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## World WIZO Chairperson's Office



**Our unity is our strength.** It empowers us to provide the very best service to the people of Israel, to do the *Avodat Kodesh* (sacred work) that serves those in WIZO's care and the wider community. This is the spirit of WIZO, the common thread that binds us in our spiritual identity with Israel. It is that spirit that fuels our desire to help our brothers and sisters and all those who live in the land we love.

Last month, I was delighted to meet the 22 women from ten countries who attended this year's World WIZO Aviv Seminar. I was warmed by their passion and commitment. They came to Israel as strangers, they saw the positive *WIZO Impact* on all sectors of Israeli society and they left as sisters. They will lead our movement into the future. It is our mission to guide them, to encourage and enhance their volunteerism and to give them the space to make their mark on WIZO for the good of the movement and for the State of Israel.

In the past month I have traveled on my own WIZO journey of sisterhood; to the UK, Austria, Uruguay and Argentina where I met with dedicated WIZO chaverot who tirelessly volunteer their time and resources for WIZO. I also had the opportunity to address key civic leaders and members of the wider community on the central role played by WIZO in support of the people of Israel. This is my Hasbara, which I see as a duty, to enthuse our wonderful WIZO chaverot on the many and varied examples of WIZO's positive and beneficial impact on Israeli society.

Here in Israel, as elsewhere around the world, WIZO has recently commemorated the United Nations Day against Violence against Women. WIZO is active in this fight not just on this designated day but every day, through its projects, shelters and prevention centers across Israel. I wish for a day when this scourge is eradicated forever, but in the meanwhile, we will continue to fight it.

As I write, Israel continues to pick up the charred pieces from the devastating fires that robbed people of their homes, possessions and livelihoods. The emotional trauma is overwhelming. Your support has been a testament to the unity of our movement and your love of Medinat Israel. For this, I thank you most warmly.



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*Rivka Lazovsky*

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky  
Chairperson, World WIZO

## *This Chavera is YOU*

## VOLUNTEERISM

The WIZO Chavera is a busy woman. She runs a home, juggles family commitments and career and is often very active in her community. So where in the midst of all the responsibilities that define everyday life for our Chavera does she find the time to volunteer her valuable time, resources and skills for WIZO?

The answer to this question is actually quite simple. She **MAKES** the time, she **FINDS** the resources and she **USES** her skills. And she does this not through some sense of duty, but because by volunteering for WIZO, by earning herself the privilege of calling herself a Chavera, she opens her heart to the people for whom there will always be a place in her heart – the citizens of Israel.



**The WIZO Chavera is first and foremost a Zionist.** Wherever she may live, in whatever time-zone her address is situated, the security of the State of Israel and the wellbeing of its people are uppermost in her thoughts – and in her prayers. This spiritual connection to her homeland creates the momentum that has driven hundreds of thousands of women to volunteer for WIZO since its inception. It is the energy that has created pioneers and heroines and life-savers, and through this marvel, the power of Chaverot was born. It is a phenomenon that has extended over generations, over oceans, over politics and culture, from grandmother to granddaughter, from sisters to sisters, from friends to friends, from country to country. **It is the power of the collective ‘Chaverot’ that spreads its power of good, by a shared identity with its spiritual homeland, Israel, and its love for the people who live there.**

The WIZO Chavera looks upon the people of Israel as her beloved extended family for whom she pledges all her support. Tirelessly she volunteers in virtual partnership with her **WIZO sisters around the world to provide care, education, therapy, respite and shelter to those in need.** She cares deeply about the people, every man, woman and child, even though so many of them she does not know, nor will she ever know. Their home is her spiritual home, and it is in their hands that the future of the State of Israel lies. And she knows that to strengthen the State of Israel the people must first be empowered. This is the Zionism, the shared identity of the WIZO Chavera, that since the beginning of the WIZO movement, since even before the founding of the State of Israel, has roused the heart, which in turn drives the volunteerism of this formidable Chavera. She is motivated by an emotional and spiritual force so much greater than herself, and tirelessly she volunteers to raise awareness, friends, and funds, undertaking even the most mundane of necessary tasks with a smile.

