Dear Chavera,

The most prominent characteristic of Israel’s population is its high diversity. Israeli society encompasses a mosaic of ethnic, religious and racial groups and can be divided into many divisions and subdivisions: Jews and non-Jews, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, Muslim, Christian and Bedouin Arabs, Druze and Circassians. Since its inception in 1920 WIZO has been at the forefront of social action in Israel and its’ mandate has always been to assist all sectors of Israel’s diverse population that are vulnerable or in distress, regardless of religion, race, or gender. Where the world decries Israel for a supposed “apartheid” mentality WIZO’s work is an example of a country catering for all its citizens. WIZO is about building bridges and our projects prove that we can sustain a society where everyone is respected, appreciated and loved. They represent the mixed cultural landscape of the State of Israel and embody a message of friendship, sharing and peaceful co-existence. Our hope is for a brighter future and that we will be instrumental in bringing the Israeli society towards more equality, inclusion and tolerance.

With warm WIZO regards,

Janine Gelley
Chairperson,
Organization and Tourism Division
World WIZO

June 2016
Push – don’t lean in

This is a shortened transcript of Maxine Fassberg’s keynote address at the 26th World WIZO EGM

I don’t know if you are aware that women in England acquired the right to vote in 1918 and women in France only in 1944. And I don’t know how much progress we have made since then. Unfortunately it is not a level playing field and our job is not yet done. So I will share with you some really alarming data and my thoughts on the importance of diverse employment, my career and learning, diversity at Intel and some closing advice.

Education – Education – Education

Today, global literacy statistics paint a gloomy picture with 2/3 of the world’s 751 million illiterate adults being women. We see a very large gender gap in women’s ability to use the internet and this reflects advanced and the extent to which they are integrated into society. I think that the most upsetting statistic is that we have 60 million young girls who do not attend school.

The reason why it is so obviously devastating is because it tells us what their future is going to be like. If they do not go to school their fate is sealed. In Israel we are not in a very good situation as far as STEM education (the level of matriculation in mathematics, science and physics or chemistry) is concerned. Only 6% of students do their final exam in STEM subjects and only 2% are girls.

Women who hold academic positions at the universities in Israel constitute only 28% and only 15% are full professors. At the BA, MA and PhD level, there are more women in the universities than men. And then there is the drastic drop off as they enter academic life. Their rate of promotion towards tenure and full time professor is much slower than their male counterparts. The main reason for this is that there is a prerequisite for advancing in academia: it is necessary to do a post doctoral outside of Israel, because abroad doctoral candidates are exposed to a wider range of ideas and thinking.

Equal opportunities

Now, what happens is that the women feel that they cannot uplift their family and their spouses and relocate abroad for their post doctoral studies. For men it is considered standard procedure to uplift their spouses and their families but for women the same consideration doesn’t apply.

I am conducting a very militant battle with the universities about what it is going to take to get the women to do their post doctorate abroad. Post-doctoral candidates typically receive a US$ 30,000 grant to go to the US, or to England. If the women cannot do it for US$30,000 because their husbands are giving up their careers, will they do it for US$100,000? Probably not. So my argument with the universities is: Don’t send 3 candidates at US$30,000. Send one at US$ 100,000 and you will have your candidate. This is a battle we need to continue pushing and if we want an equal distribution of professors in the universities we need to have these women doing their post doctorates abroad.

Gender gaps

Gender inequality leads to major wage gaps between men and women. In Israel there is a 24% difference in the overall labor market. Women with a college degree will make 61% of a man’s wage with the same qualifications. This is untenable in a country that proposes that there is gender equality. It is very far for being true. We have not made so much progress in the last 100 years. In managerial professions, the situation is not good also; women earn 73% of the man’s wage in the same occupation.

The tech world remains male dominated. This is the result of not having women professors in the universities. The gap between men and women recipients of the Nobel Prize is again untenable and we have to fix this situation.

How women work?

