



Ukrainian
refugee
update
inside

YOUTH
ALIYAH
CHILD RESCUE

UPdate
Winter 2022

Note from our CEO

Dear friends

I had the privilege of visiting Israel in August, where I met many of the Ukrainian refugee children who are now calling our Youth Villages home. Both their bravery and their pain were palpable as they worked hard to communicate with me in Hebrew, even though many speak English.

It really stuck me how perfectly positioned our Youth Villages are to absorb these refugees. They have been welcoming students from Ukraine and other former Soviet Union countries for many years now. The refugees would be embraced by Ukrainian peers, Russian speaking staff, counsellors experienced in working with trauma and displacement, and kitchen staff who already know how to prepare comfort foods such as borscht. So much hard work and caring has been put into absorbing the newest arrivals but, sadly, the financial impact has been immense.

It is thanks to your generosity that we have been able to support our Youth Villages, ensuring that every need of every refugee will be met. With no end of the war in sight, we are ready for more children to arrive. Thank you so much for continuing to give so generously so that they, too, will be able to build a new life in Israel.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and peaceful 2023.

Daliah Mehdi

Daliah Mehdi
Chief Executive

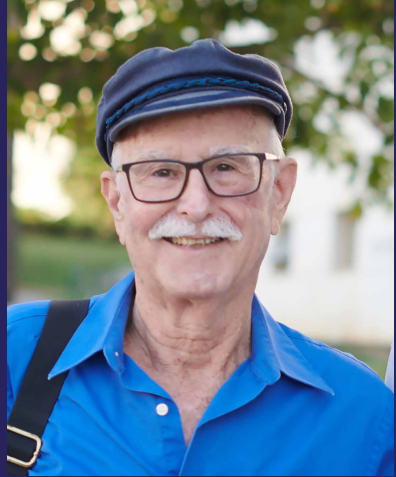


Chaim Peri

Chaim Peri to Receive Israel's Presidential Medal of Honor

We are delighted to announce that in December our dear friend Dr Chaim Peri will be awarded the highest presidential decoration given in Israel, the Presidential Medal of Honor.

This prestigious award, established in 2012 by President Shimon Peres, is being offered to Chaim Peri in recognition of his life's work as an educator, and is given to individuals who have made an extraordinary contribution to the State of Israel or to humanity.



The 80-year-old Dr Peri is an educator, thinker and social activist, who headed Yemin Orde Youth Village for almost three decades. He established the ground-breaking Yemin Orde Mechina, or pre-army leadership program, the first of its kind in Israel for marginalised youth; seeded a community settlement in the Galilee with immigrant youth; developed the Village Way educational methodology, which is being disseminated across Israel as part of the Village Way Educational Initiatives; and played an important role in establishing the educational groundwork of Agahozo Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda.

Over the years, from the beginning of his career as an educator in the southern periphery town of Sderot in the 1960's and to this day, Chaim Peri has mobilized himself entirely to promote immigrant children in general, and generations of young people from the Jewish-Ethiopian community in particular.

Chaim and our charity have enjoyed a close, warm relationship throughout the course of his inspiring career and many of you will remember him from one of his many visits to England. Many former JFS pupils also remember him fondly from the days when the school sent students to spend several months at Yemin Orde.

We wish Chaim a heartfelt Mazal Tov on this well-deserved honour and we are as proud as ever to work alongside him to support marginalised children in Israel.

Neve Hadassah

Israel is widely recognised as a world leader in cyber security and defence. The IDF trains thousands of soldiers to fill critical roles in this area, including in the prestigious cyber intelligence unit known as Unit 8200. These units are notoriously difficult to get into, with the IDF conducting a rigorous selection procedure to enlist only those with exceptional aptitude and ability.

Recognising both the potential of their students and the opportunities such military placements offer, with help from Youth Aliyah Child Rescue, Neve Hadassah built a state of the art cyber centre, with technology donated by Israeli high tech firms.

