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President’s Desk

This past year, Taf-Shin-Samech-Het (5768 – ת”שח-,”), was a good year for World WIZO. It began in January when over 1000 chaverot from all over the world gathered in Tel-Aviv to participate in the 24th World WIZO Conference (2008 EGM), demonstrating the strength of our movement and the stability of our sisterhood.

On February 18th, WIZO and the Ministry of Education announced the “WIZO supports Sderot and the Gaza Border Communities” campaign that was launched at the 2008 EGM to support the traumatized and stressed out educational personnel. Federations and chaverot didn’t hesitate and pledged $1,000,000 to this new campaign, that offered weekend hospitality (for educational staff and families) and relaxation rooms in educational institutions and a multi purpose pedagogic center to provide a supportive, strengthening and empowering program for the local educational staff, and for the children and parents of the Early and School Age who desperately need this type of support.

The WIZO Margaret Thatcher Day Care Center was chosen to house the new project. This is another demonstration of how WIZO adapts to the needs of the hour.

In May the State of Israel marked its 60th Day of Independence and the State of Israel bestowed upon WIZO the prestigious Israel Prize for its lifetime achievement to improve and advance the Community and Society in Israel. The true recipients of the Israel Prize are you the World WIZO members and supporters – our grassroots – our volunteers worldwide whose selfless devotion, dedication, love and commitment to the People and Society in Israel make WIZO so very special and successful.

June saw another World WIZO Federation born - WIZO Serbia. This is very exiting news and I hope it heralds the beginning of a new WIZO era in that part of Europe.

This year, WIZO.uk, our founding federation, celebrated its 90th Anniversary and I had the honor to participate in some of the celebrations. Canadian Hadassah WIZO celebrated 90 years of Zionist activity in Canada and WIZO USA celebrated its 25th Anniversary.

On July 16th, the bodies of our soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser were returned. As an integral part of the Israeli public we shared in the families’ sorrow, and continue to pray for the safe return of Gilad Shalit.

The current global economical trends, the weakness of the dollar and the high cost of building affect life in Israel and have direct bearing on our various World WIZO projects. These trends affect us all, but especially the vulnerable members of our society bringing a new and additional wave of needy people to seek WIZO’s assistance. But in its 88 year history, World WIZO and its Federations have overcome very difficult obstacles and will brave this storm as well.

This past year I visited many of our Federations in Europe and once again I witnessed and experienced our chaverot’s endless love, commitment and support for our blessed WIZO work. The new Jewish year Taf-Shin-Samech-Tet (5769 – ת”שת) will soon be here. The New Year is symbolized by the letter Tet (ט) – the first letter of the Hebrew words: good (טו), purity (טומט), nurturing (טומט), care (טומט), reason (טו), words that have a lot in common with our WIZO work.

Our founding mothers’ legacy to us is that when we have a purpose, women are definitely a power to contend with and we can turn dreams into reality and make a difference, even when others believe it to be impossible. This legacy will lead us to bigger and better achievements.

Shana Tova

Helena Glaser

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As I write this column, we are once again approaching Rosh Hashana and our thoughts are turned to the New Year. We look forward to a year which will be full of WIZO activities and successes. It has not been an easy year. We have suffered terrorist attacks, and when the newspapers did not have headlines referring to the security situation, they were filled with news of one scandal or another.

But who can forget that magical moment on Mt. Herzl, on the eve of the 60th anniversary celebrations, when a blind, scarred young boy held a burning torch and said, in an unwavering voice, “I, Oren Almog, a ninth grade pupil in Haifa, who lost five members of my immediate family in a terrorist attack on the Maxim Restaurant five years ago, as well as losing my sight, I who returned to my studies in school and last year won the Bronze Medal in the World Sailing Championship for the Blind, light this torch in honor of the power to live with pain, not to forget, but to overcome and be rehabilitated, and in Honor of the State of Israel”.

In lighting the torch, Oren was representing our magnificent youth who are sparked by motivation, whatever their circumstances, and are still ready to sacrifice their lives for the miracle of this country which is standing up to terrorism and reaching for that elusive dream of peace.