**This Chavera is YOU.** You are an integral and important part of WIZO, a valued member of this global sisterhood. **Your collective power is a force for change for good.** By playing your part, you empower yourself as you walk shoulder to shoulder under WIZO’s banner of unity just as you empower the many thousands of Israelis who have benefitted and will continue to benefit from YOUR altruism and kindness. In doing good, we feel good. In giving, we receive the greatest gift of all. We may be doing all for the future of Israel through the strengthening of its citizens, but as fellow Jews, we know that we are doing it because of a spiritual force so much greater than ourselves. As the age-old question posed by the great Jewish prophet Hillel the Elder asks:

אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני? ואם לא עכשיו, אימת?

*“If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? But when I am for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?”*

As WIZO Chaverot, we already know the answer to this.

## *Cheerful Charlie regains his smile*

Charlie, an only child who had earned the nickname of 'Cheerful Charlie' because of his sunny disposition had been at a WIZO Day Care Center for two years when he bounced in one morning with a huge smile on his face. Proudly he announced, "I am going to be a big brother!" His mother confirmed the happy news when she collected him later that day. The elation turned to tears some months later when the baby was still-born in the eighth month of pregnancy. Just one year later, his mother gave birth to a daughter with Down's Syndrome. The severity of her physical and mental condition was such that she required special medical attention and was unable to attend the WIZO Day Care Center. That was a double blow to Charlie, who saw no difference in the baby sister that he clearly adored and could not understand why she could not come to school with him. He wanted to have her there, so he could 'watch over her' as the big brother he had proudly become.

Charlie was inconsolable. It was only with the careful and sympathetic intervention of the WIZO caregivers who soothed Charlie and coaxed him to join in with his friends that he slowly but surely regained his cheerfulness. When Charlie left the Day Care Center at the age of three, he was back to his usual, happy self.

Since then, Charlie's mother has given birth to a healthy baby girl who attends the same Day Care Center where Charlie was always so happy. She has the same smiley disposition as her big brother. The family never forgot the special care and attention that Charlie received during that traumatic time. They view the WIZO Day Care Center as an extension of their own family and they know, only too well, that their precious and beautiful baby girl is in the very best hands.



*In WIZO's care  
Charlie regains his smile*

## *Ilana gives back*

*"It is my way of showing gratitude, and in doing so, I am rewarded even more,"* says Ilana, whose son, Ben, was diagnosed with special needs during a routine early age assessment at the WIZO Day Care Center that he attends. Ilana explained, *"I thought he was just naughty, he had tantrums. He refused to eat and I could barely cope with him. It was as if everything we were doing for him was wrong but everyone said it was just a phase he was going through, and I always thought it would pass after he grew past the 'terrible twos' age."*

But staff and caregivers at Ben's WIZO Day Care Center knew better. As a result of the diagnosis, WIZO's special education therapists devised a program of specialized treatment for Ben, both in day care and at home. Slowly, but surely there was a marked improvement in his behavior.

*"I would go into the Day Care Center to take part in the sessions and it was wonderful to see Ben responding. It was like magic. That was when I knew that **WIZO had saved my child** and my own sanity! I just knew that I had to share that joy, and so I retrained to become a care giver.*

*Today, I work at the very same WIZO Day Care Center. Now, I am part of that magic. I love every one of those little children like my own. The tools I received have also helped me personally as a mother to Ben and his sisters. Just like Ben, every child is special."*





## DAY CARE CENTERS



### *The Family in WIZO's Embrace*

*Early Age Day Care Centers*

*Parental Support*

*Warm Homes for children at risk*

*Schools*

*Youth Villages*

*Vocational Training*

*Enrichment Courses*

*Youth Centers*

*Counselling*

*Welfare*

*Respite Care*

*Trauma Counselling*

*Community Care*

*Women's Shelters*

*Family Therapy*

*Women's Leadership*

*Citizens Advice*

*Legal Services to the family*

*Golden Age Home*

Ayala (not her real name) was the youngest of six children. Her parents had always strived hard to provide the basic essentials. Life in Israel had never been easy for the family. Nevertheless, theirs was a warm and happy home steeped in traditional Ethiopian family values.

Ayala's father worked two jobs to put food on the table, and Ayala's mother worked as a cleaner. Because of their working status, they received no assistance from the welfare authorities. When Ayala's father suffered a work accident which left him unable to work, her mother had no choice but to stay home and take care of him. This unfortunate situation put a tremendous financial and emotional strain on the entire family.

