



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Janet & Irwin Tobin

We just returned from five months in Israel. Due to the war, we did not get to Neve Hanna as often as we would have liked. In fact, we were not able to bring back our usual suitcase filled with cookies and crackers from Yeladudes Bakery.

We were fortunate to get to NH for the Purim Carnival and Lisa's visit. We enjoyed the unbelievable Yom Hashoah program that Maya Amir, Director of Education and Cultural Programs, the volunteers, and some of the teenagers researched, and put together. Luckily, we were also able to attend the B'nai Mitzvah Celebration on June 5, when 8 boys and 5 girls were called to the Torah. Rabba Rosenstaf Lev worked every day for several months, to prepare the children resulting in them doing very well.

Amidst all that was going on, our Director, Itzik Bohadana, Rabba Liron Rosensaft



Levy, and our entire staff and yes, our children are doing remarkably well. It was so nice to

see the children's enjoyment in the new playground, using the equipment and playing basketball and soccer. The library is very popular. Children love to take out new books when they return their finished books. Most important is that each child has their own special time with a social worker and a psychologist.

The Youth Council was busy meeting to discuss what activities they wanted to have in the fall. They voted to continue

the Hip-Hop program.

The Streetlight Chesed Group decided what Tikkun Olam projects they would do for the needy families in Kiryat Gat.

Some former Neve Hanna children who are soldiers in the IDF are spending R&R time at Neve Hanna. A special apartment has been set up for them and one of

the social workers is always available to help with their wartime concerns. It is common for former NH children to return for celebrations and holidays as well. NH is their family.

Thanks to our director, and our superb staff, and all of YOU, our board, friends, and dedicated donors, we have built a strong resilient community at Neve Hanna. The children are finding strength in unity, faith, and in our Jewish traditions. The AFNH leadership is once again saying, *thank you* for your generous support, and commitment to the future and well-being of NH children. The Neve Hanna family greatly appreciates the life changing donations we have been able to provide. At this time, let us pray for peace, and for the safe return of all our hostages.

May your families enjoy a safe, peaceful, healthy, and enjoyable New Year.

Shanah Tovah Tikateivu,

Janet and Irwin Tobin

With Gratitude and Blessings

Rabbi Liron Rosensaft Levy



As the rabbi of our children's home, I have the privilege of walking beside young souls who have faced challenges no child should endure. Our boys and girls, ages 6 to 18, come to us from homes broken by hardship. Here, they find not only shelter, but also family, meaning, and hope.



Looking ahead to the coming year, we are committed to weaving the threads of **Judaism, tradition, and Zionism** into the daily lives of our children in ways that are both accessible and inspiring.

Judaism as a Living Tradition

We will introduce our children to the beauty of Shabbat and the Jewish calendar—not as obligations, but as gifts. Every Friday evening, we will gather for joyful Kabbalat Shabbat, teaching songs, blessings, and stories that link them to generations past. Holidays will be celebrated with creativity and warmth, helping each child feel that Jewish life belongs to them.

Tradition with Openness

Our approach is both respectful of tradition and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of our children.

We honor the wisdom of our heritage while creating space for personal expression. Torah study will be interactive, rooted in values of justice, kindness, and responsibility—showing that Judaism is not only about ritual, but about building a moral life.

Zionism as a Source of Pride

Our children will deepen their connection to the Land and People of Israel. Trips to heritage sites, encounters with soldiers and community leaders, and projects about Israel's history and future will give them a sense of belonging and pride.

They will learn that Zionism is not only a political story but also a spiritual journey—about love for the land, the Hebrew language, and the shared destiny of our people.

This year, our guiding vision is simple: to give our children both **roots and wings**—roots in the richness of Jewish heritage, and wings to soar as proud, responsible young Jews in Israel. In this way, they will grow not only as individuals, but also as future leaders who carry forward the spirit of our people with strength and hope.



Looking back – Looking Forwards

Antje C. Naujoks

PR Director, Neve Hanna Children's Home



Neve Hanna, like the whole of Israel, continues to grapple with the consequences of October 7th. As we mark Rosh Hashana, and look back, it becomes evident that we have been living almost two years a

daily life embossed by the shadow of war even if circumstances have shifted here and there along the way.

