I am delighted to welcome so many of my dear WIZO sisters to WIZO House for the 2017 World WIZO Meeting of Representatives (MOR). In the spirit of good governance, the World WIZO Executive voted NOT to host this year’s MOR at the Hilton Hotel, thereby saving our movement a considerable amount of money, which can and must be better spent on the focus of ALL our endeavors - to strengthen and empower the citizens of the State of Israel.

Indeed, it is fitting to host the MOR in WIZO House, to bring you into the operational nucleus of all our projects. It is from here that we chaverot supported by our dedicated professional workforce oversee every aspect of WIZO in the field, in a bid to deliver a service to the people of Israel that is relevant and that moves with the times to address today’s needs and the additional needs of tomorrow.

It is to WIZO House that we chaverot come every morning armed with purpose and commitment to do everything in our power to serve the State of Israel by the safeguarding of its most precious commodity, the people. And we do it not for applause, nor for praise - we do it because WIZO is our calling. We are obliged and privileged to serve. No matter how difficult the decisions we must make, no matter how heavy the burden of organizing and implementing practices and policy, we WIZO women have no choice. If not us, then who?

To be a part of that WIZO magic, to be a cog in the wheel that powers the people of our nation is indeed a vocation. It is the expression of our Zionism, our love for our spiritual homeland and our commitment to all Israel’s tomorrows.

I am proud to host you, our worldwide chaverot, in WIZO House here in Tel Aviv. I am pleased to share with you our many achievements - that have only been made possible by your valued contribution and commitment.

I hope you will be inspired by your time here in WIZO’s embrace, in your spiritual homeland and I hope you will enjoy reading about those little sparkles of light that make up the WIZO IMPACT.

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson, World WIZO
From birth until golden age, WIZO accompanies the people of Israel on their journey through life. She is both the helping hand that shares the load and the guiding light that shines on those who otherwise would know only darkness.

It has been this way since even before the fulfilment of the Zionist dream in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Almost 28 years prior to that, ever since our founding WIZO mothers came to (then) British-Mandate Palestine and stared into the abyss of a forgotten, persecuted and forlorn people suffering from abject hunger, disease and dreadful conditions, WIZO has given hope and fulfilled promises. Against that backdrop of despair at a time when the land of Israel was primitive and inhospitable the WIZO movement that we care for so deeply was founded. She took on the role of ‘mother of necessity’ and she rolled up her sleeves and got to work repairing lives and building the framework of social services that has become both her trademark and her legacy. WIZO, the mother of necessity, gathered her children (the children of Israel) to her breast and she nursed them. She educated, she nourished and she cared for them - and mobilized a worldwide army of WIZO volunteer forces; mother to daughter, sister to sister, friend to friend in pursuit of the implementation of her wholly Zionist principals - the strengthening of Israeli society. And she continues to do so.

Through every high point and low point in the history of our glorious and brave State of Israel and in the years before, in times of great hardship, of wars and enduring terror, of mass aliyah and hopeless poverty, WIZO has been there, ready to do whatever is necessary, to ensure the well-being and fortification of the people.

From that first ‘tipat-halav’ (drop of milk) delivered on the Donkey Express to the malmourished mothers of Jerusalem who had no other means of feeding their babies some 97 years ago, WIZO raised a nation and continues to do so. The WIZO graduate of today who passes his matriculation with distinctions and looks forward to a bright future does so in the knowledge that it was WIZO that gave him that all-important second chance after he was branded a failure by his former school.

For the mother of the child who, even at the age of eight, was still too traumatized to sleep in her own bed for fear of the noises in the night that sent the family scurrying into a reinforced room, not once, not twice but hundreds of times throughout the summer of 2014, so grateful is she for the counselling and therapy both she and her children received from WIZO.

For the misguided teenage girl who made unscrupulous life choices because she desperately wanted to be loved yet didn’t even like herself, WIZO empowered her with the foundations on which to build herself a more fruitful future and for the young widower raising his children alone, WIZO strengthened his resolve to carry on, when his grief made life unbearable. And it is for his children, and his children’s children that WIZO must lay the groundwork for even brighter tomorrows.

WIZO will forever be the mother of necessity. And wherever the need arises, she will be there to provide support. It is up to us to be forever WIZO because, Chaverot, even as we race towards WIZO’s centenary, it is only just the beginning. We have so, so much more to do.
Ayala’s aunt gets some ‘me’ time

Ayala’s father never got to meet his beautiful new baby daughter. He was tragically killed while on active IDF service in Gaza in the summer of 2014 when his wife was just six months pregnant. When Ayala was born, she was rejected by her traumatized mother and was raised by her aunt and uncle, the sister and brother-in-law of Ayala’s father. They already had six children of their own and money was tight, but they did their very best for their late brother’s child.

