

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS — Janet & Irwin Tobin



We want to take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to you and your families for the New Year and the upcoming High Holidays.

This year we are thankful that we had a year during which we had the chance to work intensively on all our regular programs: therapy, remedial teaching, leisure enrichment activities and religious education. We also were able to introduce new activities that serve our education and therapeutic goals.

Please enjoy this *new* NEWSLETTER from American Friends with an update on the latest news of our activities at Neve Hanna along with the enclosed Israeli Newsletter. With your continued and generous support our children will grow and develop into accomplished and successful adults. We hope this Newsletter will inspire you to increase your contribution in recognition of our shared dedication to building a bright future for the children at Neve Hanna.

Best wishes for a healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

L'Shana Tova Tikatavu

Janet and Irwin Tobin

AMERICAN FRIENDS VISIT ISRAEL

In June, American Friends staff and some board members visited Israel having the opportunity to attend the B'nai Mitzvah, at the egalitarian section at the Kotel and partake in the festive luncheon

celebration — much food and dancing with the children. Also included was our visit to Neve Hanna and Rosh Pina (NH northern retreat), all a very spiritual and enlightening experience.

MY WEEK AT NEVE HANNA

By Lisa Pollack

I had the extraordinary opportunity touring Israel with Janet and Irwin Tobin, Co-Presidents of American Friends of Neve Hanna. Our tour included a day at Neve Hanna, in Kiryat Gat, barbecue and sleep-over at our northern retreat in Rosh Pina and the wonderful B'nai Mitzvah of 6 boys and 6 girls at the egalitarian section of the Kotel; Robinson's Arch. The services were led by Rabba Liron Levy. I was deeply moved spiritually and emotionally throughout the ceremony. Watching each child being called up to the Torah was touching with a feeling of love, hope and pride. The celebration continued at the Leonardo Jerusalem Hotel with a gala luncheon and program.

I had the wonderful opportunity of spending a week volunteering at Neve Hanna. It was most fulfilling and rewarding. It was a heartfelt journey with a fully engaged and active week created by Antje Neujoks, the PR Director of Neve Hanna. The week included working at the Petting Zoo and Bakery, lunching every afternoon with the Tnizanim (Hebrew for flower) Family Group. It is a beautiful family of boys and girls, nurtured by an Israeli volunteer and big sister, Chen Perri, and House Father, Avi. Every evening I had dinner with a different family. There are six family units in total with 10 to 15 children in each group. Each has a House Mother, House Father and an Israeli and German volunteer.

Having lunch and conversation every afternoon with Tnizanim, I was given the chance to observe and learn firsthand how a family at Neve Hanna works and operates daily with routines and rituals. I interacted and engaged with each child through conversation, laughter and playing board games. Having spoken with Tnizanim's Israeli Vol-

unteer and Big Sister, Chen Perri, I learned much more about the uniqueness of Neve Hanna. Many of the young Israeli volunteers who work at Neve Hanna make it their mission and responsibility to create and build projects for the children with the purpose of teaching social awareness and giving back to the community. Our children are taught the importance and value of Tikkun Olam and Mitzvahs by giving to those less fortunate. One of the girls, working at the Bakery in the afternoons, contributes part of her earnings to a community service group that provides food to those in need. Sharing dinner and conversation every evening with a different family gave me the



opportunity to learn how all of the children are unique. Each family is run and operated differently with all of its children behaving as brothers and sisters. Every family is different, but they all have a common factor which is a strong bond of love among the children and their House Mother, House Father, Israeli Volunteers, Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The close friendships, relationships and bonds are powerful and evident throughout every family group.

Volunteering at the Petting Zoo, I gained knowledge and experience on the amount of work involved in one of the many important facilities within the Children's Home. There is tremendous responsibility involved in caring for each of the animals which play an important role in the lives of the children at Neve Hanna. The Petting Zoo is much more than a place where the children watch, feed and pet the animals. It is the special environment for animal-assisted therapy, where therapists watch children

interact with the animals interpreting their behavioral patterns. During the late afternoons and early evenings, I would explore the grounds, photograph and interact with many of the children and staff. Watching the children play basketball and soccer, sometimes with one of the volunteers overseeing their activity, I witnessed their sportsmanship, team work and friendship. Several of the children asked if they could use my camera. Naturally, I jumped at the opportunity to show them how to hold and operate the camera.

It was an extraordinary and exciting afternoon spent with each child as they all patiently waited their turn. I connected with



several of the children who knew how to capture the moment. Many of those same children are enrolled in the new Photo Workshop.

Working for the past two years at American Friends of Neve Hanna has been my passion and personal Tikkun Olam. Volunteering at Neve Hanna Children's Home has reshaped my life and mission on how truly remarkable, vitally important and beneficial Neve Hanna is to the well-being and future of our children. A piece of my soul has been left there with a part of the Children's Home remaining forever in my heart. Neve Hanna is truly "Changing Children's Lives."

