



NEWSLETTER

Fall-Winter 2010



ISRAEL LITERACY INITIATIVE HOLDS KICK-OFF EVENT

The Israel Literacy Initiative took its first tentative steps with a cocktail event at Zanzibar this summer. JOI executive director Stephen Bisk discussed the staggering erosion of scholastic achievement in Israel and JOI's response to develop school libraries, library resources and literacy learning projects. The event raised money to purchase 350 books for two tiny school libraries in Holon and Petach Tikva.

Special thanks to chairs **Ben Axler, Jonathan Ross, Matthew Speiser** and **Scott Zerner**, and to volunteers **Brittany Bell** and **Naomi Kaplan**.

JOI is looking to create a board to drive this vital project. We're also working with Naomi (student president of Hillel at University of Pennsylvania), Brittany, and Josh Belfer (head of Israel programming for the Hillel) to create a student support group for the initiative.



Left to right:
Ethan Keswin,
Kevin Fisher,
Ben Axler



Left to right:
Evan Golub,
Matt Speiser,
David Heath

HOW JOI GUARANTEES COMPUTER AND SCIENCE EDUCATION FOR THOUSANDS

We claim to take your dollar further. How? We hone in on programs that meet our rigorous criteria:

- Acute need
- No one else involved
- High-impact solution
- Cost-effectiveness
- Leveraging

In our spring newsletter we showed how we turned a regular soup kitchen into a highly-leveraged, low-cost, independently-run food haven, where JOI's few cents create a meal and JOI's dollar is multiplied by 100! Now take a look at this:



Case Study #2: STEP (School-Teacher Enhancement Project)

JOI's foray into computer education began in 1994. "If I learned computers in the Scarsdale school system in the '70s, then Israel's immigrant children should be learning computers in the '90s," claimed JOI executive director Stephen Bisk. But Stephen wasn't satisfied with a nice, successful after-school program. "We were carrying facility rental, overhead, enrollment costs and teacher salary, all to operate in the two- or three-hour window that we had after school."

By 1995, JOI's after-school computer program became an in-school computer program. We approached a young, under-funded school that did not offer computer education and offered to help. JOI would put in 75% of the cost of computers and co-run teacher training, oversee curriculum, and perform student testing, while the school would carry the infrastructure, educational staff, computer insurance, maintenance and 25% of capital. It was a win-win proposal, and we gradually extended the program to more under-funded schools primarily serving immigrant populations.

Today JOI ensures computer education for upwards of 3500 immigrant children by piggybacking on existing infrastructures in 24 schools and supplementing what's missing. The STEP network of computer centers has produced computer literacy, computer professionals, and even a first-place winner and several finalists in the national science competition – all at a cost of pennies per student!

NOAH'S ARK FOR TEENS

JOI has joined forces with a few caring and entrepreneurial youth workers to create a new work-study framework for disenfranchised high school dropouts from the American-immigrant community.

The program, situated in a Jerusalem suburb, offers a warm, relaxed, accepting environment for teens who have not been able to connect well with normal programs. Classes are engaging, informal and flexible. Work is arranged for evening hours, providing a structure and a sense of accomplishment. Formal and informal counseling is coupled with music jamming and a

congenial place to hang out. JOI plans and expects that our partners will eventually establish themselves to carry the program independently.

JOI'S ONCOLOGY SOCIAL WORKER HELPS IMMIGRANTS AT THE CRISIS POINT

No one should ever have to know what it's like to deal with cancer. The physical and emotional toll is indescribable. A patient who speaks Hebrew or English is able to access many doctors and health-care professionals for information and assistance. But if the patient is a Russian-speaking immigrant with little access and minimal family support, the anguish and distress are off the charts.

Since 1996, JOI has hired a Russian-speaking social worker to work within the oncology unit at Shaare Zedek Hospital of Jerusalem. Meeting patients at the "point of crisis," right after they receive their diagnosis, calls for tremendous reserves of empathy, emotional understanding and expertise – all of which **Ludmilla Perchikov**, a 6-year veteran of the post, has in abundance.

"I provide support before various treatments, give feedback to the medical staff on the patient's emotional state and capabilities, arrange appointments and tests, and translate meetings, documents and reports," Ludmilla describes. "The role of translating goes way beyond words on paper – it means understanding the patient's emotions and building trust.

"For example, a 33-year-old woman who had been in treatment for a year adamantly refused the breast removal that the medical staff felt was necessary to offset her rapidly-declining situation. I was able to tap into her deep depression and provide intensive counseling, giving her renewed resolve to battle the cancer. Her operation

was deemed successful, and beyond that, she met someone at the hospital, married and – despite ongoing treatments – gave birth to a healthy son.

"I wish I had extra hours to do more," says JOI's angel of mercy. "But I do feel deep satisfaction in knowing I am providing important assistance to patients dealing with the worst kind of illness and at the most difficult moments of crisis."



