



## Report – February 2018

### Danish Jewish Friendship

#### **Thank You!**

Thank you for your continued support of Orr Shalom and for our programs that save and enrich the lives of Israel's most at-risk youth. Your funds ensure that each child that you support receives the individualized level of care and therapy to give them the future they so deserve.

#### **Graduate's Program**

Thank you to the Danish Jewish Friendship Association for donating the full startup cost of one of our 10 new graduates apartments! Thanks to this generous, one-time, donation we will be able to open one apartment for 6 graduates. Orr Shalom's graduates are left alone at the age of 18. This is alarmingly terrifying for many of our graduates with no one to rely on at one of the most crucial junctures in life. Our Graduate's Program, which opened in 2013, was designed to offer a holistic emotional and practical response to these young adults, alone in the world. Thanks to your help, six new graduates will have a safe space to live, free from homelessness and the accompanying risks that lie within. Starting their new lives on the right foot will enable them to devote the proper time and mindset to their studies and to retaining employment, thus helping break the cycle of poverty, abuse, and neglect for the next generation of Israeli youth.

#### **Your Support in 2018 will help:**

The generous support of the Danish Jewish Friendship Association, will go towards the Beit Goldschmidt Home for Adolescent Girls; our three Therapeutic Family Group Homes in Beersheva; our National Service girls Pri Megadim, Eshkolei Paz, Vollach, and Rishonim Homes; and our Safe Haven Overnight Camp for orphans with nowhere to go during the school holidays.

#### **Beit Goldschmidt Home for Adolescent Girls:**

There are currently 11 girls living in Beit Goldschmidt. These girls are some of Israel's most in-distress and at-risk adolescent girls; disturbed souls coming from unimaginable backgrounds of abuse and neglect. They have very poor impulse control and often display a high level of violence, against themselves and others. The only program of its kind in Israel, together we are literally saving lives. Two new girls have joined Beit Goldschmidt since October 2017:

- Z\*, 10, joined Beit Goldschmidt after emergency hospitalization in a psychiatric ward due to a very complicated and violent history with her biological family. The psychiatrist in Beit Goldschmidt is working intensely with her to try to stabilize her, as she shows signs of inherited mental disorders.



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**External Affairs**

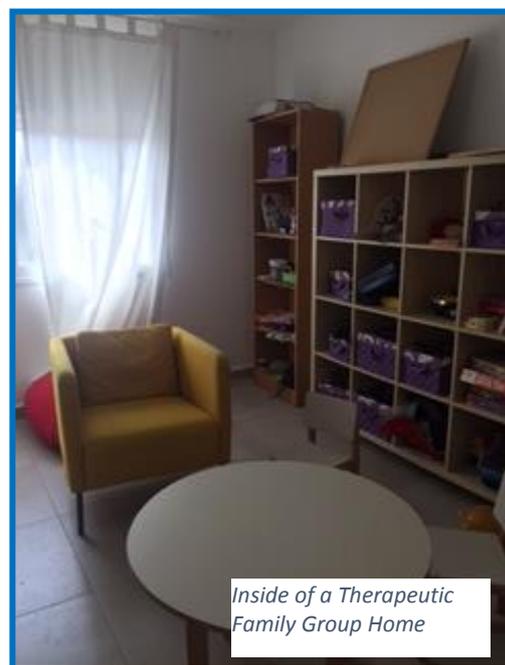
- **D\*** just turned 12, and will be celebrating her Bat Mitzvah later in the year. She too has a difficult background with her biological mother, and was removed due to the daily violence and abuse she had to contend with there. Following a short hospitalization, she was placed with a foster family, but they were unable to cope due to the violent behavior she herself was displaying. We are working with her intensively on her anger issues.

**Spotlight on H\*:** H is entering her third year with us. When she first arrived, she was relatively quiet, listening to her counsellors and the house mother, doing her homework. In her second year – because she felt comfortable letting go and being herself without any barriers – she began to act out. It was a very hard year, and a lot of her anger and violence were directed against her own body. Our staff was totally committed to holding her through special training sessions and extra support, and they managed to continue to hold her through this very difficult time. Slowly, this fact – that we refused to give up on her – sank in and she has started this school year on a much better note. She visibly displays relief that we did not reject her. She has even begun studying of her own volition.

### *Orr Shalom's Therapeutic Family Group Homes:*

We are excited to relay that we are in the process of conducting a cross-organizational Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) staff training program this year! **This program will begin at Orr Shalom and will continue towards a larger outreach with the ultimate aim to change the landscape of therapy solutions for youth at risk throughout Israel.**

The reality is that Orr Shalom's children, having faced unimaginable nightmares, have been disrupted in their social and emotional development, which can lead to a higher chance of developing mental health problems often linked to deficits in the self-regulatory processes. Self-regulation is defined as a child's ability to monitor and modulate systems of emotion, attention and behavior according to the demands of a situation. DBT is a compassionate type of behavioral therapy that is intended to help people move toward having a life that feels even more meaningful and worth living. DBT targets the issues that cause distress and teaches coping skills which negate the need to resort to self-defeating behaviors. Our staff is in the process of being trained in this, and will begin implementing this in our Family Group Homes this year, in a much more concentrated manner.