Over 50% of students at Neve Hadassah choose to take a course in cyber specialisation. The major is taught at the highest level, combining innovative technological tools and advanced learning environments to meet the requirements of the hi-tech industry, the National Cyber Headquarters and the elite units of the IDF.

As part of a broader effort to empower girls at Neve Hadassah, the village staff actively encourage and empower girls to pursue this field of learning.

For many years, Neve Hadassah graduate, Major Yuval Yaft, now a high-ranking officer in the IDF's Cyber Defence Division, has been recruiting a number of the village's graduates into his units.

As a result of the success of their graduates, Neve Hadassah now has an agreement with the IDF that selected students will undergo additional preparation in their final year of school and will then be drafted directly into units that provide cyber services to the Prime Minister and to the army's Chief of Staff.

The high-tech industry is keen to recruit those who have completed their service in these units, which further helps to secure the integration of marginalised immigrant youth into mainstream Israeli society.



Talpiot

Therapeutic Navigation

Talpiot Youth Village is home to many of our most emotionally complex children, ranging in age from 5 to 18. The village leadership understand that they need to use a wide variety of therapeutic treatment styles in order to reach each of the children they care for, and they are well known for their innovative approach.

One example is therapeutic navigation (orienteeering). Children participate in a weekly class within the grounds of Talpiot, and once a month they venture into the surrounding forests and parks, using a map and compass to find their way. At the end of the year, the members of the group go on a three-day challenge trip where they walk about 30 km every day.

The navigation activities help the children to develop resilience, determination and problem-solving skills. Working in teams, they learn to cope with failure and disappointment, celebrate successes, and develop critical communication skills, emerging stronger both physically and emotionally.

Sharon's parents went through a contentious divorce. She was caught in the middle, pressured to take sides while playing the role of parent to her younger siblings. Although she gained some confidence in playing this role within her family, she found it increasingly difficult to function among her peers and she soon withdrew from any social interactions.



When Sharon arrived at Talpiot she refused to take part in any activities or classes, although she did manage to establish good relationship with a number of adult staff.

With the encouragement of Sharon's care team, she agreed to participate in the navigation programme. At first, a staff member had to accompany her but little by little the team backed off and allowed her to function independently, forcing her to interact with her peers in this very structured setting.

During the end of year challenge Sharon, of course, stood out in her abilities to manage and organize the group, but her greatest achievement was that she succeeded in forming new friendships, which she continues to cherish.

Today, after two years of being part of the navigation group, Sharon has returned home. Thanks to her experiences at Talpiot, Sharon has learned that she can not only navigate a forest, but she has the ability to navigate her own life and choose the path she takes.

Refugees Update

The first groups of Ukrainian refugees started arriving at Yemin Orde, Aloney Yitzchak and Neve Hadassah in March, soon after Russia invaded Ukraine. For the remains of the school year, the focus was on settling into Israel, learning Hebrew, and closing educational gaps, while tending to their considerable emotional needs.

In the early summer months, they studied Hebrew in “ulpan” for most of the day and during the afternoons and evenings they enjoyed fun activities that most Israeli children take for granted but that these youngsters may otherwise not have experienced.

August was much quieter. The only children in the Youth Villages were the new Ukrainian arrivals and other Russian and Ukrainians who have been in the Village since the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. They had planned to visit their families over the summer but were unable to go due to the war. While it was good for their integration into Israeli society to initially be in the Village with people from different backgrounds, the calm and relative quiet was very good for them.

Everyone needs a summer vacation, and that’s what we provided for these children who have had such a traumatic year. They were given a break from their Hebrew (ulpan) and school studies and immersed in Israeli culture, history and geography. Educational field trips were a fun way to learn about Israel as well as an important



part of their building a connection to Israel and their Jewish roots. They went hiking in the Golan Heights, kayaking in the Jordan River, horseback riding in the Carmel Mountains and toured Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, sampling Israeli foods like falafel and hummus along the way.