Open Wounds – Children who were in Sderot, Netivot, and Ofakim are still struggling with the impact of what they witnessed there. Neve Hanna still mourns Shimi, who grew up in our home and was murdered at the age of 29 at the Nova Festival. All of our children bear the implementations of rocket attacks, war news, uncertainty, and an immense range of both personal and collective concerns as our dedicated staff continue to mobilize every resource to be fully present for our children.

Beyond Band-Aid Measures – NH has placed even greater emphasis on comprehensive therapeutic support, on learning assistance, and on a wide variety of leisure activities. These activities are designed to challenge the individual,



strengthen group dynamics and the sense of belonging, bring joy, provide stimulation or relaxation, but above all enriching our children both physically and emotionally. Our youth club Streetlight, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah project, and the bakery school of Yeladudes play vital roles. Our library's collection of books we owe to you, our American friends, has become an indispensable part of our daily life.

Static Yet in Motion – Looking back to last Rosh Hashana, we remember a year of incredible challenges. We knew it was far from over, yet never in our wildest

dreams did we imagine that we would face another holiday season in such a difficult reality.

The school year brought many changes. Some children graduated and moved on, and new children had to find their place in Neve Hanna. Staff members left, and new ones joined.

In 2023, the German state-funded volunteer program came to a standstill and yet some German volunteers continued to come for weeks and even months. An additional 17 Israeli volunteers, doing a year of service before the army filled in the absence of foreign volunteers. Our Jewish-Bedouin daycare center was forced to close. In its place, we added another Jewish-Arab group to our already existing joint Jewish-Muslim youth meetings. All other activities and projects continued: Therapy, educational support, and activities for both younger children and teenagers – including a new group called Keren Or, preparing children to join the Streetlight youth club. Democratic elections expanded the Children's Council to 12 members. One of its first heartfelt requests for the new school year was that the children wished to receive professional



instruction in Hip Hop. Thanks to the generosity of our American friends, especially the descendants of Neve Hanna's visionary founder, Hanni Ullmann,

this dream became reality. The weekly classes, organized by age groups, gave our children and youth great joy.

Rosh Hashana 2025 – A New Beginning with Renewed Energy

– Since the national after-school program underwent changes and one daycare group in Neve Hanna was closed, we applied and received government approval to open a seventh residential group. This requires renovation of the attic floor in our main building, mainly offices. This new flat will become home to a group of children aged three to six. This younger aged group will alter the demographic



balance of our children's community, and will require adjustments in care and education. Yet Neve Hanna would not be Neve Hanna if it did not face such challenges with foresight, confidence, experience, and an abundance of optimism. That we can withstand hardships and overcome even the very challenging days such as during the *Operation Rising Lion*, the Twelve-Day-War which Israel faced with Iran, this is evidenced by the seven children who graduated this summer. At their farewell celebration, we witnessed remarkable young people who underwent an extraordinary personal journey during their years residing at Neve Hanna. They now carry into the world the values and principles they absorbed in Neve Hanna – values that will serve decisions in the army, in national service, or during a pre-army volunteer year and help them later on making major life decisions. These graduates of Neve Hanna are a shining example, encouraging us all to look toward the future with confidence.

My Visit at Neve Hanna

Lisa Pollack



Last March, I visited Neve Hanna just in time to attend the Purim Carnival and witness the behind-the-scenes hard work making the Purim Carnival a success. I toured the campus admiring all the beautiful updates including the new playground, the library, the colorful murals, whimsical sculptures and the Yeladudes Bakery store.

I met with the leadership, and learned about their work, and goals for the children. Neve Hanna is not a job; it is their daily life, a mission and vision. The staff consists of trained educators, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, as well as experts in different therapeutic fields. They understand every aspect of Neve Hanna, and set the tone for the children to follow.

Introduction to leadership and staff:

Rabba Liron invited me to sit in a circle with this year's B'nai Mitzvah class as they discussed being Israeli, their Jewish pride, their way of life, studying the Torah, the holidays and the values of Tikkun Olam, and Tzedakah. Her warm caring qualities working with children are extraordinary and special. It meant a lot to me that I was able to watch firsthand.