*Inside of a Therapeutic Family Group Home*





## ***National Service Girls in Orr Shalom's Therapeutic Family Group Homes: Extra Hands, Extra Hearts***

Our National Service girl work in Orr Shalom's Therapeutic Family Group Homes 40 hours a week. They are an indispensable extra pair of hands and hearts for both our house parents as well as our children, providing practical assistance, as well as emotional and educational support for the children.

As one house mother in Beersheva recently said, *"I would be lost without my National Service girls – they play off of each other perfectly! One is funny and loves to horse around with the kids, and the other girl is the perfect complement, so gentle and calm. I don't know how I would manage without them."*

**Educational Support:** Most of their time is spent assisting the children with their studies. After the children return from school, everyone gathers in a communal space to do their homework; those without homework will use the time to review what they learned that day or practice a certain skill such as reading or arithmetic. The National Service girls will then spend the remainder of the afternoon and evening helping the teenagers with their studies, specifically preparing for their matriculation exams. The individual attention the National Service girls provide serve to empower the children to focus on their studies and improve their marks.



**Emotional Support** Our National Service girls are critical in providing much needed emotional support to our children, who have undergone tremendous traumas in their young lives. This plays out in many ways and includes playing games with the children; taking them to activities outside the home, including community activities, sports activities, trips to the movies, the shopping mall, etc.; teaching the children basic hygiene skills, helping the children tidy their rooms and showing them how to respect their environment by keeping it clean and organized; helping to prepare their bags for school; making meals with them and teaching the older children how to prepare their own meals; and taking them to doctor's appointments. Their daily interaction with the children is a central factor in the reduction of symptoms that have resulted from their traumas, such as bed wetting, extreme introversion, and acting out, among many others. They are close enough in age to the children that they fill the role of Big Sister perfectly. The children look up to them as adults, but also confide in them as fellow children. The teenagers in the home especially look up to the National Service girls as a positive example of what their own lives could look like once they graduate from Orr Shalom. Their contribution simple cannot be emphasized enough.



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One of our house mothers in Beersheva told us that one of the children in her home was having difficulty falling asleep at night – this was an ongoing issue, and he was beginning to disrupt the other children in the home. Tali (name changed) her National Service girl, stepped in, and sat with him every night for the course of a few weeks, reassuring him that she was still there, and that there was nothing to be afraid of. Eventually he learned to fall asleep on his own, knowing that Tali would check in with him the next day to see how his night went. Having a stable older sister figure in his life has made an enormous difference in his daily life.

### **Safe Haven STARS!**

As you know, our homes close 1 week each over Sukkot, Chanukah, and Pesach, as well as for 24 days in August. Sixty of our children, however, cannot return to their biological homes either because they are orphans, or due to particularly dysfunctional and abusive situations. To continue caring for these most vulnerable children, we operate our Safe Haven Overnight Camp, providing a fun camp experience within a tightly held therapeutic environment.

We are extremely excited to announce that we will be upgrading Safe Haven this year, by transforming 4 weeks of Camp into Safe Haven STARS: Science, Technology and Academic Readiness, an English, Arts, and Science focused camp. Tightly focusing Safe Haven as an educational overnight camp experience will allow us to offer our children exciting and innovative ways to get hands-on familiarity with important language, science, technology, and engineering concepts in an informal, fun, setting; thereby narrowing the educational gaps they face in the traditional classroom setting!

It has been tested and proven that children and youth who are able to pursue science education in an informal setting, who are able to ignite the spark of curiosity, are more motivated and able to improve their performance in the traditional classroom setting. This is extremely important as the children at Safe Haven represent Orr Shalom's "weakest links": These 60 children have no biological family support, have extremely traumatic histories, the majority come from a low socio-economic background, and many have some form of learning disorder only diagnosed once they have come to Orr Shalom. The overwhelming majority of the children attending Safe Haven face a gaping educational gap between themselves and their "normative" peers. A good grasp of English is of paramount importance, while developing their relationship to science will have enormous long-term potential to reduce socio-economic gaps for which they are already at-risk. Increasing the sense of curiosity and wonder, latent in all children, will *only* help them along their path in life to a brighter future.

We look forward to updating you on our first pilot session of Safe Haven STARS!

**Thank** you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your support of Orr Shalom's Children.  
**Your support means the world to us.**