The refugees volunteered in a nursing home, where many residents are themselves Russian immigrants. Our newest students really shone as they were the only ones who could really communicate with these people. Such volunteering is important to encourage Tikkun Olam and to empower the youth by giving them the opportunity to help others.

They also enjoyed much-needed downtime, sitting around the pool in the Youth Villages or working out in the gym and simply being teenagers in safe surroundings. Several of the youth have extended family in Israel whom they went to visit on weekends, others were paired with Israeli host families, and some stayed in the Villages. The individual and group therapeutic sessions continued throughout the summer and will continue throughout the coming school year, and the teams of informal educators continue to be on alert for signs of unusual distress. We know that the therapeutic treatment is crucial to their settling into their unplanned new lives.

School began for all students in September. Most of the children in the Villages speak Hebrew now, but groups can be heard speaking among themselves in French, Portuguese, Amharic or Russian. The youth from Ukraine have very basic Hebrew skills, so their daily schedule includes Hebrew ulpan in the mornings and a regular high school curriculum taught in Russian in the afternoons.

A large number of the new youth in the Youth Villages are experiencing traditional Jewish holidays for the first time. They enjoyed festive meals and new foods on Rosh Hashanah. They heard the shofar blowing and during the afternoon hiked to scenic areas to join staff and their families for the “Tashlich” ceremony where they symbolically threw the sins/regrets of the past year into the Mediterranean Sea or nearby rivers.

In September, new groups of Ukrainian and Russian children arrived under Israel’s Na’ale programme. Youth have been coming to Yemin Orde and Aloney Yitzchak from the countries of the Former Soviet Union for many years, but this year’s groups are different in a few ways. Most importantly, these children have been displaced by war. They may not otherwise have chosen to

come to Israel and had little time to prepare for the transition. The Na’ale programme designed exclusively for 16-year-olds was extended to include children aged 13 to 18 in order to welcome refugees. In the past, each teen would undergo an academic and psychosocial evaluation by Israeli representatives before coming to Israel. Due to the war, as well as the uncertainty of the relationship between the Jewish Agency and the Russian government, the screening process has been curtailed. As a result, we are seeing substantially greater therapeutic needs and learning disabilities among the latest arrivals, as well as significant medical and dental problems that the Youth Villages will need to find funding to pay for. Now that the initial “honeymoon period” is over, even more emotional and psychological needs are surfacing.

While the challenges are great, the staff and students alike have warmly embraced the refugees. Many are already picturing their futures in Israel and are looking forward to their families making Aliyah, too.

What they have endured already, at such a young age, is hard to fathom, but we are incredibly fortunate to be able to provide financial support so that they can heal and build a bright future in Israel.



T.O.M.

Agriculture and technology join forces at TOM

TOM Youth Village is located in the Hefer Valley, a fertile rural region in central Israel. This year, about three hundred and fifty new immigrant boys from Ethiopia and France are studying in the village alongside existing students from all over the country. The village focuses on two fields of study, engineering/technology and agriculture.

About fifty students are studying in the agricultural track this year, combining theoretical and technological studies alongside hands on agricultural work in hydroponics, olives, and grapes.

The educational concept of the village includes the full participation of students in the development of the village's programmes. This year saw the opening of TOM's winery, using grapes grown at the Village.

Together with the educational team, the students of the agriculture major were full partners in all stages of establishing



the winery, from the business planning stage to the execution stage. This included recruiting professionals from different wineries around Israel for guidance and mentoring and for teaching the practical process of producing wine.

The students participate in every step of the wine production process, from the cultivation of vines in the field to the production of the wine itself. This requires outstanding teamwork and communication between the students, daily hard work, shared responsibility, and a sense of great pride and ownership of the finished product.

In the next step, the students will go through a learning process with professional marketing and branding guidance and prepare a business plan that they will present to leaders in the wine industry.