One day, when Ayala's mother came to collect her daughter from the WIZO Day Care Center that Ayala had attended for the past two years, she broke down in tears. The Day Care Center director led her into the office and asked her what was the matter.

Ayala's mother admitted how difficult it was to make ends meet and she confessed that she had no one to turn to. It was clear that she was having difficulties coping. Patiently, the Day Care Center director listened. *"I don't eat,"* Ayala's mother admitted through tears. *"There is not enough food to go round and I must feed my children first."*

The Day Care Center staff mobilized a plan to get the family the welfare assistance it badly needed and the kindly WIZO Day Care Center cooks would often send food home with Ayala's mother so that she, too, would eat. They were always careful to do this when no other parent was around, to save the embarrassment of this proud, brave yet exhausted mother.

Through the intervention of the Day Care Center staff, the family has received much needed support and Ayala's mother has returned to work part time, while her husband receives the benefits and compensation due to him. He is undergoing subsidized rehabilitation and is confident that he will be fit to return to work soon.

The clouds of doom have lifted from the family. Ayala's mother wanted to show her appreciation to the kindly staff members at the day care center, but the day care director insisted that no thanks were necessary. It was all in a day's work, she said.



Did you know that in Israel one child out of three goes to bed hungry?

The sad reality is that over **21 per cent of Israelis are living under the poverty line**, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2016) - more than in countries such as Mexico, Turkey, and Chile.



## *Shelly & Yaron work it out the WIZO way*

**WIZO ISRAEL**

There is a common misconception that violence against women is prevalent only in poorly educated socio-economic sectors of society, that the phenomenon is such that *'it doesn't happen to people like us'* - but nothing is further from the truth.

Shelly and Yaron had a fairy tale wedding, a no-expense-spared affair that others could only dream of emulating. Both sets of parents were well-to-do and nothing was too good for their children. Yaron worked in the family business and his salary was such that Shelly, a teacher, did not need to work. Life was charmed.

Yaron wanted to wait a few years before starting a family. Shelly wanted to start a family right away. When she gave birth to their baby, barely a year after their wedding, her usually mild-mannered husband became irritable. He criticized her for being tired all the time, accused her of loving the baby more than she loved him and became brutal towards her in his demands for sex. Shelly with tears in her eyes, complied. *"I didn't want to make a fuss," she said, "and I certainly couldn't tell my parents or friends, it would have just been too embarrassing. Everyone thought we were the perfect couple, to spoil the illusion would have been too much to bear,"* and so silently she suffered the abuse. And it got worse.

She felt guilty that she was not living up to the ideal that she had set for herself, and her guilt was fueled every time she allowed herself to be abused. She would plead with Yaron not to hit her. *"I'm sorry, please don't hit me, please..."* she begged.

Shelly managed to hide the bruises with makeup, with dark glasses and little white lies. And every time she plucked up the courage to ask him to seek help for his anger issues, he would blame her. *"You make me this way,"* he would say, launching into a tirade of abuse that scarred not only her body but her self-esteem.



It was the neighbors who alerted the police, having heard Shelly's screams. This time, no amount of makeup or little white lies could camouflage the bitter truth and Yaron was exposed as an abusive husband. He sat down on the floor with his head in his hands and broke down crying in remorse.

*"What have I done? I don't know why I do this. I have a problem. Please help me."*

*"I tried to hide the bruises with makeup, with dark glasses and I lied to protect him."*

The couple was referred to one of the three WIZO Centers for the Treatment and Prevention of Violence, dedicated to stopping acts of abuse and to help violent members of the family deal with difficulties in a non-threatening way. The individual and group programs are run at the center while maintaining the family unit and eliminating violence. The staff includes social workers who specialize in anger management and the treatment of domestic violence as well as dedicated volunteers. The centers specialize in the effects of abuse on children and offer group and individual counseling for children.

Yaron also benefitted from the services of the dedicated WIZO helpline for husbands who are at risk of abusing their wives/partners. The couple take small steps together to pick up the fragments of their marriage.

Shelly has regained her self-confidence, her self-respect. Yaron is mindful of his actions and has addressed the deep issues that resulted in his abusive behavior. The couple have learned that **to build the kind of married life they had pledged to each other under the Chuppah on their wedding day, there must be love, honor, and respect for the other.**

WIZO has not only saved their marriage, WIZO has saved Shelly's life.