Let’s talk about us. How do women work? We start very early, little girls are expected to help with household chores from a very early age. We are making progress; also little boys are starting to understand that they have a role in the home. Since the caveman days women have been multi-tasking. Men would go to hunt, while the women would take care of the fire and tend to the children. So we have been practicing multi-tasking for thousands of years and that is the way we work.

When we discuss why is important to include gender diversity in the workplace, you will see that is one of the strongest skills that we actually bring into play. We work forever. I am sure many of you can identify with this statement.

What women need?

Women must have networks because the all-boys club is the strongest network in the world and in every environment you will find an all-boys club. In Israel the all-boys club starts in the army and even if women go to the army, it is not the same thing. So we have to enable women to have strong networks, formal and informal, and part of what we do in big companies like Intel is that we provide the network capabilities for the women.

Women need to be heard and understood. Often what it is not said is the most significant. Women always wait for the men to finish before they raise their hand and they always raise their hand. Men never do. When a man has to leave a meeting, he will get up and say: I have to leave, Byel! The woman will give a whole explanation. When we teach women how to present themselves, we have to work on this difference, not to give explanations. We have to teach women to believe that it is legitimate to get up and say: Sorry, I have to go. End of story.

Same results – Different ways

Women really want to be part of a team. But women attribute success to team efforts and men attribute success to their personal efforts. This is just a different pattern of behavior. It is not a judgment and we have to recognize this when things do not go right. I believe that men and women achieve the same results in different ways and if we look at these two knots, both of them will successfully keep the boat afloat but they are very different and we need to accept this hard fact.

So we ask ourselves why we need women onboard and the true answer is that if they keep building single thinking, single capability teams we get very narrow answers. If we build teams that include diverse thinking and diverse behavior, we get much more comprehensive and better answers. Statistics prove that the top Fortune 500 companies are those that are committed to diversity and they outperform companies that don’t.

Getting to your passion

One of the things I want everybody to remember is that in order to be successful you have to find your passion. You cannot work in a situation where you are doing what is right for everybody else. You have to do it because you believe in it, because you are passionate about it.

Remember this: For all great things, including birth, you have to push. It is not good enough to lean in. I have a lot of respect for the book that Sheryl Sandberg wrote “Lean In”, but it is not enough. To get us where we need to go we have to push and we have to learn to push without feeling that we have to apologize for doing so.

“Often there are times you have to go out and say “I can do this”. You have to practice in front of the mirror and see the lion even if you feel like a pussycat. You need to fake it till you make it. One time you will really make it. This has nothing to do with your integrity. It has to do with how you present yourself and how you stand out on the stage and deliver. And finally remember that opportunities never come at the perfect time. I am saying this because the men do it to us. They say let’s wait one more year before we promote her. Let’s first make sure that she is going to be successful. But, would you say that for a man? No. We don’t do it for a woman either. But the women must be ready to stand up and demand it. And one of the things we don’t know how to do is negotiate. I can tell you that about 70% of the men that I give a job offer to ask me if it is negotiable. And I can count the number of women on one hand who want to negotiate. I have to keep pushing and there and learn to use opportunities, push aside our doubts, fake it until we make it and negotiate like crazy.

We learn from what we see and not from what we are told to do. All of you are role models for young women who need to know that it is possible to have a career and to bring up a family and to do it all.

In conclusion

After so many years, if we look back and review the progress we have made since we got the vote, we can go home. But we don’t. And I say again and again, we cannot give in and we don’t give up.

Maxine Fassberg has been serving as the General Manager of Intel Israel since 2007.
4 ways to embrace diversity for workplace success

By Rachelle Rutman, Senior Human Resources Consultant, Arup Sydney

Firstly I feel privileged to have been asked to write this article for WIZO about my experience politics, culture, tradition in the field of Human Resources and specifically in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I).