We in WIZO are honored to have the opportunity to invest in the education of those who hold the key to our future. We are helping them to realize their full potential, so that we, in the future, can benefit from them and build up a country based on values of equality, true democracy and respect for one another. But we cannot do it alone, and you are our partners in everything that we are achieving, and trying to achieve in the future. During the past year we celebrated your contributions with, amongst other ceremonies:

- The inauguration of the Kahn Sports Hall at WIZO Nir Haemek.
- The cornerstone ceremony for the expansion of the Korsonsky Community Center in Kfar Saba.
- The 2008 World WIZO Conference attended by over 1,000 women.
- The unveiling of the Susi Bradfield Dormitory in WIZO Nahalal.
- The opening of the expanded Sherman House in WIZO Beersheba for girls at high risk.
- The opening of three new family units for girls in distress with a donation from the Camhi family in WIZO Hadassim.
- The inauguration of the Joseph Keller Sports Center and prayer room, in WIZO Nahalal.
- A Home for Graduates was dedicated in the name of the Falic family, in WIZO Nir Haemek.
- The inauguration of the Rae and Tom Mandel Basketball Court and refurbished boys’ dormitory in WIZO Ahuzat Yeladim.
- The awarding of the 2008 Israel Prize to WIZO.

Each ceremony represents a different aspect of our work, and the hard work of a different federation. Together they are like a large bouquet of flowers, representing our WIZO sisterhood, filled with color and bringing so much joy to those who see them.

May we all enjoy a year in which we can continue with our WIZO work surrounded by peace, health and prosperity. I wish you all a Happy and Peaceful New Year.
Improvements at Ahuzat Yeladim thanks to Rae and Tom Mandel

The new basketball court in the name of Rae and Tom Mandel, major donors from Australia, was inaugurated on July 9[nd] at the WIZO Ahuzat Yeladim School (sponsored by WIZO Australia). Rae and Tom were visibly moved throughout the whole ceremony, and as Tom gave a most emotional address, tears were in his eyes as he looked at the children, knowing how much they were being helped by the donation. WIZO World Chairperson Tova Ben-Dov, the moderator of the moving occasion, thanked the donors for their warm-hearted generosity. She added that WIZO Australia President Jo Gostin greatly regretted not being able to be present, and thanked her for her involvement.

The event was attended by His Excellency James Larsen, Australian Ambassador to Israel, generous donors the Fink family from Australia and members of the World WIZO Executive and others.

Ahuzat Yeladim Director Yossi Saragossi said: “I stand here in the heart of Ahuzat Yeladim, and without a heart we could not have reached such wonderful achievements.” Entertainment was provided by girls from the school who gave a dance performance.

Then one of the boys approached Mr. Mandel with a basketball and asked him to start the game, which he was delighted to do! Only a few weeks later, on August 26[th] one of the boys’ dormitories at the school was dedicated, with funds for the refurbishment donated by the Mandels. In her heartwarming address, Tova Ben-Dov said, “we are triply blessed to be here, for this is the third project that Rae and Tom Mandel have chosen to donate to WIZO Ahuzat Yeladim.” Their first project was the refurbishment of the school’s kitchen and dining room, followed by the basketball court, and now the dormitory. With the pupils about to begin school in September, a battle against the clock began. The work was carried out night and day, and the efforts of all concerned from the World WIZO Building and Maintenance Department, chaired by Ruth Tamir and Ora Baharaff, department director and engineer Doron Yehieli and the contractors, were successful, and the boys were able to begin the new school year in a sparkling new building, the rooms complete with en suite showers. They were also greeted with brand new bathrobes, donated by the Mandels, and colorful quilts on each bed, donated by WIZO Australia. Each room has a mezuzah hand-made by Ethiopian immigrants, from the WIZO Adisia Project.

The ceremony was held in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Mandel, Ms. Nicoli Manning Campbell, the First Secretary and Deputy Head of Missions in the Australian Embassy, Italian journalist Anna Roli, Mr. Pini Wagman, Director of the Welfare Department in the Haifa Municipality, WIZO Israel Chairperson Yochy Feller, WIZO Haifa Chairperson Haya Kovach, members of WIZO Haifa, WIZO Ahuzat Yeladim School Director Mr. Yossi Saragossi and members of the World WIZO Executive. The affixing of the mezuzah was done by Rabbi Shaar Yeshuv, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, and Mr. Tom Mandel.

The children at WIZO Ahuzat Yeladim, who have been dealt a hard hand in life, have been shown, with the aid of the Mandels, that they really deserve encouragement, so that they have a chance to reach their full potential.
Pearl Lazarus @80

Durban, South Africa resident and WIZO member and supporter par excellence, the family of Pearl Lazarus recently marked her 80th birthday by donating a sefer torah in her name to Beit Protea a senior citizens’ home in Herzlia, where all residents are from English-speaking countries. Residents of the home, numerous family members and friends of Pearl, including a delegation of the World WIZO Executive, headed by Tova Ben-Dov, attended the moving and joyful ceremony.