Despite efforts by the family and teams of psychologists and psychiatrists, Ayala’s mother refused to have anything to do with her baby daughter and has since left the country.

When Ayala was six months old, she was placed in the care of a WIZO Day Care Center by the welfare authorities, giving her aunt, Ruti, some much-needed breathing space during the day. Ayala thrives at daycare. She is a well-adjusted, happy little child who loves to draw pictures and always rewards her aunt with a beaming smile as she proudly hands her little works of art when she comes to collect her at the end of the day.

Ayala’s aunt Ruti, whose own children are much older than Ayala, relied heavily on the help she receives from the WIZO Day Care Center staff. She explained:

“WIZO Day Care Center is more than just a place for Ayala to learn, to play, to feel safe and loved. It also provides respite for me. I lost my dearly beloved young brother and now with the added responsibility of taking on his beautiful baby, I just need ‘time off’ so I can figure out how to maintain the balance in my already large family. Without the WIZO Day Care Center, I don’t think I could have coped with all this,” she said, “and what about my poor little Ayala? She is just a baby. Every time I look at her I think of my dear brother. She is the image of him. I dread to think what would have happened to her if we did not have WIZO in our lives.”

The WIZO model of supporting the family

Ayala attends a WIZO Multi-Purpose Day Care Center where she is cared for from seven in the morning until seven in the evening. This takes the pressure off Ayala’s aunt, giving her precious free time during the day so that she can attend to the home, chores, and the needs of her own children and husband. The staff at the Day Care Center and the supervisors closely monitor the functioning of the family, in a positive and effective manner. The Day Care Center serves as an ‘open house’ for parents, encouraging them to participate in daily activities with their children. They are seen as full partners in deciding upon programs and being involved in their implementation. Aunt Ruti has benefitted greatly from this partnership, especially with guidance, counselling and nutritional aspects - and the Parents Help Line, to which Ruti turned when Ayala would neither feed nor sleep, and she just did not know what to do. The calm and competent voice on the other end of the phone was just the tonic that Ruti needed in order to soothe herself enough to effectively pacify her young niece.
Shulli designs for a sparkling future

Shulli is 17 years old, a student at the WIZO Maya Rosenberg Technological High School in Rehovot (sponsored by WIZO Brazil and WIZO France). He lives with his father, a widower. His elder brother currently serves in an infantry unit in the IDF. His mother died when he was 13 years old, just months after he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah.

Growing up in a rough area of the city, with very little parental control, Shulli was already known to the police for his involvement in street brawls with other disaffected youth. His father worked long hours as a bus driver and Shulli’s relationship with his elder brother was very strained. As Shulli explained, "he was the one that got the good grades and I was the one that got into trouble."

Shulli first came to the WIZO School in the tenth grade. His class teacher recalls, "Shulli’s attitude was very poor at first. He had no expectations of himself and even less of the school. If he came to class at all, he came late, never did his homework and when challenged about it, he would just shrug his shoulders and offer no explanation. We soon realized that his poor attitude was merely a façade behind which Shulli concealed his academic shortcomings."

Shulli benefitted greatly from the Mahut Center, which operates within the school learning syllabus, promoting empowerment and insight for students like him who have serious educational difficulties. Shulli responded well to the one-to-one sessions and small class sizes. As his schoolwork improved his self-confidence grew and his bravado subsided.

"Suddenly, I found myself actually enjoying my studies, and I realized that I could also excel as my brother had done," said Shuli, who had a curious habit of twisting paper clips into intricate shapes. It was a habit that led him to choose a course in jewelry manufacture for which he has great talent.

"Look at my designs," he says with pride, pointing to a shining display of elaborately-crafted metal collars and bangles in the glass cabinets outside the principal’s office.

Now in the 12th grade, Shulli has a different mind-set. He believes in his own ability to achieve. The academic, vocational and life lessons he has learned ensure not only full matriculation success, but the promise of a sparkling future. He plans to follow his brother’s example and enlist in a high profile unit in the IDF. Shulli also confided that after the army he would like to continue with jewelry making on a professional level, perhaps to study gemology and work with diamonds. He hopes to one day launch his own jewelry line - "All hand-made in Israel, by me!" he says, "You'll see them in all the top fashion magazines, I promise you!"
Natasha finds her savior at school

Natasha, who never knew her father, was rejected by her mother and spent her early years in an orphanage in the Ukraine. When she was three years old, her biological mother had a change of heart and collected her and her brothers and they made Aliya to Israel. Natasha’s formative years were spent abandoned in various boarding schools in Israel. The years of rejection had left her with great emotional scars and the trauma of returning to live with her mother had broken her spirit even further as the home situation was fraught with problems.

