to work. He has both emotional and learning problems. With the devoted attention he received from the Haifa Center teacher, he started to read and write Hebrew and his class participation is slowly increasing.

\* Names have been changed to ensure privacy.

**NEW PROJECTS RECENTLY LAUNCHED:**

- 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. In addition, we run parenting workshops to help empower mothers to take care of their children's needs, in spite of the difficulties they face.
- Home Visitation Project – in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Welfare a group of volunteers is taking part in a course to become professional "home therapists". 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 arena of 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.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:**

### **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 plan to 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 will be provided.

### **Clinical Center**

To establish a clinical center to treat orthodox women and adolescent girls suffering from a range of problems and mental health issues: issues to be addressed in this center – taking a culturally sensitive approach, will include: trauma resulting from abuse, post partum depression, anxiety, distress, personality disorders, issues relating to fertility, eating disorders, and more.

### **Events at the Haifa Center – '09/'10**

- Haifa Center staff met with school teachers of children receiving treatment here at our center to brainstorm and find solutions to problems. Working together with school staff has proved to be amazingly successful.

### **Conference, Workshops and Professional Seminars '09/'10**

- Edna Gilboa – one day seminar for staff on the topic of neuromotor development.
- One day seminar for ECR Center staff with social worker – Moriah Amit from Kupat Cholim
- Open House at Rambam Community Center in Neve Sha'anana – our staff registered participants for a program of lectures given at the community by our therapists. A joint venture between the Haifa Center and Rambam Community Center will include ongoing lectures to parents, by our staff, on various topics of interest.
- Ms. Maskit Schochat, School Principal at Schneider Children's Medical Center and Snoezelen Room therapist gave a one day seminar on the "Snoezi Model" used to treat

pediatric cancer patients. Participants included: Haifa Center staff and social workers from Rambam and Bnei Zion pediatric oncology departments.

- Moshe Asor – qualified therapist, presented his techniques on Biofeedback and Guided Imagery and explained how his work connects to a range of expressive therapies.
- Shulamit Suissa, Ministry of Education inspector, visited with her team, who spent the day taking an in depth look at Trauma and Snoezelen Room treatment.
- The staff of special ed schools in the north participated in a workshop at the Haifa Center on the topic of "Behavior Modification for PDD children" run by Mr. Uri Cohen, educational specialist.
- Open Day at the Haifa Center for principals of special ed schools – coming from all over the country, including Snoezelen room workshop and lectures.
- Rechasim branch of Ofakim Teacher's Seminary was hosted at the Haifa center and spent a day getting to know about our work.
- Einav Keshet, Psychologist from Yad Sarah presented an in-depth look on the topic of ADD including practical tips and solutions.

### Fund Raising Events

**6<sup>th</sup> 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** – proceeds went towards furthering our ongoing projects, while sweet packages were distributed to Ethiopian pupils and children hospitalized in the Rambam Hospital Oncology Department.

### VISITORS AT THE HAIFA CENTER

- Prof. Zvi Izikowitz of the Faculty of Social Work, Haifa University and Head of the Center of Social Research
- Eitan Adres – Director of Haifa Civil Society
- Danny Pessler - Principal of Leo Baeck Education Center and Haifa Rotary President
- Jim Morgan and Michal Regunberg – Haifa Boston Connection
- Maskit Schochat – School Principal - Schneider Children's Medical Center
- Mr. Anthony Vance – Deputy Secretary General - International Baha'i Community
- Dr. Kramer brought a delegation of supporters of Israel from Germany lead by Pastor Gerd Rodewald
- Ini Lederer with Dutch supporters of Israel who donated tulips to the Haifa Center

- Rachel Ziv, Director - Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter & Hadas Dagan Blum, Director – Haifa Shelter for Battered Women
- Mr. and Mrs. Bruce and Annette Weintraub from the U.S.A.
- Mr. and Mrs. Jake and Lyn Aronson from the U.S.A.
- Paul Aronson from the U.S.A.
- Tracy Shreiber, special education specialist, from the U.S.A.
- Ms. Carmit Levy David – Irgun Keshet
- Edna Gilboa – who ran a workshop on neuromotor development
- Ms. Moriah Amit Tal – social worker – Kupat Cholim, who ran a workshop for ECR staff
- Danny Pessler – Principal of Leo Baeck School and President of Haifa Rotary
- Orli Polinger - social worker, Rambam Hospital
- Moshe Asor - Biofeedback specialist
- Kobi Brosh – Keren Haifa Director
- Nachum Lederer and Yoline Goldberg – Haifa Rotary representatives
- Minister Rabbi Professor Daniel Hershkowitz - Minister of Science and Technology
- MK Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Mozes
- Dr. Moshe Kramer, MD - Skin Specialist
- Dr. Sigal Sapira, MD – Community Family Doctor
- Dr. Avi Schapiro, MD - Pediatric Psychiatrist
- Dr. Chana Abramowitz, MD – Family Doctor
- Mr. Uri Cohen - educational specialist

**Thanks to our ongoing volunteers:**

Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, for 21 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.

Giorga Yahel – for renovations in the kindergarten and to Chen Ifgergan from Ruah Tovah Organization for sending Giora here.

Renovation team from Carmel Olefins Ltd for renovations and development of ECR outdoor area, and for providing and installing new cages in the pet corner

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.

**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, Levi Lassen, Haifa Chevra Kaddisha, Keren Nefesh Kol Chai

**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

**In conjunction with:**

Rambam Medical Campus, Bnei Zion Hospital, Women for Women – The Haifa Shelter for Battered Women, Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter, Schneider Children's Medical Center, Ezer Mizion, Beterem, The Israel Cancer Association, Lev Chash, The Crisis Center for Religious Women – Jerusalem, Yad Sarah – Jerusalem, Beit Issie Shapiro – Ra'anana, Ate"m – Nefesh Israel, Elwyn Israel, Haifa Council for Volunteers, Haifa-Boston Connection, Merkaz HaPa'ot, Haifa University, Health Services, Shatil, Gan Hayeled, Leo Beck School, Yavneh School, Gateways – Boston, Solomon Schechter Day School – Boston

**In memory of:**

Mr. Benny Hesse, ob"m, Director of Haifa Chevra Kaddisha, who was dedicated to the community and donated generously to the Haifa Center for many years. We extend our wishes of condolences to his family and hope that memories of his good deeds will be a source of comfort to them after his tragic passing.