I’d like to share a little about myself. Born and raised in a traditional Jewish home in Toronto Canada to Ashkenazi parents and beautiful Polish grandparents, I have always had a strong sense of self and been quite independent. I have been lucky to have lived in Toronto, Israel and Montreal before moving to Sydney Australia eight years ago to pursue a Master’s degree and never looking back. Thus far in my professional career I have worked across a number of industries including public health, construction, engineering and professional services.

Diversity & Inclusion: Practical tips, innovative concepts and advancement of best practices

1) Don’t be afraid to engage with people who disagree with you

One of the most important things I try to convey is the benefit of surrounding yourself with people who have different frames of reference than you have.

One of my most memorable experiences as a student in Sydney was an experience I had in a local Thai restaurant with a few of my classmates. It starts like this...a Jew a Buddhist, a Christian and a Hindu walk into a restaurant. Sounds like the making of a bad joke but in reality it was an eye opening experience. My colleague ‘the evangelical Christian’ was quite religious and I decided that I would question him about his beliefs. What would happen to me ‘the Jew’ if I didn’t accept his point of view and how did he know that his beliefs were the absolute. As we began having a collegial and polite adult conversation I felt a kick from under the table. It was ‘the Buddhist’. My lovely Thai Buddhist friend who always finds the best in people and the ultimate peacemaker. He was obviously feeling uncomfortable with the confrontational conversation and felt it was going nowhere fast.

My colleagues and I shared many of these conversations about religion, politics and culture. We probably never going to change but were still able to work together and socialise really made an impact. I am so much richer from those experiences and often come back to those memories when I need to remind myself to be tolerant, to listen and that different views make for richer individuals and organisations.

I can be quite argumentative and stubborn and like to win so this is not easy! But the important thing is to be aware of when a group gets too safe. When things go quiet and get comfortable it’s time to find out why.

2) Acquire a mentor, or two or three

I have always had a knack for collecting mentors. I find people in the strangest of places and for whatever reason they spark my curiosity and I want to know more. In my opinion you can never have enough mentors. I have both mentors who think like me and who I aspire to emulate and mentors who are nowhere near where I see myself in the future and whose brains are completely dissimilar to mine. My latest ‘acquisitions’ are a Learning and Development Manager (like me) and the head of the Building Group for Australasia (unlike me).

3) Executive champions

Of utmost importance to any organisational diversity strategy is having the CEO not only support diversity and inclusion but actively champion it. Some organisations are lucky to have a CEO who already understands the case for inclusion and makes it a part of the business as usual. Others learn the hard way. I have found that for the latter, a bit of a look into what the competition or key clients are doing around D&I can certainly help to move them along! Like all people our leaders are motivated by different forces – some are influenced by the human factor, the employee engagement and wellness at work and some are motivated by reputation, stature and external forces. One is not better than the other - the key is to find out which one drives your organisation’s leadership and how to tap into it.

4) Empower others

At Arup I have been working with the Australasian CEO, Head of Building and Head of HR to set up a D&I Executive. This has been quite a positive and motivating experience for me so far as we have a passionate and committed leadership team. We have just appointed our new D&I Executive whose members were chosen based on their individual expressions of interest. We selected applicants carefully and they included those who expressed a passion for diversity, as well as having the ability to demonstrate knowledge of best practice and leadership in at least one area of D&I. Our D&I Executive is made up of employees from Australia and Singapore who are of different ages, genders, business groups and levels of experience. Our first videconference took place in May 2016 and a face to face workshop is scheduled for July. Two of our initial priorities will most likely be rolling out a D&I employee survey as well as setting up regional diversity committees in each office.

Our D&I Executive will focus on the following diversity dimensions:
- Gender
- Culture and ethnicity
- Physical disability and mental health
- Age/generational
- LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – (NB This dimension is unique to Australia and refers to Australian Indigenous peoples)
Dialogue builds bridges

By Martin Vegoda, founder and Chair of the Bristol-based non-profit Salaam Shalom

“One small community organisation in Bristol, England. Over 800 WIZO projects in Israel. It was fascinating to see that ideologically and in practice, we share so much.”