JUDAIC STUDIES

Thanks to the support from the American Friends of Neve Hanna and our wonderful Rabbi Liron Levy, our Judaic Studies program has been extended. Some of the programs are familiar to the Jewish tradition and other programs Rabbi Levy has chosen to elaborate and celebrate in a unique and creative manner. According to the Hebrew calendar, all the Jewish-Israeli holidays and memorial days are celebrated by a ceremony and/or a fun activity, special meals and blessings. Shabbat is a very joyous and meaningful experience at Neve Hanna filled with song, games and traditional davening.



B'NAI MITZVAH By Erica Brodie

WOW! My heart is in my throat. We have just spent the day with twelve charming, responsive B'nai Mitzvah of Neve Hanna as they celebrated at the Western Wall, the Kotel -- so many wonderful, very special, and most personal moments. At times, I could not stop the tears (and I don't choke up easily).

Over the years, Joe (Rabbi Joe Brodie) and I have been very impressed with Neve Hanna and have visited the loving and nurturing home to 80 young people in Kiryat Gat. We were honored when you invited us to join the board.

Today's Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration at the Kotel moved us in ways we could never have imagined. Eager not to miss a minute, Joe and I arrived earlier than told. We watched at Robinson's Arch as five other groups of Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrants came and went. And then, accompanied by much singing, huppot, drumming and levity, came the twelve honorees, the girls had garlands in their hair that they had made. The boys wore new kippot with their names on them. Some B'nai Mitzvah had some members of their biological family present along with staff and volunteers at Neve Hanna.

And what a staff it is! Rabbi Liron Levy creates a loving, spiritual atmosphere with her humor, her caring and her attention to the most minute detail. Each "home" of about fifteen residents has an "ima" and "abba." In addition to them, there were the social workers, the music teacher (who happens to be married to a former Neve Hanna resident), and volunteers of different ages and professions. No child was alone or abandoned for a second. The interaction of the staff with the visiting family members was one of inclusion and respect. At times, some of the parents or family members were uncomfortable or perhaps unfamiliar with the proceedings. The staff immediately responded to their discomfort.

The Shacharit service was remarkable. At the outset, children were given their own tallitot, making the bracha together. During

the Torah reading, each child had an aliyah. Some read their particular aliyah. A large tallit was held over the head of each child, by family members – biological and/or Neve Hanna family members. Between each aliyah, Rabbi Liron made special brachot for a healthy, successful future for each one. And a different familiar song accompanied each child. It's unlike anything I have ever seen, and the moments of pulling at my heartstrings came fast and furious.

One of the staff members (I don't know if he was a driver, a counselor, a teacher or what) stood on the sidelines, without a kippah, without a tallit, without tefillin, and as he watched each child receive his/her aliyah, he suddenly turned around, leaned on his arm, against the ancient wall and prayed. He prayed quietly. I turned to Joe and said, "I see more kavannah (sincerity) in that one act than I've seen in a long time! Joining us were a group of people from the States who were part of a Neve Hanna tour. They were politely interested at first, and as the excitement and enthusiasm of the B'nai Mitzvah built, they became more and more involved – leaving their seats, trying to capture it all on film. I, too, took over 100 pictures and several videos. They do not do the occasion justice.

I thought Joe and I were aware of Neve Hanna and what it accomplishes. Seeing the joy, the pride, the sublime happiness on the faces of these precious young people who are "malei chen" full of charm, and realizing that with Neve Hanna's help that they will realize their potential, filled us with emotions that are truly indescribable.

The staff provides the frame, the structure, the love and guidance for these young people to succeed in life and contribute to Israeli and world society.



Just for the record, my money is on Shalev, a Bar Mitzvah, who knew how to work a crowd better than any entertainer, with his limited English, but limitless humor and

good nature! A thumbs up gesture from him brought a smile every time!

Thanks so much for sharing this wonderful day with us. We're so grateful to have been able to share this occasion with our heroes – the children and their many mentors, not to mention the two of you, Janet & Irwin Tobin, co-presidents of American Friends of Neve Hanna.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SUPPORT NEW PROGRAMS:

*Qualifying Teenagers for Adulthood

This is a project that was developed to help teens who are in need of an intensive communication on a frequent basis to facilitate a supportive framework for dealing with questions of growing up. Our program's goal is to provide the teens with necessary tools and skills to enable them to live a healthy adult life once they leave Neve Hanna. We deal with subjects such as self-image, friendships and partnerships, drugs and addictions, sexuality, social media and privacy.

Separate meetings are held for girls and boys dealing with different questions teenagers deal with during their journey to adulthood. The meetings explore and discuss personal matters in total confidence. Along with these meetings there are other sessions which include both genders. All sessions are accompanied by a therapist, a social worker and the help of a young Israeli volunteer. The meetings are held in a socially informal atmosphere.

Examples: The girls had a professional make-up artist showing them how make-up and dress can communicate different messages. The boys went on an overnight trip to learn about their environment, followed by a campfire discussion centered around their personal abilities and group responsibility.

