What’s New In WIZO?

May 2013
Dear Chaverot,

As I write this message it is Spring. Our Jewish calendar is crowded with significant dates, many of which were added after we were fortunate enough to have our own State. Holocaust Day, so very painful, is marked on the 27th of Nissan. The fourth and fifth of Iyar are the Remembrance and Independence Day of the State of Israel, a cause for both mourning and celebration throughout the Jewish world. The tenth of Iyar is Herzl Day, the anniversary of the birth of this great visionary who laid the cornerstone for our Jewish State, as we know it today. The 28th Iyar is Jerusalem Day, the day on which our divided capital city was reunited.

We in WIZO have also added our own special day to the calendar. Our World WIZO journey began on the 11th July 1920, and today our WIZO family is spread across the world.

These dates have been integrated into the rich Jewish calendar of festivals and mourning periods that have been marked for centuries. When we began, once again, to live in own land we earned the privilege to celebrate and commemorate days that are so important to us as a modern, yet ancient people.

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky,  
Chairperson,  
World WIZO Executive
In June, it will be the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's proclamation "Ich bin ein Berliner" (I am a Berliner). The exultation that greeted his words and the reverberations are thought to have presaged the collapse of the Berlin Wall and communism.

In these times when anti Semitism is once again rearing its ugly head and it is more politically correct to be anti Zionist than to be anti semitic, the time has come for another declaration to be heard over and over again:

I am a Zionist because I am a Jew
I am a Zionist because I know my history.
I am a Zionist because Jews never forgot their ties to their homeland, their love for Jerusalem.
I am a Zionist because in establishing the modern State of Israel, the Jews were returning to history.
I am a Zionist because I am an idealist.
I am a Zionist because the vision of the Jews rebuilding their homeland, reclaiming the desert, renewing themselves, was one of the greatest stories of modern times.

Say it loud and clear; pronounce it with pride . . .

"I am a Zionist."
Remembrance Day and Independence Day were marked in all WIZO Day Care Centers with joy, tinged with sadness. The children came dressed in blue and white and all the Day Care Centers were decorated with the national colors.

The Early Age Division is increasing its efforts to improve manpower in the Day Care Centers through training courses, which will provide the graduates with professional grades as licensed early age caregivers. Ten courses have begun.

The Early Age Division is also working with Israel Defense Forces to find suitable candidates, from amongst the soldiers when they complete their army service. Enrolling the girls, whilst they are still in the army gives them the chance to earn a salary immediately on completing their service, which, for many of these girls, is of critical importance.
The Early Age Division has also begun training WIZO staff who are about to retire so that they can help, as volunteers, in WIZO’s Day Care Centers after retirement. The first course has just begun with a specially designed program.

Many parents have difficulty in believing in their ability to cope and are helpless to find immediate help and affordable guidance. They may have repeated problems through lack of knowledge, differences in cultures and problems in coping in a pluralistic and material environment. Sometimes they feel even more helpless, and they rarely ask for help due to financial, personal and superstitious problems. In the reality of today’s State of Israel every third child is living below the poverty line, and there is a ‘culture of poverty’ which has long term consequences.

In these situations and during family, communal or national crisis, such as the long war on Sderot and the settlements around Gaza, the need for support and direction is even more essential.

A new group of volunteers have begun a course to train volunteers to man the Advisory Call Station for Early Age in Arabic, in the Beersheba area.

Here is one of the many ‘thank you’ letters that we have received.

Shalom,
Two weeks ago I called the Advisory Call Line regarding my daughter and I spoke with a volunteer advisor called Guy. He explained to me how to cope with the difficult behavior of my daughter. Guy really helped me, within just one day, everything sorted itself out. He explained to me the principles of behavior amongst small children and how we, as parents, have to deal with difficult circumstances. Now my daughter is calm, so I wanted to thank you, and especially Guy, for your activities and your help.

Thank You,
The Caroline & Joseph Gruss WIZO Afula Community Centre sponsored by WIZO uk and WIZO Holland is as active as ever.

On the eve of Purim residents of Afula Community Centre gathered in celebration of Jewish Heritage from Iran. Upon entering the center, arrivals were flooded by the sound of Persian music and met with the savory smells of authentic foods prepared by several families of Iranian descent. The evening opened with a blessing followed by a personal story from Yehuda Shushan Rahimi, as he remembered Purim from the stories passed down by his father. Participants also enjoyed a lecture by Author, Perry Sinai, who spoke about her journey leading up to the publication of her best-selling children’s book (translated to English) Persian Rooster.
Three years ago at the WIZO Afula Community Centre, three young women met during an event commemorating International Women’s Day. Realizing their shared interests, they decided to pursue degrees together at Beit Berl College.

During this time they learned of the lost poetry, which had been written by Jewish women from North Africa. The women held an event this year at WIZO Afulla Community Centre to call attention and recapture this historic and almost forgotten form of expression. The result was an event held on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, that included a musical performance by Ziva Atar, and a moving lecture by Dr Miriam Gaz Abigal.