I’m a founding member, now Chair, of the non-profit organization Salaam Shalom in Bristol which was founded in 2006. I was working with Muslim colleagues to get Bristol health authorities to provide circumcision facilities for Muslim boys. Without local services, parents were resorting to unqualified medical staff and they were experiencing botched procedures.

We were planning our next meeting. For the first time, in 2005, Rash Hashana and Ramadan were about to coincide. We had to mark this and the result was our first set of dialogue between Bristol’s Muslims and Jews. People got together, discussed enthusiastically and agreed we had to continue.

A central government grant was announced. An incipient Board decided to apply to set up an organisation focusing on young people, using technology to appeal to this age group. In 2006 this new community organisation was awarded the maximum grant. In July 2007, we launched Radio Salaam Shalom, broadcasting live for several hours each day on the internet.

All our programmes were researched and delivered by Muslim and Jewish volunteers. Presenters ranged from teenagers to the over eighty. Radio Salaam Shalom was listened to locally, nationally and internationally. We won media awards and our organization’s activities were the subject of numerous radio and television programmes. One small community.

Our volunteer teams also made podcasts enabling them to research topics in greater depth. We interviewed Muslims and Jews in positions of authority, including an outgoing Israeli ambassador to the UK.

Over time we came to two realisations that underpin all our activities since the inception of Radio Salaam Shalom. One realisation is that our strength and distinctiveness is our being a media and arts organisation wanting to bring about dialogue between people of different backgrounds. We now offer people the opportunity to participate in a media or arts event and then to discuss it. That avoids assuming that people of a particular social, cultural, or faith background necessarily bring to a discussion something that is common to everybody of that background. Usually, dialogue, or the acknowledgement that dialogue is necessary, ensues. Sometimes this can be described as “agreeing to disagree”.

This enables us to fulfill Salaam Shalom’s mission, to build good relations between Muslims and Jews, and between them and other cultural communities in Bristol and in the UK. By enabling greater familiarity and understanding between people of different faiths and cultures, fears and myths are dispelled, resulting in a more tolerant and socially cohesive society. We work with adults, school children, and young people to challenge prejudice and prevent discrimination.

Over the years we’ve embarked on a variety of projects. Two one-off events attracted audiences from across Bristol’s majority and minority religious and cultural communities. At the first event, viewers discussed their response to a film depicting Israeli and Palestinian family members working together to show that revenge is not a solution to the violent death of a family member. At the second event, a panel comprising an academic, a comedian, a television producer and a journalist, shared their perceptions of whether there should be restrictions on freedom of speech in relation to decrying religious belief. There were abundant, thoughtful, questions from the audience.

Similarly, Salaam Shalom has partnered with the Bristol Festival of Ideas (the forerunner of all such festivals now prolific in the UK), the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and the Amnoli – Centre for Global Christianity to present events for young people of all backgrounds, from teens to twentysomethings. The programme is organised by young volunteers and includes a panel briefly presenting their stance on the chosen topic, followed by discussion and questions from the floor. Each event has attracted over a hundred – sometimes more – young people, with discussion continuing in the café or bar. The event on “Racism” enabled the audience to challenge racism in all walks of life and in all its aspects, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

That Salaam Shalom itself evidences dialogue underpins our activities in primary and secondary schools. The project, for DBF, supports two primary schools in different areas of Bristol separately exploring their own culture and personal identity. In then coming together, sharing our learning, discovering that they share needs and ways of looking at the world. They work together in arts and music workshops, and on media projects, which has produced an exhibition of art and videos at the M Shed museum in Bristol.

For secondary school students, Salaam Shalom offers “Resistance”. Young people reflect on bullying and discrimination, encouraging them to promote change. This project derives from workshops for school and college students that Salaam Shalom conducted following the showing of a film on the treatment of disabled children in Germany during WWII. This was an M Shed initiative marking Holocaust Memorial Day. Salaam Shalom’s young volunteers made a short film showing young people experiencing and combating harassment, bullying and discrimination.