The reach of this enterprise extends beyond the agriculture students. Engineering and robotics majors have formed a joint research team, with the goal of creating solutions that can be used in the agricultural setting.



Mechinot

Preparing for the army, and for life

The Women's Mechina is well into the year, with a strong group of young women looking to gain life and leadership skills that will enable them to use the period of their IDF service as a springboard into the Israeli mainstream. The Mechina is located in the heart of the Jezreel Valley, and connecting the participants to their surroundings, as a way to strengthen their connection to the entire country, is central to the Mechina program. During the last week of October, the Mechina participants spent 3 days hiking through the Jezreel Valley. They carefully planned for the hike, organizing the food and other supplies, and set out on foot with all of the supplies in their backpacks. For the young women who had never really hiked before this was truly a challenge, and they all rose to the occasion. When one of the women was tired a different friend stepped in to help carry her load. It was incredible to watch the group coalesce and each women find her

strengths. The last night held a special surprise as the women were woken up at 2:00AM and then hiked through the night. When it started to rain in the middle of the hike, they simply pulled out their improvised rain gear and continued together.

Amaya has been a very reluctant participant of the program, almost every morning talking about dropping out. She has been an outsider, not making friends and barely speaking during classes or group discussions. The staff quietly encouraged her to persevere day after day. At some point in the middle of this 3-day journey something changed and she suddenly blossomed. She moved to the front of the pack and led her new friends, navigating the trails, lighting the bonfire and preparing food. She even offered to carry others' backpacks when they were tired. "I 'started' the program late, but I'm here now," she told her new friends.



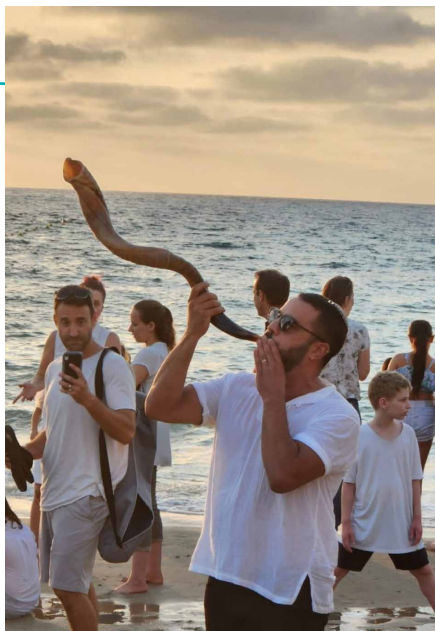
Aloney Yitzchak

Judaism in a Secular Zionist Village

In 2014 we worked with one of our donors to establish a small synagogue at Aloney Yitzchak Youth Village. Although Aloney Yitzchak is a “secular Zionist village”, all meals are kosher, there are mezuzot on every door, and Jewish holidays are celebrated. The village leadership considers it important to provide students with opportunities to explore and learn about Judaism as much as they would like to. This is especially important for the large number of students from the former Soviet Union who, although they have Jewish ancestry, may not have any personal experience with Jewish practice.

Today, Avichai Cohen, the warm and energetic educator who first requested a synagogue on campus, talks to students in the synagogue about the Parshat Hashavua every week after the festive Kabbalat Shabbat meal. What started as a fifteen minute lesson on the Parsha soon expanded to twenty minutes at the students’ request. He then added Havdala for students, staff and volunteers, many of whom had never participated in this multi-sensory service.

The week before Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, Avichai led a group of students in Slichot services, culminating in a visit to Tiberias where they learnt about and visited sites related to the Rambam, Mishna, Talmud, and highly



regarded rabbis. The students sang and danced, and Avichai blew the shofar that his family donated to Aloney Yitzchak.