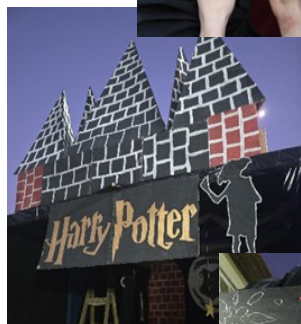
Antje, PR and Resource Development, took me on a tour of the Negev Bedouin community, who are traditionally nomadic Arab tribes, living in the desert region in southern Israel. On the way back to NH we drove through impoverished Kiryat Gat, which gave me a better understanding of the at-risk youth who come to Neve Hanna.

Maya, Director of Cultural Affairs and Education, understands the children, drawing them out by inspiring education and creative ideas. Her enthusiasm is passed onto them. She is the creative force, undertaking responsibility guiding the children as can be witnessed at the Purim Carnival.

This year's Purim theme was Blockbuster Movies. Maya, led the incredible school-wide event with beautiful costumes, creative kid's interactive booths, remarkable decorations, and fantastic festivities. The children, staff, and volunteers



were involved in every aspect. Their creativity and hard work were evident



throughout every detail. It was a special treat to witness it all, and watch the kids rehearse their dance numbers. Attending the carnival and witnessing the children's enjoyment was pure pleasure. The Purim Carnival is open to the parents, families and community at large.



Judith, NH Librarian, discussed daily work at the library where she organizes and catalogues the books, and works with the children, who come in at least once a week, to get new books. Their reading comprehension scores have



vastly improved. The library fosters a love of reading, improving their study habits, introduces vocational ideas, and inspires the pursuit of higher education. Watching the children interact with Judith was inspiring.

Ishay, Director of the Petting Zoo, understands the importance of how each child relates to the animals through Animal-Assisted Therapy. Many therapy programs take place in the Petting Zoo. The children referred to this program are between 6 and 15 years old. They have weekly individual sessions with their therapists as well as group activities.



Michal, NH Social Worker discussed a day at Ziv Neurim. The approach to the *Path of the Sea* program is based on strengthening teen self-image, building up their ability to cope and deal with their fears, stressful situations, thus creating positive experiences encouraging perseverance to cope with overcoming obstacles. They develop expertise swimming and handling small sea-craft enhancing their skills. This experience transfers over to a positive effect on their studies, their national service and their future working careers.

Dudi, Director of the Yeladudes Bakery, a former child and a success story of NH discussed the bakery's integral part of daily life. The children explore their talents and experience success working at the bakery.

Zohar, baker at Yeladudes, is a success story. Zohar is a former child who lived at Neve Hanna since the age of six. Following his graduation from NH, Zohar served in the IDF, where he appreciated the art of baking. Subsequently because of his love of baking he returned to NH entering the bakery apprenticeship program. I was able to observe how well he relates to the children working at the bakery and how his success is an example to them. Throughout the years, there have been many successful alumni from NH. These young people were given the chance to grow beyond the circumstances from which they emerged. Neve Hanna is truly "*Changing Children's Lives.*"

I thank Janet and Irwin for allowing me to experience Neve Hanna. I thank Antje for arranging the itinerary and interviews with Neve Hanna leadership. Thank you all for making me feel at home.

Now More Than Ever!

Antje C. Naujoks

PR Director, Neve Hanna Children's Home

In my last article for the American Friends, I wrote about "Neve Hanna in Turbulent Times." Reflecting on developments since October 2023, I emphasized the vital importance of Neve Hanna's coexistence projects, which have been central to our mission for decades: the Path to Peace—Israel's only joint Jewish-Bedouin daycare program for children from disadvantaged backgrounds—and our revived Jewish-Muslim youth meetings.

Shortly after publication, times truly became turbulent. The Ministry of Social Affairs transferred administration of Israel's daycare programs to local municipalities. As a result, our cross-municipal project—the Path to Peace—was left unaccounted for, forcing us to close this daycare center established in 2004 in honor of Neve Hanna's late founder, Hanni Ullmann.

Fortunately, our Jewish-Bedouin youth meetings were not affected. Unlike the cost-intensive daycare program, they are sustained through donations. These meetings—revived in 2021—bring together 16 teenagers every two weeks. About these activities, I wrote a year ago: "*Neve Hanna feels it is a privilege to touch lives, to actively live the values of pluralism, which are a lighthouse to the Masorti Movement and at the same time a shining*

Now More Than Ever!

Continued from page 3

example that renders claims that the State of Israel is an apartheid state absurd."