The Trustees running Ammordern, a Christian Retreat and Conference Centre opened for all faiths and none, with an emphasis on dialogue and reconciliation, acknowledged that the centre was not known and used by Muslim and Jewish groups. Recognising Salaam Shalom’s experience, they have twice commissioned groups of young people of mixed religious and cultural backgrounds to participate in residential workshops led by Salaam Shalom.

Salaam Shalom pioneered dialogue based on a theatrical presentation and publishing short plays as part of the M Shed Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations. This has led more recently to dramatic performances in community centres, to initiate dialogue on conflict in the Middle East. This verbatim theatre project, drawing on personal testimonies to be collected in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, will enable audiences to form their own response rather than relying on contentious media reporting.

During the UK’s late May Bank Holiday in 2015, Salaam Shalom put on an exhibition of art works by eight local and national Muslim and Jewish artists. Its success led the British Arts Council to award Salaam Shalom its maximum award to repeat the exhibition this year. With the support of other funders and organisations in the city we have extended this to a two month arts festival.

The festival has just begun. In addition to the exhibition of contemporary art, viewedhere, Muslim and Jewish students have an exhibition on the presence of Muslims and Jews in the city for a century or more, at Bristol Central Library. Also for the first time from the University of Southampton will give a talk on Marc Chagall, during a play about Marc and Bella at the Bristol Old Vic. Lectures will be given on personal and Bristol Festival ideas, and films will be screened at the Watershed, a Bristol arts cinema, film festival and community and political relations between Muslims and Jews. All this will bring the work of Salaam Shalom to a much wider audience.

Our activities led to me and Salaam Shalom being nominated for a 2015 WOWUK Commitment Award in the category of ‘Social Inclusion’. Recognising Salaam Shalom’s commitment, the four nominees we were selected as the eventual winner. Our prizes included amongst others a trip to Israel in February this year to see first hand how WIZO’s approach to meeting the social welfare needs of disadvantaged Israelis shares the same principles that motivate Salaam Shalom.

I was struck by the inclusiveness of WIZO’s social welfare projects, and the readiness of participants and staff to acknowledge this. At WIZO Nir Haemek School and Youth Village in the Jezreel Valley, two of the students were our hosts for the entire morning and accompanied us around the facility. They, themselves come from very different ethnic origins, and described to me their fellow students’ mix of religious pluralism, and disparities, and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The school caters to native Israeli students as well as immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Some of them are youth at risk. All work towards acquiring a high school education and a matriculation certificate. All participate enthusiastically in the range of voluntary activities on offer after the school day ends. Enthusiasm extends to voluntarily mucking out horses in the lunch break. In the robotics workshop, students from different faiths sit happily together. It was evident that, in addition to all their formal learning, these students were also discovering a new culture, new arts and new skills that bridge their different social and cultural origins.

This is continuing dialogue.

Directly relevant to Salaam Shalom’s arts festival is the art project that has been running for several years at the WIZO Gruss Community Centre in Afula. Under the guidance of the Gruss volunteer, artist teacher and curator Sheila Dvore Casdi, Israeli women both Jewish and Arab paint pictures of olive trees with each one reflecting a unique artistic point of view. Families have become friends; they share each other’s social and cultural activities. The women’s newfound artistic talent has even been recognized by their spouses who openly acknowledge their accomplishments.

Two successful Olive Tree exhibitions have toured Israel and internationally and have won much acclaim. The Olive Tree project will be on exhibition the UK during the autumn. As it turns out, Salaam Shalom, collaboration through art brings about a greater understanding that what previously was thought to be different is in fact, “The other”, is actually pretty much the same.

One small community organisation in Bristol, England. Over 800 WIZO projects in Israel. It was fascinating to see that ideologically and in practice, we share so much.”
“Outreach is a mechanism for building a diverse supporter base and a unique aspect of WIZO’s work in South Africa is that it benefits from the help of many Christian Zionist supporters of Israel.”