CONDOLENCES to Jeffrey Goldberg

on the passing of his father and mother Jack Goldberg and Beverlee Kane

CONGRATULATIONS to Board and Staff Members

To **Aryeh and Elana Bourkoff**
on the birth of their son
Asher

To **Baruch and Ariel Glaubach**
on the bar mitzva of their son
Alexander

To **Stephen and Yitti Bisk**
on the birth of their granddaughter
Saira

Special Thank You

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To **Jeffrey and Erica Keswin**
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literacy event

To **Yeshiva Mercaz
HaTorah**
for annually hosting
our 3-day Mothers
Retreat



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Mothers Retreat, Summer Camps Take The Stress Off Distressed Families

"A lifesaver!" agreed participants at our 4th annual, 3-day retreat for impoverished, hyper-stressed mothers who can't afford vacations. Serving up a full platter of social, recreational and learning experiences – with an infant-only policy – this retreat gives mothers a well-deserved break and sends them home with a feeling of renewal and optimism.

JOI also works to ease the tension in low-income homes during vacation periods, when unstructured days and no money for entertainment produces bored, bullied and delinquent kids. Fully 40 percent of the bunks at JOI summer camps are filled by kids from distressed families, who get a chance to shine and make new friends in a fun and positive environment.

Bat Mitzvah Girl Rallies for JOI

All it takes is one person with a good idea and the energy to see it through to make a difference in other people's lives. In this case, dozens of impoverished immigrant youth in Israel are going to be even happier next summer when they put on their new camp jerseys donated by 13-year-old Sheli Leshem of Ryebrook, NY.

Sheli wanted to do something meaningful for her Bat Mitzvah that would impact less-fortunate youth, in a long-term way, in Israel. She came up with the idea of a jersey collection, and got a lot of other people interested and excited in the idea. She collected dozens of new and gently-used jerseys and shipped them to Israel to be distributed at JOI's Camp 2011. Great team-work, Sheli!

JOI Now Offers Life Coaching

JOI offers a host of mediums to assist and empower individuals, couples and families. Our arsenal of education, mentoring, workshops, counseling, and therapy forums is now expanding to include life coaching. Dina Elman, one of our trained family therapists, and Yitzchok Pintosevich, senior workshop leader for JOI's Institute for Personal Development, have received in-depth training in facilitation and coaching to unleash each individual's ability to attain success.

PRE-MARITAL WORKSHOPS

"If I had attended this workshop before my marriage, I would still be married today."

That's just one of the many votes of approval received for JOI's new Pre-Marital Workshop for men and women. The full-day seminar explores issues of dating, responsibility, needs, wants and goals, communication and resolution of differences. To produce the seminar, JOI is partnering with a Russian organization whose extensive connections guarantee steady enrollment.



"Marriage is so important and central to life, but it's not something people think about or are prepared for," notes Yocheved, one of the organizers who follows up with participants after the

course. "When people don't understand each other's wants and needs well, and how to relate to them, it generally leads to painful and costly mistakes with far-reaching repercussions."

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION DAY

For all of the life-sustaining assistance that our volunteers give, year after year, to lonely Russian-speaking residents of old-age homes, it's nice to give them a token treat in return. JOI sponsored a trip to the Diaspora Museum, the Mediterranean Sea and lunch for our annual volunteer recognition day. A dozen volunteers participated in the fun and stimulating outing.



PENN INTERN MAKES A SPLASH

For the second straight summer, JOI benefited from the support of a Penn intern. **Alexandra Heller** (C'12) has begun to share stories of her experiences through a periodic, short email newsletter called Splash. Look for more of Alexandra's reports this winter!



A PAINFUL LOSS

JOI is saddened by the loss of one of our key staff members, Yehudis Kaplan, who succumbed to cancer this September. Yehudis and her husband, Tzvi, were trained and accredited in JOI's 7-year marriage and family therapist program as well as our relationship workshop course. Yehudis was considered the best of our therapists and workshop leaders, successfully counseling dozens of families in crisis at greatly reduced fees (approximately \$10/session). Yehudis and Tzvi also traveled to Jewish communities in the Former Soviet Union to teach and counsel families on behalf of JOI. We, together with the rest of the Russian-immigrant community, will miss this vibrant counselor and friend.



IN APPRECIATION

JOI gratefully acknowledges the following contributors whose generous donations have reached us by November 1, 2010. We are most grateful to all our donors and we take this opportunity to thank them.

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Your gift can sponsor one or more of the following programs:

Night Owls

- \$1,000 will support nighttime youth street counselors for a month
- \$12,000 will support nighttime youth street counselors for a year

Israel Literacy Initiative

- \$100 will add 10 books to a nascent school library
- \$350 will purchase a shelf of library books
- \$2,500 will purchase a bookcase of library books

JOI Educational Centers

- \$125 will provide educational enrichment for a child for a month
- \$1,000 will purchase a computer with software
- \$15,000 will create a computer or science center

Personal and Career Training

- \$500 will sponsor a course at JOI's Institute for Personal Development (IPD)
- \$1,200 will subsidize a professional career-training course

Counseling Services

- \$250 will subsidize 10 sessions of marital counseling
- \$500 will subsidize a marriage or parenting enhancement workshop

Senior and Emergency Support

- \$75 will keep a person or couple afloat in a time of crisis
- \$180 will feed an elderly couple for a month
- \$750 will fund six months of an activity group at a seniors' club
- \$1,000 will extend Project LifeLine, critical grants to the most needy, to a city for one month
- \$12,000 will bring Project LifeLine to a city for a year

JOI Camps

- \$100 will sponsor a child for a 3-week day camp
- \$1,000 will sponsor an entire bunk

Jewish Continuity

- \$120 a month will sponsor a weekly Jewish lecture series
- \$1,000 will sponsor the production and airing of one Russian-language Jewish educational program on national TV