That is why, at the beginning of 2025, Neve Hanna founded the "Path to Peace Coexistence Center," supervising not only our youth meetings but also a new "Jewish-Bedouin Young Leadership" group. Nine Muslim Bedouin and six Jewish teenagers are mentored weekly by one Jewish and one Bedouin educator. During the initial phase dedicated to relationship-building, they baked pretzels, Shabbat challah, and traditional Middle Eastern flatbread. These shared tasks required communication, cooperation, and decision-making as a team — important first steps toward mutual understanding. The group also explored themes such as majority-minority relations and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. A highlight was when the Muslim youth joined the Purim celebration at the children's home. Since the Jewish festival coincided with Ramadan, they held Iftar, the traditional meal that breaks the daily fast, in Neve Hanna together with our Jewish teens.

In the coming school year, the group will participate in intensive English lessons and a photography and video course. Our aim is to empower these young individuals while broadening their collective perspective. Inspired by David Ben-Gurion's words, "Anyone who doesn't dream is not a realist," we hope that the "Path to Peace Coexistence Center" will become a vibrant hub of shared community life and in addition lay the foundation for a grassroots Jewish-Muslim youth movement.



PROGRAMS FUNDED BY AMERICAN FRIENDS

Health and Physical Fitness
Hip Hop
Teenager Empowerment Program
STREETLIGHT
Ziv Neurim
Rabba Liron Levy Rosensaft

Library
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program
Masorti Noam Youth Movement Activities
Holiday celebrations
Gardening Therapy/Sandy's Greenhouse

In addition: Horseback Riding Therapy, Petting Zoo (Animal Therapy), Summer Camp allocations, Remedial teaching and tutoring teenagers for high school exams, Tallis and Tefillin for B'nai Mitzvah children and Scholarships for former children of Neve Hanna pursuing academic studies.

Follow us on:      

AFNH Young Leadership

Samantha Tobin Hess



Our Young Leadership Chair, Samantha Tobin Hess, LMSW, a Trauma Therapist, has written a beautiful book **Leo and The Storm Inside: A Kids Book about Managing Big**

Feelings, a story about a young boy who feels like a storm is raging inside him whenever big emotions take over. He has a hard time calming the storm until he learns simple ways to listen to his body, breathe through his feelings, and find inner strength. With gentle guidance, Leo discovers that just like real storms, feelings don't last forever, and he has the power to weather them.

This book uses somatic therapy techniques helping children recognize emotions and develop tools to feel safe, strong and in control. Copies of the book will be donated to the NH library. In the spring, Samantha will be going to NH to read and work with the children.

LEGACY and ESTATE PLANNING

Neve Hanna legacy is built every day by caring for our young people. Your legacy is easier to create than you may think. You can have a lasting impact on the lives of these youngsters through long range financial planning. In one of these ways:

- **Through Your Will**
- **Through Your Retirement Plan**
- **Through Your Life Insurance**

To discuss any of these options and to learn how to join, please contact our office.

Neve Hanna presented at the FJMC International Convention

Lisa Pollack

"No matter what our particular job, especially in our world today, we all are called to be Tikkun Olam—repairers of creation." — Fred Rogers

This summer, I was invited to present American Friends of Neve Hanna to the Geffen Institute workshops at the FJMC International Convention in Chicago.

AFNH also had a table at the Program Fair, which offered the opportunity for convention delegates to engage in individual conversation with me and pick up literature.

AFNH and FJMC are both affiliated with the Conservative Movement and understand the value of Tikkun Olam. It is central to who we are as Jews. Many of our AFNH board, friends, and donors are part of the FJMC community. We are one family — *Mishpacha*.

FJMC already supports Neve Hanna through the International Kiddush Club (IKC) Tefillin Program that gifts tefillin to the Bar Mitzvah boys every year. They also have had fundraisers benefiting Neve Hanna: the KIO Region Men's Clubs Dinner Dance Fundraiser with B'nai Jeshurun Congregation, Park Synagogue-Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregation, and Congregation Shaarey Tikvah; and the FJMC King of the Hill Walking Challenge.

Thank you, FJMC, for inviting AFNH to be part of your Convention and helping us to inspire the Regions and Men's Clubs to promote mitzvah programs that will benefit the children at Neve Hanna.

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