



Report – August 2017

Danish Jewish Friendship

Thank You!

Thank you for your continued support of Orr Shalom and for our programs that enrich and enhance the lives of Israel's most at-risk youth. Your funds ensure that each child that you support receives the highest level of care and therapy to give them the future they so deserve. Please find below an update on one of our Family Group Homes in Ramot, and on a joint Bat Mitzvah celebration that was recently held for some of the girls from Beit Goldschmidt, our closed residential facility for girls who are unable to integrate into any of our other frameworks.

Beit Korman

Located on a quiet street in the Ramot neighborhood of Jerusalem, the Family Group Home Beit Korman cares for 11 children - 7 boys and 4 girls - between 14 and 18 years of age. New house parents recently joined the home after 5 years working in our emergency kelet for babies in Modiin. Michal and Naftali, an older couple with grown children of their own, are very experienced with children and have developed warm connections with the children in the home.

Michal and Naftali are supported by social workers and psychologists as well as two National Service volunteers, Adi and Lior. Adi and Lior are invaluable in helping to maintain the home's daily functioning. They help the children with their homework and study for tests; prepare dinner; take the children to the doctor/dentist and on other errands; and help them fall sleep at night, an hour when many of the children's fears and traumas come out. They plan birthdays for the children, decorate the homes for holidays, and keep a warm, positive atmosphere in the home, serving as 'big sisters' and confidantes.

Biological parents who are capable of maintaining contact are invited to visit the home once a week during which they see their children and also have sessions with the social workers. This is a complicated issue with many sensitivities. Some children are orphans, and some parents choose not to, or physically cannot, come out or maintain contact with their children. Some biological parents who do not come during visiting hours speak with the social workers by phone. A student social worker is currently training in the home, and providing extra support and counseling to interested biological parents.

Ezra's Story: Ezra, 16 years old, tragically lost both of his parents two years ago. He is still processing and dealing with the fact that he is an orphan, and that aside from his Beit Korman family, he has no one.



Visiting hours for biological parents are especially difficult for him. School is also a big challenge for him, as he has lost concentration and motivation since losing his parents. The staff is helping him close gaps in his learning, including weekly tutoring, nightly study sessions with Adi and Lior, and communication with his school. He also works part-time after school as a waiter at a nearby restaurant.

Yasmin's Story: Yasmin, 18 years old, is approaching the end of her last year in Beit Korman, and is feeling anxious about her next step when she leaves the home. She is working very hard in school, going to tutoring every week and taking extra study sessions with Adi and Lior. She is most likely going to go into National Service, the alternative to army service for religious girls. She is in Orr Shalom's new graduates program and is receiving guidance to help her take the first steps to independence.

Beit Goldschmidt Bat Mitzvah

This May, we celebrated the Bat Mitzvah of three girls from Beit Goldschmidt. The three girls, Eliana, Amanda, and Samara (names changed to protect their privacy) are all new to the home this past year. Everything from the beautiful venue to the amazing food and décor, from the girls' dresses to their hairstyles to their gifts, from the photographers to the D.J. – was generously donated by various vendors who have successfully worked with us on Beit Goldschmidt Bat Mitzvahs in the past.

On the surface, a Bat Mitzvah party for a Beit Goldschmidt girl may seem like any other Bat Mitzvah party anywhere in Israel. In reality, months of careful planning and intensive one-on-one holding are required in order to make the party a success. Likewise, the success metrics of a Beit Goldschmidt party are different than those of a "normal" party. While the goal is, of course, to make the girls feel special and like a princess for their special day, the overall goal is to keep a tight eye on the girls throughout the day and ensure that they don't break down.

All the girls in Beit Goldschmidt have very deep traumas from years of extreme physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse.



Amanda showing off her Bat Mitzvah dress



Nearly all the girls have been hospitalized in a psychiatric ward at one time in their lives. They live in Beit Goldschmidt because their behavioral and psychological problems are so severe that they cannot be integrated into other programs in Israel.

One of the main coping and healing mechanisms used by our staff is setting clear boundaries, establishing order, and ensuring routine. Routine and the expected enable the girls to cope with their inner turmoil. The girls do not need or want surprises; they want to know exactly what to expect, from whom, and when.

A party off the Beit Goldschmidt campus thus presents an enormous challenge, as it is a huge break in routine. Our one-on-one staff ratio during the party ensured that all the girls were able to be there and managed to get through – and even enjoy – the party.

Each girl was allowed to invite 10 guests to fill “her” table at the party. This is no small task for the girls, given their complicated backgrounds. After careful sessions with their therapists they were able to send their invitations. Eliana has no biological family; Amanda chose to ignore most of her biological family, choosing instead to invite her foster family and distant relatives; and Samara was able to invite her biological family. The week before the party, the girls went shopping for shoes and dresses, accompanied by a biological or foster family member, a National Service volunteer, and their house mother. After the shopping trip, the group went out for lunch in order to make the girls feel pampered.



Poolside tables

The venue for the Bat Mitzvah was a private home donated for the event, and was decorated stunningly, with chairs set up by the glittering in-ground pool. After the girls arrived, they got their hair, nails, and makeup done by professionals, and were then professionally photographed. At 4pm when the guests arrived, the girls were in varying states of excitement. Eliana was extremely exuberant, and acting out excitedly. Amanda was very happy to see her foster siblings, but was detached from the event itself. Samara, meanwhile, turned inwards and became increasingly shy and withdrawn, though by the end of the party she was able to enjoy herself. The girls were treated like princesses for the day, and enjoyed catered food by El-Al and their own personalized Bat Mitzvah cakes. Especially moving was when Amanda invited her foster siblings to give her a public blessing. They stood in front of everyone while her foster brother and sister declared that she was their sister forever, regardless of where she lives or where she may



find herself emotionally. All the girls will be receiving a photo book to commemorate the day.

Everything outside of their routine can be a trigger for these girls, and so as much as it was a joyous celebration, the girls were watched incredibly closely to deal with any emotional problems that arose. The days after the celebration are likewise very delicate, as the girls re-adjust to their routine in Beit Goldschmidt. Eliana, Amanda, and Samara – and their families - are sure to remember their Bat Mitzvah for years to come, thanks to the tireless work of Beit Goldschmidt's staff and the generous donation of time and services from our various vendors.

Thank you for your generous support.

Your support of our work is heartwarming and together we are helping to save some of the most at risk children in Israel.