Dear Chaverot,

We have just celebrated the 67th anniversary of Israel’s Independence. A time to contemplate how far we have come - and what the future holds.

Many countries, companies and individuals recognize the important role of the Jewish State, and the never ending lists of Israeli innovations that are benefitting the world. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if the Jewish State has been established for the benefit of humanity as a whole. Israel’s surgeons treat everyone regardless of nationality or religion, such as the complex heart surgery to save 18-month old Iraqi Christian Maryam Mansour or the Syrian boy treated after he lost a leg in an explosion and for whom six Israeli medical students subsequently bought a smart new digital tablet with their own money!

The future of Israeli innovations is encouraging, indicated by the fact that Israeli companies and entities registered 3,555 patents in the United States in 2014 – a 21 per cent increase on 2013.

Israel has also recognized talent within its borders. Tarek Abu-Hamed, a Palestinian Arab from Sur Baher in East Jerusalem, has just been named as Deputy Chief Scientist of Israel’s Ministry of Science, Technology and Space. Or what about Muslim nuclear scientist Noha Hashad who spent 11 years in an Egyptian jail, for conducting pro-Jewish Quran research. During the chaos following President Mubarak’s overthrow in 2011, she escaped and fled to Israel. “Israel is like a jewel, a diamond, I am very fortunate to be here,” she says.

Finally, there is now a new opportunity for world leaders to understand and appreciate the bond linking the Jewish people to the Land of Israel from time immemorial. An exhibit entitled “People, Book, Land – The 3,500 Year Relationship of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel” has just opened at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York.

Yes, we have much to be proud of!

With warm regards.

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson
The Jerusalem Post

The campaign, "From three one is hungry" aims to raise awareness of the poverty statistics and encourage youth to take responsibility to help combat the phenomenon.

WIZO students stand under billboard in Afula for Day without Hunger. (photo credit:Courtesy)

Students from the Women's International Zionist Organization’s (WIZO) Nir Ha'emek Youth Village in the Jezreel Valley launched a campaign on Monday to address the issue of child hunger and poverty in Israel. The campaign, “From three, one is hungry,” aims to raise awareness of the poverty statistics and encourage youth to take responsibility to help combat the phenomenon.

As part of the campaign, the students declared Monday to be a “Day without Hunger” and rallied dozens of businesses throughout the North, including restaurants, pizzerias, cafes and kiosks, to sell food and meals to schoolchildren for only NIS 2. Afula is serving as the pilot city for the project, and the students recruited the Afula Municipality, which donated billboards to advertise and raise awareness of the initiative.

According to the annual poverty report by the National Insurance Institute published in December, there were some 1,658,200 people living in poverty in 2013, among them 756,900 children and 432,600 families.

The Alternative Poverty Report published annually in December by the Latet NGO reported even higher rates of poverty – some 2,546,000 people, with one out of three children, living in poverty. The findings indicated that a quarter of children went to sleep hungry at least a few times a month, while 65 percent did not receive a hot meal at school for lunch. “We realized that without a significant awakening of the general public to significantly and continually pressure the decision-makers in the country, the social situation would not change and even may worsen,” said Shaked Susu, the chairman of the youth village student council who led the initiative.

“We are proud of our students, who are being educated first and foremost as involved citizens, giving back to the community, and not just [as] students who aspire to achieve the best results. The youth of today are the politicians, economists and social scientists of tomorrow, and their social engagement today is critical for building a more just and equal society,” said Prof. Rivka Lazovsky, Chairperson of World WIZO Executive.
A competition was held amongst the Day Care Centers that are affiliated to the ‘Day Care Center and More….‘ project. The staff were asked for suggestions for creative ideas to increase income, to cut costs and to improve employee’s welfare. The DCC’s were asked to offer ideas which are easy to implement and which will contribute to the welfare of the children.

In the third place was the idea to send birthday card to mothers on their birthdays. This demonstrates caring and personal attention and increases the relationship between the family and the home.

In the second place was the idea to form a WIZO choir, which would represent WIZO at special occasions and would be a fun recreational activity for employees.

The first prize was divided between two Day Care Centers who suggested a national sports competition in which would take part the Day Care Centers and other WIZO institutions in the country. This would increase the sense of being part of a big organization.
130 children, and their parents enjoyed a Purim Happening, with music and movement activities, make up demonstrations and games, in the WIZO Open House in Sderot.

After the event one parent wrote:

'Every time I come here I am surprised anew. You are unbelievable. It is always a pleasure to come to the 'Open House'

Single mothers who can now receive funding to help pay for the tuition in the Day Care Centers, by joining the workforce with the help of "Paths to Employment", which is one of many projects of the Friends of Toronto Foundation. The project targets single mothers with at least one child of the early age, who has begun to work recently, and is finding it hard to pay fees to the Day Care Center, women who are married to a partner who is dysfunctional, women from the Ethiopian community.
A 'Day of Bonding' for the Directors of the all the Day Care Centers included a full day workshop in which the directors took part in an action packed challenge. It was an opportunity for them to share their ideas with one another, and to learn from each other. They had an unforgettable day.

Mishloach Manot, care packages, were distributed in the Children’s Departments at Hadassah Hospital in Mt. Scopus by the staff of the Falic WIZO Day Care Center in Maaleh Adumim, which is under the sponsorship of WIZO USA. This was an initiative of both the staff and the parents of the children in the Day Care Center.
Pesach is one of the most challenging holiday season for parents of young children. The Pesach holiday includes days of vacation, family meals are long and drawn out, and the diet is different than normal, with a variety of traditional dishes. Overall, a cause for celebration, but sometimes it is not so simple as it seems. The Mukpatz magazine provided a number of useful solutions for everyone to enjoy the holiday.