Establishing the synagogue and providing Aloney Yitzchak with a physical space filled with the many essential ritual objects has given Judaism a home at the Youth Village. As a result, the study and practice of Judaism, with Avichai’s help, has become more meaningful and more accessible to all.

Refugees, recent immigrants, and Sabras all participate in Jewish life at Aloney Yitzchak now. The recent Ukrainian refugees, most of whom had no previous interaction with Judaism, are particularly moved. They said Judaism relaxes them and makes them feel protected!

Village Way

On October 6th, more than 900 people with a passion for education—including Village Way staff members, educators, principals, youth village directors, counsellors and education system employees—made their way to Tel Aviv University for the ninth annual Village Way Conference to discuss the status of educators in Israel. Participants reflected a true cross-section of Israeli society, attending the conference to learn together and from one another by sharing their professional and personal experiences and stories.

The Village Way was founded by Chaim Peri to share the expertise gained through decades of working at Yemin Orde with other professionals working with at risk children around the country.

Conference participants were divided into 70 different facilitated learning circles of 10-15 people, each with an emphasis on diversity, purposely creating a unique, exceptional opportunity for educators from Arab, Jewish, religious, and secular educational communities and frameworks to sit together - something that rarely happens in their day-to-day lives.

Focusing on the concept of “Education Inside and Outside the Box”, this year’s learning circle content came in the form of an actual box. Both inside and out, the box contained texts, songs, illustrations, and more, with the box’s form symbolizing the need for educators to learn how to work within the confines of a “box” as well as outside of it in order to provide good education. The content acted as the path by which to do so, leading participants through a series of questions, discussions, and activities.



Together, as each diverse group of educators delved deeper into the box and shared pieces of themselves with their peers, they learned that, despite their differences, there was a shared sense of purpose and understanding that, as educators, they had answered a calling and not simply chosen a profession.

The First Lady of the State of Israel, Mrs. Michal Herzog, gave the keynote speech and she was followed by two educators. Inbal is the principal of a high school for at-risk youth who spoke eloquently and passionately about what it means to be an educator. Isra is an Arab-Israeli educator who began her career as a secretary and, after her superiors identified her potential, worked and studied hard to fulfil that potential to reach her current position. Both women are strong believers in the Village Way and have taken the key Village Way component of Tikkun Olam to heart, traveling together to Ukraine as part of a small Village Way delegation to provide assistance to the local population.

The conference allowed participants to share their learning and renewed enthusiasm back to their schools and communities, each more deeply committed than ever to give their students the best possible chance to succeed in life.

Yemin Orde

One of the most beautiful elements of Yemin Orde Youth Village is the cultural mosaic of our community. Each youngster brings his/her own cultural traditions which they share with others. One evening one of our Ethiopian-Israeli informal educators invited a group of very new immigrants from Ukraine to his home to share in the Ethiopian “buna” coffee ceremony. Dressed in traditional Ethiopian clothing, he welcomed them into his home and then taught them how to make the ceremonial coffee and explained the meaning of the ceremony. Ethiopia’s coffee ceremony is an integral part of the social and cultural



life in the country. An invitation to attend a coffee ceremony is considered a mark of friendship or respect and is an excellent example of Ethiopian hospitality. At the time, the new immigrants didn’t understand even a word of Hebrew, but they understood this offer of friendship. After coffee they all put on Ethiopian clothing and danced traditional Ethiopian dances together.

Six ways to step up for at risk children in Israel

1

Donate

by phone or on our website at
www.youthaliyah.org.uk/donate

2

Join

a Youth Aliyah Child Rescue committee

3

Visit

one of our Youth Villages when you are next in Israel

4

Remember

Youth Aliyah Child Rescue in your will

5

Fundraise for us

You can choose how you want to help –
we’ll support you all the way

6

Follow us

on social media, and join our mailing list

www.youthaliyah.org.uk

235 Regents Park Road, London N3 3LF | 020 8371 1580 | info@youthaliyah.org.uk

Charity No: 1077913