Unfortunately the "longest hatred" still prevails. As Abe Foxman was the director of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) stated "Anti-Semitism is not a history lesson, it is an ongoing current event". All too often we feel discriminated against and alienated and of course we now have to deal with anti-Zionism and anti-Israeli sentiments.

Outreach is a mechanism for building a diverse supporter base and a unique aspect of WIZO’s work in South Africa is that it benefits from the help of many Christian Zionist supporters of Israel who hail from Bridges for Peace, the International Christian Zionist Embassy and the ACDP - African Christian Democratic Party.

In March 2016 the South African federation launched their first WIZO event of this caliber. This partnership is an ongoing event of this magnitude. This partnership is a strong foundation for Jewish and Christian Zionists through the Arts with Jerusalem being the focus, in the majestic Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town. WIZO were key in assisting her to achieve an integration of youth from all social, ethnic and economic backgrounds gaining the tools for a successful personal and professional life - a strong argument against the labeling of Israel as an Apartheid state.

WIZO South Africa is delighted to have this positive interaction with their Christian supporters, and values this synergy between Jews and Gentiles which builds bridges of friendship and understanding.

Tel Aviv – a celebration of gastronomic diversity

It may not be on the tourism map, but if you like markets and exotic spices, not to mention Persian and Balkan delicacies, Levinsky Market is the place for you. Established primarily by Turkish and Greek Jews, the street is a patchwork of ethnic diversity. Its spice shops, ethnic restaurants and delis all seem to be family-run businesses handed down through generations. Along a five block stretch visitors can eat their way through the market’s widespread culinary history.

Penso, a ‘Surekas landmark’ in Tel Aviv has been serving amazing Turkish baked goods for 80 years and is managed by the third generation of the Penso family from Turkey. One of the market’s most beloved food shops is Yom Tov Delicatessen, a family deli opened in Istanbul in the 1940s and re-established in Florenti in 1969, which is packed from floor to ceiling with treasures ranging from olive oil to hand-stuffed olives. Salma, a Persian eatery serves up delicious comfort food like Gondi soup – the Persian version of matzah balls.

Would you believe that in Tel Aviv you can get ice cream that is said to rival some of the best ice cream in Italy? With warm weather most of the year, Tel Aviv is a heaven for ice cream lovers. You can even find a 100% vegan ice cream place in the Levinsky market. This is just a small glimpse into the diversity of the food culture in Israel (Tel Aviv).

Israel foods reflect so much of what we all love about Israel - as if each dish is a window into something unique about this fabulous country, our people, culture and history.

Jael Ancker is a Finnish food & travel blogger living in Israel. You can find her here: www.instagram.com/appelsineyhuruajas/
Diversity is the name of the game

By Ruthy Benoliel, Chairperson, Danielle Lifshitz, Development Coordinator and Suzanne Haper, Director WIZO Florida

“All of our chapters together complete WIZO Florida as a very diverse and integral part of WIZO USA. It is from this Diversity that WIZO Florida thrives and flourishes!”

South Florida is widely known for its diversity. Many people move to South Florida from all over the United States and from abroad. A multitude of languages is commonplace as people are very proud of their cultural background. WIZO Florida definitely encompasses the same diversity in its membership. Here in Florida we offer a myriad of opportunities to attract different members. With over 11 active chapters, WIZO Florida is a rapidly growing movement within our community.

One of the things that makes WIZO Florida so unique is its ability and passion to stay current and to engage individuals. We are so proud to have enjoyed many years of expansion and growth. Years of research have shown that diversity leads to innovation. Having women of different backgrounds and ages yields incredible creativity and originality. Social Media has been a valuable tool for promoting our events and spreading our PASSION to the community.