Natasha’s mother, clearly unstable and unable to cope with her children, lashed out at Natasha both verbally and physically. There was also the strong suspicion that Natasha was sexually abused by one of her elder brothers. On one occasion, Natasha slipped and broke both her legs and recalls the utter desperation she felt at being left alone and immobile at home, neglected and helpless, unable to move herself to go to the toilet or to get anything to eat.

In light of these revelations Natasha was removed from her home by the courts. In the various youth villages that she later attended, Natasha fitted in well with her surroundings and made good progress.

However, three years ago, her mother insisted that Natasha came back to live at home and Natasha was enrolled in the WIZO-uk-sponsored Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family Vocational School. The transition from the framework of a youth village to living back at home was challenging as once again the shy and self-conscious Natasha became embroiled in a cycle of neglect and abuse. It was only at the WIZO school that she was able to find any respite from her tormented home life, particularly in the company of the compassionate school staff who always provided her with a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on.

The WIZO School became her savior.

Within the nurturing framework of the school, Natasha felt secure but she was still prone to violent outbursts when her frustrations of continued rejection at home got the better of her. Eighteen months ago, she escaped from home to a temporary shelter. Deep, unresolved mental health issues caused her to self-mutilate, and on one occasion she cut her wrists so deeply that she had to be taken to the emergency room. School staff decided to take her for risk assessment at a mental hospital because of fears of her committing suicide.

Natasha underwent a series of therapeutic counselling sessions at school which have enabled her to work through her issues. Natasha is very close to her class teacher in whom she has found a warm and consoling mother-substitute. She has taken Natasha under her wing and gives her the love and attention she truly deserves. In return, Natasha has rewarded her teacher with a genuine willingness to learn and excellent grades in her classwork. With the help of a comprehensive customized therapeutic program Natasha has been equipped with exceptional coping skills and impressive self-awareness. She has also learned how to be more assertive and confident and has begun to take pride in her appearance.

Today, Natasha is a bright, cheerful and helpful young lady. She shows a great zest for life and excels in her studies. She is expected to pass her matriculation exams with flying colors. Next year she intends to go in the army.
**Believing in Boaz**

Boaz (not his real name) came to the WIZO-sponsored Rebecca Sieff Centre for the Family Vocational School in the tenth grade to train to be a cook. He had a history of attention deficit disorder (ADHD) and severe learning disabilities. He had been suspended from his former school for his anti-social and disruptive behavior. Despite this, he was intelligent, sensitive and curious. On a school trip to the Mount Herzl Museum, it became apparent that he had never before been on a day out due to his erratic behavior. He could not control his actions. He shouted and lashed out.

The WIZO School one-to-one counselling and therapies revealed that his emotional issues related to a fraught relationship with his parents and hearing difficulties when he was a small child. Through drama therapy at school Boaz was able to express his emotions in various ways, which helped him moderate his impulsive reactions. The school facilitated a series of meetings with Boaz’s mother and the class teacher to improve mother/son relations, and as a result Boaz’s mother gained a greater insight into her son’s needs and received instruction on how to improve their complicated relationship.

“I am so grateful to WIZO” said Boaz’s mother, “I was becoming so scared of my own son. I never knew when he was going to explode in one of his rages. I just did not know how to handle him. Staff at the WIZO school knew. They helped us both work out our feelings towards one another. Now we are so much closer.”

Boaz came to the WIZO school with a criminal record and a parole officer. In the eleventh grade, he was sentenced by the courts to do public service and attend an anger management course. After completion of this his criminal record file was closed. This was due in no small part to the encouragement and support of the therapeutic and educational staff who worked in collaboration with Boaz’s parole officer.

Boaz, despite his disabilities, understood the importance of attending school. His greatest punishment was a suspension for a day or two. However, during the three years that Boaz was at the WIZO school, he was instrumental in causing damage and problems because of his anti-social behavior. Sometimes, he even refused to take his medication for management of his ADHD, which led to debate within the school management about his suitability to attend, but in the end WIZO refused to give up on him. Seeing the willingness in Boaz to learn, the strong bond of friendship between him and other pupils and the improvement in his cognitive abilities, it was decided to give him another chance. In the 12th grade at the ‘HaGadna’ army cadet program, Boaz persevered three days before his unruly behavior towards the military staff caused him to be dismissed from the course. This came as a wake-up call to Boaz.