Nutrition is the key components in raising children to be both physically and mentally healthy. The WIZO Early Age Division prepares a colorful newsletter, Mukpatz, which is sent out each month to thousands of parents.

Eitan, together with his brother, Jonathan (6) and his sister, Ariel (3.5) drink a green smoothie from a recipe in the Mukpatz magazine. It is packed with vitamins and minerals, and includes a combination of vegetables and fruits which includes bananas, strawberries, oranges and apples.
On April 19th, the traditional event for the graduates of WIZO Nir Haemek, took place. All the graduates appeared in their army uniforms and in good spirit! They all spoke of their memories, and their longings, for Nir Haemek, both the external students and those who lived in the dormitory. They hugged one another, and their teachers. We gave them all our blessings. It was very moving to see our pupils many of whom are in top fighting units, full of motivation and love for their country.

Holocaust Day ceremonies were held in all our WIZO schools and youth villages, including at the Municipal Technological High School in Rehovot. 50 graduates arrived at the ceremony, in full army uniform. The students heard stories from Holocaust survivors, whom, we are sorry to say, are slowly leaving us. In most ceremonies reference was made to the increase in anti-Semitism that is sweeping through many countries yet again.
I attended the Memorial Ceremonies that was held at WIZO Gan VeNof in the evening and CHW Hadassim in the morning. I read out a very moving song that was written by Orian Shukrun, a graduate of the WIZO Maalot Tarshicha Music Center at the time of the Protective Edge Campaign. During the Protective Edge campaign he and a friend decided to meet when it was over, and enjoy a beer together. But when they did meet again, it was at the funeral of his friend’s officer, who was killed during the operation. Orian wrote the music to the song called, ‘After You Return’ in his memory, which was played continually in the media:

"After you return, we’ll set the table for you…
After you return, we’ll put out the flags,
We’ll wipe away the tears, we’ll dress the wounds.
After you return we’ll suddenly breathe again…
After you return the light will shine for you,
Promise just one thing – promise that you’ll return."

A movie “To Remember/To Forget”, was produced by a group of students in the youth leadership group known as “Young Ambassadors” from Pisgat Ze’ev in East Jerusalem which is under the direction of the WIZO Kagan Center for Community Media, as part of a program promoting voluntary and social involvement for youth.
A few days before Passover, each age group in WIZO Nachlat Yehuda, held a Passover seder, which was a new experience for some pupils who are unfamiliar with this age old tradition.

11th and 12th grade students from the school participated in a Hosen (resilience) international youth program and learning program. Several months ago students in the school ‘adopted’ the Bulgarian nursing home in Rishon Lezion and are working with the elderly, within the framework of a national project of the Ministry of Education which has been adopted by the youth village and involves activities with the elderly and the sick.

Pupils in the eighth grade in Canadian Hadassah WIZO Hadassim built a solar stream as part of their ‘green’ studies.

The water flows in the stream using solar power and amperage depending on the amount of light. The project was set up as part of a scientific study in alternative solutions to energy problems.
In a traditional ceremony, that takes place every year, the chametz at Beit WIZO was sold for the duration of the Pesach holiday by Prof. Rivka Lazovsky, Chairperson of World WIZO.

WIZO's second hand shops, the 'Bigudit' chain, held a fashion parade watched by hundreds of passers by at the Tel Aviv railway station. Although it seemed spontaneous it involved much planning. A film of the event was seen by an audience of 360,000 viewers on the social media.

A very special and moving ceremony to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day was held at Beit WIZO. As sirens wailed all over the country and we all stood together with our heads bowed, in a true atmosphere of unity and sisterhood.
To mark International Women's Day, WIZO, together with Wikimedia Israel (which supports Wikipedia in Israel) initiated a unique competition which calls upon writing items about 150 women in Israeli society, and in the Jewish world, who have not yet received recognition in Wikipedia.

The competition will last for two months, prizes will be awarded and a ceremony will be held in Beit WIZO. During the period of the competition many events will be held throughout the world with the framework of ‘Women’s Month’, which are being organized by Wikipedia.

There is a need to increase the information about leading women and to expose their unique activities. A list of 150 women, who have made their mark in various spheres of influence, and have not yet been recognized is being created. The spheres include education, culture, economics, defense, sport and society.

This project will contribute to change and advance gender equality, and the 150 women who will be included will serve as role models for many others.
WIZO Israel is increasing its efforts for the Prevention of Violence in the Family. WIZO runs two battered women's shelters in a protected and secluded environment for women and their children and prepares them for independent and violence free lives.

WIZO also operates centers for the prevention of violence where families come for treatment while staying together and a help line for violent men seeking assistance.

The poster reads, 'She is the daughter of all of us, we have to stop violence in the family'.
And finally.................

As this edition of What’s New in WIZO goes to press hundreds of rescuers with the Israel Defense Forces are readying to leave for Nepal in a bid to assist the Himalayan country to deal with the devastating aftermath of an earthquake a day earlier.

“Because we are coming in a relatively short time, we are hoping to find survivors underneath the rubble, so for this stage the main mission is to save lives,” said Col. Yoram Loredo, who is the commander of the Search and Rescue Corps and the head of the IDF delegation to Nepal. The IDF delegation rented two Boeing 747s to carry personnel and 95 tons of supplies.

The field hospital will include “pediatric, surgical, internal medicine, neonatal, and radiology departments as well as a maternity ward and emergency and operating room,” The IDF said in a statement. “This is a large, high-end delegation with a considerable staff, including the 40 doctors and nurses of the field hospital,” Laredo said in the statement.

“[You are being sent on an important mission,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Laredo before he took off. “This is the real face of Israel — a state that comes to assist those far away at moments like these. Good luck, we are counting on you.”

May God bless them all.

With warm regards

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson
World WIZO Executive