*Gardening Therapy

This is the second year for Gardening Therapy. We have increased from 10 to 13 students. Gardening therapy as it relates to the world of plants and flowers is a perfect medium expressing love and hope.

The children participating in gardening therapy carry, without any exception, difficult memories and deal with emotional scars. For them, the greenhouse first and foremost is a place of quiet, tranquility and peace giving them the feeling of a non-threatening and secure environment. One of the boys who had to deal with multi-

ple mental and emotional injuries, caused by family members, asked to just sit quietly in the greenhouse. It was as if he absorbed, like a sponge, the tranquility and the peacefulness of the greenhouse. After some time he started to talk and to share some of his thoughts related to his difficult past.

One of the participating girls came from a



family with deep conflicts, constantly fighting. She came to the therapy session full of anger and aggression, but also with the self-image that she is not good at anything, an overall failure. She planted carrot seeds, convinced that nothing would grow, but to her surprise all of the seeds grew into delicious carrots. This girl discovered that she has a talent that she is capable of something positive and is learning to dismiss the negative, destructive atmosphere from her past.

*Path to Bread

Our project Path to Bread offers supervised baking sessions in our in-house bakery, Yeladudes, for our children together with a mother.

It was established with the intent of improving a shattered relationship of a child from a dysfunctional family with his/her mother. Neve Hanna believes that a close relationship between a child growing up in a children's home and the child's mother is vital for the healthy development of the minor, as they spend quality time baking bread together and cooperating with each other. It is a successful experience that



encourages them to continue the process of open communication and healing.

*Photography Workshop

All the children, ages 10-18, from the residents and daycare program, were given the opportunity to participate in a Photography Workshop, beginning this fall.

Equipped with professional cameras as well as smartphones, the children will learn to capture photos: still and moving pictures. They will learn all the technical skills around angles, frames, color, light, composition and enhancing pictures. Most important, they will learn how to tell an entire story with just one picture or by a short sequence of frames.

This project, aiming to involve the children in documenting their daily life at Neve Hanna, is part of Neve Hanna's leisure time enrichment programs, but also bears therapeutic aspects of working on personal challenges and individual stories, personal responsibilities as well as cooperation and team work.

HIDDUR MITZVAH MEZUZOT PROJECT

Neve Hanna Children's Home, has begun



the renovations and rededications at both our campuses, Rosh Pina in the north and our main campus, Kiryat Gat in the south.

American Friends would like to include **you** in our new **Hiddur Mitzvah Project** as we replace and rededicate the mezuzahs on all the door posts at Neve Hanna. The children will be learning about ceramics and will be making all the mezuzot, needed at both campuses, during the Art Therapy program. Rabbi Liron Levy will be enhancing this project by teaching the children about the SH'MA prayer and the significance of it in the mezuzah.

In appreciation for your participation in the **Hiddur Mitzvah Project**, you will receive a duplicate mezuzah as the one you donated. With your generous donation and support, our children will continue to grow and develop, and be accomplished, successful young adults.

PROGRAMS FUNDED BY AMERICAN FRIENDS

2017-2018 new and on-going projects:

Horseback Riding Therapy
Petting Zoo — Animal Therapy
Gardening Therapy/Sandy's Greenhouse
Music Therapy
Art Therapy
Teenager Empowerment Program
Path to Bread – Yeladudes in-house bakery
Photography Workshop
Mezuzot Hiddur Mitzvah Project

Steady/Regular Funding:

Rabbi Liron Levy
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program
Masorti Noam Youth Movement Activities
Holiday celebrations: Rosh Hashana, Sukkot, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach
Summer camp allocations

In addition:

Remedial teaching and tutoring teenagers for high school exams
Talis and Tefillin for B'nai Mitzvah children
Scholarships for former children of Neve Hanna pursuing academic studies
Emergency funding (times of war, recreational trips out of danger zone)
Refurbishment of buildings
Renovating housing in Rosh Pina

DO YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH A FOUNDATION?

We are looking for additional foundations to solicit for grants. If you have a personal contact at any foundation for us to send our information and request for funding please contact: Joan Kase or Heddy Belman at info@afnevehanna.org or 212-870-2980

SCHEDULE A PARLOR MEETING

Parlor meetings have been used successfully by thousands of non-profits as an intimate way to educate potential donors about the non-profit and to raise dollars. Many non-profits have held parlor meetings around the country with fewer than 25 people, raising thousands of dollars.

American Friends is asking for your help getting our story out about Neve Hanna Children's Home, by hosting a parlor meeting within your home or synagogue.

Please contact our office at 212-870-2980 and let us know when you would like to schedule a meeting. We will help with programming and material.

GREETING CARDS

Send special greetings to your family and friends and have American Friends of Neve Hanna be an additional beneficiary of your kindness and thoughtfulness. Just send a donation and request the cards you would like to receive.



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