## *Repairing Nadav at a WIZO Youth Village*



Nadav was a quiet boy, well-mannered and gentle. His mother was a widow who put her heart and soul into raising her only child, and he was a credit to her. He was studious and excelled in his school work.

When his mother remarried, his world fell apart. He became introverted, and his studies suffered. When his teachers tried to engage him, he would stare out of the window careful not to look them in the eye. Eventually, he confided in the school counselor that every night he would lay in bed listening to his mother screaming, while his new step-father lashed out at her verbally

and physically. Nadav went to sleep with tears in his eyes to the sound of loud thumps. The one time that he tried to come to the defense of his mother, his new step-father pushed him out of the way, knocking him to the ground.

After hearing this, the school immediately initiated the process for him to be transferred to a WIZO Youth Village.

When he first came to the WIZO Youth Village, Nadav was very anxious, displaying the classic signs of witnessing domestic abuse; he blamed his mother, herself the victim, for his overwhelming fear, poor concentration, difficulties in coming to terms with puberty and limited social skills. Slowly but surely, he responded well to therapy from WIZO counselors under whose care he was placed. He was equipped with a range of cognitive, emotional and physiological tools to help him cope. With patient guidance from teachers and village personnel, he regained his enthusiasm for study, and he adapted well to living in the dormitory. Although he was still worried about the safety of his mother, he was more able to deal with his own personal feelings. When his mother visited him at the youth village, counselors were always present to assess her needs, too. In the framework of 'working with the family' Nadav's mother also received much-needed therapy and support to build up her own self-esteem. She is taking steps to regain her independence by retraining for a new career.

Nadav is popular and helpful and regards the dormitories as home. He enjoys excellent grades in his school work. His relationship with his mother, which was so fractured when the step-father was on the scene, is becoming close once again.

With WIZO's help, both mother and son have received the support to enable them to stand up, head held high, and face the future with renewed confidence and to control the negative influences that had threatened to tear them apart.

Nadav's mother is so grateful to the WIZO Youth Village for the part they have played in repairing the damage to her son that she once blamed herself for, when she was also a victim.

### ***In Partnership with Parents***

It is an integral part of the ethos of WIZO Youth Villages to include the parents, wherever possible, in the healing process of a traumatized and conflicted child. WIZO recognizes that parents are the most important and central figures in the world of a child. Parents are involved in the process of absorption into youth village life, and attend family intervention programs in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. For the child, and for the parents, it is a win-win situation.

## WIZO Inspires Me

## EDITOR'S MUSINGS



**Tricia Schwitzer**  
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Among the various definitions of the word 'inspiration' are: *something that makes someone want to do something, to create something or to give someone an idea about what to do or what to create* but when I put the acronym 'WIZO' in front of the word 'Inspiration' the word takes on a new depth of emotion.

**WIZO Inspiration** is what happens to us when we visit the projects and meet the people and hear their stories. It is that feeling we get when we come face to face with those in our projects and witness the interaction, the compassion that forms a bond of trust between WIZO care-givers and therapeutic staff and those who are on the receiving end of WIZO's crucial support.

It is precisely that depth of emotion that compels me to write these stories. They are not fairy tales, they are real. However, for the sake of anonymity I change the names, I rarely name the project and I use generic images that reflect the subject matter. Because, more than anything, we must protect those in our care, respect confidentiality and preserve their dignity, a dignity that WIZO has in so many cases worked hard to restore or repair.

It is important that our Chaverot get to know these stories, which define our work, our volunteerism. These testimonies are a tribute to everything that inspires me to volunteer for WIZO and they are the sum total of the **WIZO IMPACT**, that affects us all through our commitment to WIZO and WIZO's commitment to the citizens of the State of Israel.

There are so many stories that lay untapped behind the smiles and tears of every child, man and woman who has ever walked through WIZO's welcoming doors, so many stories yet to be told - and I hope to tell them, to share them with you so that you can share them, too.

The **WIZO IMPACT** has its own Facebook page, Instagram account and Twitter feed to compliment the **WIZO IMPACT** in which we volunteers can all take pride, so that we can share that WIZO Inspiration instantly to reach more friends, allowing social media to do the work for us.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present these stories to you. Please let me know what stories work better for you in your Federation. Because there are so very many, it is often difficult to choose. I welcome your feedback and wish you happy reading and happy sharing!

Email me: [trishas@wizo.org](mailto:trishas@wizo.org)



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