Boaz realized that he was too immature for military discipline and the only way he could enlist was through ‘Havat Hashomer’ (a program designed to help disadvantaged youth who are considered at-risk to enlist), which was something Boaz had refused to do before. Now, he realized it was the only way.

Boaz graduated school with several matriculation certificates and a cookery diploma. He continued his national service in the Israeli Air Force, where he learned English. He went to the USA and is currently studying business management.

Despite the challenges that both Boaz and the school faced, Boaz understood from the start that the school was there for his benefit. The school staff persevered despite Boaz’s behavior and were able to give him the resources for him to make the very best future for himself.
Igor comes home to HaAhuza Haktana

Igor’s mother was a single parent. She worked as a prostitute. Igor did not know his father. No other family members lived in Israel.

At the local school that he attended in Haifa, teachers were becoming increasingly alarmed at Igor’s appearance and apathy. He was dirty, his clothes unwashed and he was very lethargic. Often, he would put his head down on the desk and fall asleep in the middle of lessons. When the children were asked to bring things in for festivals or class projects, Igor never did and his mother never responded to the school’s numerous requests for meetings with her to discuss Igor’s progress.

There was one occasion when Igor was found in possession of a chocolate bar that another pupil said he had stolen from his school bag. When confronted about it, Igor broke down in tears and admitted that he could not help himself. Temptation had got the better of him because he was so hungry.

A school counsellor went to Igor’s home. She was horrified at what she saw. Igor lived in a filthy, cold, one-room apartment with his mother in a very rough area of Haifa. Just one flimsy curtain separated her bedroom where she received her clients, from his cramped space, which was strewn with rubbish.

Igor admitted to being sent to stand outside for long periods during the night, which explained his falling asleep in the day.

Eight-year-old Igor was referred by the welfare services to HaAhuza Haktana, a facility for younger children at the WIZO Australia-sponsored flagship project Ahuzat Yeladim Youth Village.

Teachers and therapists set to work to repair this young boy’s childhood, which was so adversely affected by his living arrangements and fragmented relationship with his mother. He told his counsellor that he did not understand what his mother was doing but it made him feel very sad that she made him go out onto the cold and dark streets for long periods during the night.

Igor settled in well at HaAhuza Haktana. For a child who never knew what it was to have a cooked meal and to be cared for in a warm family environment, he felt that he had ‘come home’. For the first time in his life there was a framework, the way he imagined other kids had. A time to go to bed, a time to get up, to have breakfast, to do homework. Now, he has a new-found enthusiasm for school and takes great pride in tending the plants in the herb garden. He feels a sense of belonging and he feels safe. “They love me here!” He said.

Igor has been under the care of WIZO for two years now. In this time, counsellors have facilitated meetings with his mother and they are working together in an attempt to build up a relationship. For the time being, Igor prefers to spend Shabbat and festivals in the secure family atmosphere in the Shabbat House at Ahuzat Yeladim, where he is assured a warm bed, nutritious, home-cooked meals, supervision and help with his homework, and maternal hugs from a very caring house-mother.
LISTENING TO THE HEART

“The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause that you consider to be good.” (Ivan Scheier). I totally agree with this quote, which is why I volunteer for WIZO.

Every act of philanthropy, whether it be the donation of time (volunteerism), resources or money, originates from that little voice within that compels us to give. It is the heart’s way of making itself heard.

We, WIZO chaverot, all listen to that same voice, we are guided by it, and it is in the giving that we respond. Giving is not tangible, its reach is infinite but what can be measured is the impact that it makes on the recipient.

In my office here at WIZO House, I have an enormous and somewhat untidy box file entitled ‘Stories from the Projects’ – inside it there are many notes, testimonies, and reports. Every day, I add more and more. These stories are all the results of the impact of giving, and that is what you read here in the WIZO IMPACT.

“Seeing is believing” is nowhere more pertinent than in WIZO. Visiting the projects is the best way to feel the real impact of your giving. When you actually set foot inside WIZO’s projects, or you witness first hand the difference that WIZO services make then the impact of giving can be felt in a far more profound way. It is so much more than words on paper. Out there in ‘the field’ the impact of giving is alive, it breathes. It laughs, it cries.

However, even though our world is closer because we make it that way, the distance between our home countries makes visiting ALL WIZO projects impossible. This is why there is a great need to bring you the stories. It is up to us, all of us, here at World WIZO, to bring the magic to you in words, in pictures, in video – using every medium and platform that we have available in the most effective way possible.

Writing The WIZO IMPACT is my way of responding to that little voice that tells me to give. I hope it brings you pleasure. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need stories from YOUR projects to assist you in your WIZO endeavors.

From chavera to chavera, I am always happy to be of service.