Through our chapter and community events, there is place for everyone! The WIZO Bat-mitzvah program lead by WIZO Yachad provides a valuable service to the participating families. This program attracts around 1400 members of the community who aren’t all involved in WIZO. This year WIZO Simcha, a dynamic and energetic chapter from Weston, formed the first Bat-mitzvah group in their area. Besides learning together, both groups of bat mitzvah girls were very proactive fundraising through bracelet sales, which were sold around the world. Simcha has also been extremely engaged in a new platform called “WIZO gives back.” This constitutes a forum of women and children who give back to our community by collecting much needed products which are distributed to different organizations.

Many of the Bat-mitzvah program alumni have joined our newest teen chapters, Kadima North and South. Their goal is to inspire and set an example to their peers and at the same time have fun while raising money for WIZO. Having teen groups has been a dream of WIZO Florida for many years and having them engaged in our cause assures long continuity and leadership. We can really see the importance of WIZO Aviv and the necessity to provide opportunities of engagement in order to establish a connection with younger generations. Our Young Professionals group, Atlid, has flourished, providing young adults with networking opportunities and even creating a few shidduchim! The young women and men participating at these events are able to establish a close bond with WIZO at a vital point in their lives. The outcome is that this diverse group of individuals who were previously unfamiliar with WIZO are now committed and involved. Happy hours, boot camp classes and parties are key events to engage this very important target group.

Another Aviv chapter is Zorahat. This group creates fun events for their young families. They are recognized for events such as the annual Children’s Fashion Show, EAT for Israel, and most recently, “WIZO Star” in which numerous artists: dancers, musicians, gymnasts and magicians enter a talent competition and ten finalists are chosen to perform. The three best groups are chosen as the WIZO Stars. Many of the participating artists were not from Jewish backgrounds and this created much awareness of WIZO in our community.

Our Yachad Chapter runs one of our widest-reaching events, Bee Sweet Campaign. This fundraiser is an excellent example of outreach since the entire community purchases and sends beautiful Rosh Hashanah gifts to friends or relatives. Each recipient gets only one gift, with a card that lists all the friends who have purchased the gift. Bee Sweet reaches over 2,200 households in South Florida, many of whom are not WIZO members.

The Yonit and Ilanit-Tikva chapters cater to women whose children are older or out of the house. Their events include Gala dinners, Car Raffles, Sponsor a Child Luncheons, movie nights, and lectures, art events, phone-a-thons, Memories in the Living Room (holocaust related), cooking classes and cookbooks. This year, Ilanit-Tikva was busy creating two projects, which will touch thousands around the world. The “Baby Book” and the “Tehilim Project”. The Baby Book, an art piece in its origin, has been presented to several museums and books stores, which have already placed orders.

It’s important to note that our original Chapter, WIZO Miami, is still active, producing great events such as our distinguished Chanukah Dinnerless Dinner. Continuing to meet and raise funds for WIZO programs give our women a sense of purpose and an opportunity to socialize.

For many years, our chapters were centrally located and the meetings and events were scheduled nearby. In the past few years, active chapters have sprouted in more remote locations further away from the WIZO office. These chapters allow us to invite new friends into our circle and encourage other community members to embrace WIZO’s mission.

Our newest group, Boca-Chai is located over an hour away from the WIZO Florida office. This is a truly International group with members from Switzerland, Israel, South America, Turkey, USA, Canada and Morocco. What a dream to have an all-encompassing chapter, where all women feel welcome. Boca-Chai promises to become a very influential group.

WIZO Florida is proud that we can offer something for everyone. Our ability to provide a connection to Israel to women of all ages is a large part of our success. Regardless of age, stage of life, or cultural background there are 11 chapters, which provide creative events for everyone to enjoy. Our chapters are a reflection of the diversity of South Florida, and also of the pluralistic nature of our country. We are in the works of continuing our expansion towards North Florida and South Dade County through Bat Mizvah programs as well as creating new chapters.