23 women from the city of Afula and Stamford, Connecticut, U.S united to create a special project for International Women’s Day. Both groups of women presented an exhibition; Pictures of Women. The photos depicted women currently living in Afula and Stamford and are open to individual interpretation. The exhibition began with a party, joining the International Women's Day events in the city and was attended by the Mayor, the Municipal Women's Forum Chairman, Chairwoman of WIZO Centre, and Advisor to the Mayor. The exhibition was open for the public at The Municipal Gallery Afula until the beginning of May 2013.
This Passover, 170 children from the city of Afula spent their time participating in a day camp that provided enrichment education. The campers enjoyed a range of activities condensed into one exciting week. Each camp day was scheduled until 16:00 and included lunch.

WIZO Nir Haemek School and Youth Village, sponsored by WIZO Argentina and WIZO USA has been approved by Tel Aviv University to take part in a special program for excelling students who are graduates of schools in the periphery of the country. The program, which began in 2007, is for pupils who are recommended by the Ministry of Education and as the letter from the Ministry of Education said, ‘the selection of your school pays tribute to the ongoing high quality of the school’.

Five outstanding pupils, compared with other pupils in their age group, were selected to apply to learn at Tel Aviv University, without having to take a psychometric examination. In addition, their socio economic situations are taken into account and they can receive a stipend accordingly.
I attended a very moving Remembrance Day Ceremony for those murdered in the Holocaust which was held at WIZO Nachlat Yehuda, sponsored by WIZO Switzerland.

Everyone in the school, including staff, personnel and other employees, participated in the ceremony which took place in the Sport’s Hall. It was prepared by the pupils who had visited the concentration camps during the course of the year, in a trip to Poland. They showed the film that they had produced from the visit, and included readings and songs. The participants in the ceremony were particularly moved by Holocaust survivor, Rachel Baltar, who has worked in the youth village for over fifty years. She spoke about her life in which she has had to cope with memories of the past.

The National Service volunteers in the school set up a ‘Shock Room’, where activities were organized during the course of the day to see pictures and hear about the different periods during the Holocaust.
In the beginning of this school year a new course of studies began to operate, at WIZO Nahalal School and Youth Village, sponsored by Canadian Hadassah WIZO and WIZO uk. The course, called Mutav, is for students in the Naaleh (immigrant youth before parents) Project and includes one 10th grade class and two eleventh grade classes, all students who are about to sit for their matriculation examinations (3 units) at the end of the twelfth grade. The studies are in microorganisms and air quality.

In March, Naaleh students proudly presented their work involving bacteria in milk. The Naaleh group arrived at WIZO Nahalal two and a half years ago and the students did not know each other before arrival. The language barrier and the Israeli mentality, were the first obstacles to their integration at school but over time they began to mingle with the other students.
They learn according to the regular school curriculum, covering all subjects. It was decided to add advanced sciences to their curriculum and they visited power turbines in the Golan Heights, the Tnuva factory and electric power plants as part of their studies.

Students in the class are, without exception, highly motivated to succeeding in this field.
Following an alarming rise in domestic violence during recent weeks, especially cases in which aged are being murdered by their partners, WIZO Israel initiated an article which appeared in the Israeli Press under the title: ‘Mommy, Why did Grandpa murder Grandma?’

The article called upon the welfare authorities to pay more attention to tensions between aged couples before the issues spiral out of control.

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women, in the Knesset, visited the WIZO Shelter for Battered Women in Jerusalem.
WIZO Israel asked a series of questions on subjects such as passing legislation for women’s benefits on their leaving the shelter, establishing a central body to deal with violence in the family, the appointment of a person in charge of the issue of violence in the Ministry of Internal Security, as well as others.

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Yair Lapid, has promised not to make cutbacks in the welfare budget that affect the shelters for battered women.

Haim Cohen, General Director of Dun and Bradstreet Israel, has been appointed as Chairman of WIZO Israel’s Annual Fundraising Appeal for the coming year.

Past Chairmen of the WIZO Israel Fundraising Appeals have included: Zalman Shuval, Danny Gillerman, Shalom Zinger, Alfred Akirov, Ofra Strauss, Yaakov Peri, Gila Lapidot, Oded Tira and others.

We wish WIZO Israel, and Haim Cohen, a very successful fundraising year.
This month we will celebrate Shavuot, the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai.

The giving of the Torah was an event of awesome proportions that indelibly stamped the Jewish nation with its unique character, faith and destiny. In the 3,300 years since, the Torah was given, monotheism, justice and responsibility – have become the moral basis for Western civilization.

The revelation at Sinai was the singular most momentous event in human history, and we can only shudder when we consider what our lives would have been without it.

חג שמח

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson,
World WIZO Executive