All of our chapters together complete WIZO Florida as a very diverse and integral part of WIZO USA. It is from this Diversity that WIZO Florida thrives and flourishes!
WIZO projects - models of multiculturalism and diversity

Contributors:
Rachel Hazan, Coordinator Single Parents’ Club Jaffa
Eytor Gil-Or, Director, Chorley Day Care Center, Kfar Saba
Jenny Bruchi, Director, and Idit Hason, Regional Administrator, M. Helene and Nadine de Rothschild Comprehensive Care Center, Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem

“Multi-culturalism and diversity abounds in WIZO’s day care centers for early age children. It’s nice to see kids raised in a diverse environment, even before they understand what diversity is.”

WIZO’s network of social welfare projects in Israel provides services and programs for all sectors of the Israeli population, be it infants, children, youth or the elderly. Be it Jews, Arabs or Druze: WIZO believes that every individual has their own culture, ethnic background and place in life and something valuable to offer and the organization seeks to encourage the contribution of every person. WIZO projects nationwide expose the rich diversity of Israeli society and carry a strong message of hope.

WIZO’s Single-Parent Club located within the WIZO Center in Jaffa serves single-parent Jewish, Arab and new-immigrant families. The support group, which started approximately 25 years ago, is a resource for struggling single mothers and fathers, most of whom are widowers or divorcees. Here – irrespective of religion – the participants find support from the professional staff as well as from each other. Not only does the center provide its members with practical tools to help address the challenges of single parenting, it also gives them moral support, friendship and a sense of community. Single mothers that joined the group with low self-esteem and poor self-image are now holding their heads high, empowered and exhibiting renewed self-confidence as a result of WIZO’s assistance. Despite participants’ cultural diversity, differences are obscured at the center, where holidays like Purim and Ramadan are marked with equal attention and values of mutual respect are emphasized. The WIZO Single-Parent Club brings together Jewish and Arab Israelis for a more meaningful understanding of each other and shows the harmony that exists between this multi-cultural and diverse population.

Multi-culturalism and diversity abounds in WIZO’s day care centers for early age children. It’s nice to see kids raised in a diverse environment, even before they understand what diversity is. The day care center staff invests effort to create a positive environment which acknowledges and values human differences, and that helps the children learn positive, appropriate responses to differences. In turn this exposure to human differences and relationships with diverse people helps to break down fear and negative stereotypes. Learning to respect our differences is the only way we can get along in a changing world.

We share the emotive stories of two WIZO day care centers. The first, Chorley Day Care Center located in the Shikun Kaplan neighborhood of Kfar Saba caters to a diverse population from low-middle socio-economic backgrounds, immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, the Arab Israeli sector and children with disabilities (on the autism spectrum). Diversity also extends to the staff which includes religious Jewish women, immigrants from Ethiopia, secular Arab women, disabled volunteers participating in a project that integrates people with diverse backgrounds. Without a doubt, the integration of the Haredi population in the day care center presented a challenge but also a wonderful opportunity for outreach and the possibility to offer WIZO’s services to a sector of the population which was previously unserved. The challenge was met head on, resulting in positive outcomes that facilitated a heightened sense of belonging and team work amongst the staff. The children and their families have also benefited from this diversity and inclusion.

The caregivers are Ultra-Orthodox and the food served in the day care center has Badatz kosher certification. In the pre-kindergarten classroom prayers and blessings are recited and the educational program has been adapted to include content relevant to this sector of the population. Alongside the two ultra-Orthodox classes there are also three classes catering to the secular population. The Director of the day care center and the caregivers in these classrooms are not ultra-Orthodox.

The caregivers (secular and religious) participate together in workshops and training sessions and are involved in the development and implementation of the yearly educational program.

A warm and friendly atmosphere pervades the facility with the caregivers attending each other’s family functions and respecting each other’s values. Their successful cooperation is evident to all and the confidence of the parents in the staff, has led to a new trend where some of the ultra-Orthodox families have integrated their children into the regular secular classes from an early age. Over the past five years the day care center has brought together children, parents and staff from different cultural and religious backgrounds and has promoted tolerance, understanding and acceptance amongst all. This integration of religious and secular has become par for the course and is highly commendable.