The most moving tribute to Pearl was from her husband Bernhard, who emphasized what a successful career woman she was, her career being the raising of their six children and being a devoted community activist, a legacy continued by their children. “She was the No. 1 collector for charities, especially WIZO,” declared Bernhard to applause from the WIZO ladies. “She always cared for people who were lonely and in need and visited the sick, cheering them up with her radiant smile, which still lights up her face today.” Pearl has been active in WIZO for over 50 years and is a most generous donor, particularly to one of the WIZO battered women’s shelters, to which she has made a further donation to mark her 80th birthday. And as a culmination of her Zionist activities, she and Bernhard are making aliyah this coming September.

Welcome Home Danny and Janice!

After six successful years as Israel’s UN ambassador, Danny Gillerman and his wife, Janice arrived back in Israel this summer. At the World WIZO EGM this past January, Gillerman gave a resounding presentation and stated to loud applause: “I walk the corridors of the UN representing Israel with my head held high.”

Interviewed by the Israeli press prior to his return from New York, he revealed that before assuming his position at the UN, he had been warned that he would be “abused, attacked and criticized” and there wasn’t much he could do about it. However, he went to “make a difference” and there he succeeded, including making contacts with Arab representatives whose countries have no diplomatic relations with Israel, and being elected for a term as Vice President of the General Assembly (the first Israeli to be elected to this post since Abba Eban 55 years ago).

Before leaving for New York, Janice was very active in WIZO, volunteering as deputy chairperson of the WIZO Tel Aviv Fundraising Department and deputy chairperson of the World WIZO Tourist Department.

Keller Sports Center Dedicated

Distinguished WIZO Florida donor Sami Rohr dedicated the sports center in the WIZO Nahalal Youth Village to his best friend, Joseph Keller, in honor of his 80th birthday. Mr. Keller has devoted his life to the handicapped and this center provides facilities for people with physical impediments. The Rohr family, accompanied by the Katz and Tabacinic families, along with World WIZO President Helena Glaser and World WIZO Executive Chairperson Tova Ben-Dov attended the inauguration ceremony in Nahalal, where Mr. Keller dedicated a Torah in memory of his parents. Shacharit prayers and a Kiddush followed, accompanied by the beautiful words of Tova Ben-Dov. At the Sports Center they were welcomed with a basketball game in wheelchairs. This was followed by a trip to the WIZO Nir Haemek High School and Youth Village, where they toured the school and the synagogue dedicated in January 2007 to the memory of Charlotte Rohr’s parents Leah and Yekutiel Yehudah Kastner. This amazing experience ended at Bet Haboger which was inaugurated and dedicated by the Falic Family in honor of Samuel Falic’s Bar Mitzvah.

A smiling Pearl and husband Bernhard taking the sefer torah to the synagogue

(L-R) Tova Ben Dov, Joseph Keller, Helena Glaser, Sami Rohr
Challenging WIZO Youth

Israel Youth Award:
In the footsteps of the Duke of Edinburgh

This story could be titled “the Duke of Edinburgh comes to WIZO.” The new Israel Youth Award program has opened up new and challenging horizons for students at the WIZO schools and youth villages

It’s hard to describe the excitement generated at the monthly meeting of the World WIZO Manager Forum at WIZO House in Tel Aviv, when an entire session was devoted to a presentation about the Israel Youth Award, and the decision to involve WIZO’s youth villages and schools in the project. Veteran educator Moshe Bitman, who works with the World WIZO Education Division, gave an inspiring presentation about the Award, which made all present proud of WIZO’s participation in the project.

He said that there has always been a gap between the formal and informal side of education. The original Duke of Edinburgh Award was established in 1954 to help overcome this gap. Prince Philip, husband of England’s Queen Elizabeth whose official title is the Duke of Edinburgh had a teacher who was a German Jew, who had been inspired by the German youth movements. That approach to youth education, combined with the scouting tradition started by Baden-Powell in England, led to the creation of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Founded by Prince Philip

The Duke of Edinburgh Award was established by Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh in 1954 “to support the personality development and leisure-time activities of young people.” Since then almost five million young people from one hundred countries have taken part. In recent years, his sons Princes Andrew and Edward have assumed responsibility for the awards.
Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement

England has always been the source of initiatives connected to youth. After all, it was Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, the 1st Baron Baden-Powell, a lieutenant-general in the British Army, who founded the Scout Movement. In 1907 he held the first Scouting encampment at Brownsea Island in England, opposite the resort town of Poole. In 1908 Baden-Powell published “Scouting for Boys“, and by 2007, the world Scouts movement had 38 million members in 216 countries.

Since then, the Award has spread around the world, and each country, which has decided to participate in the program, has adapted it to its own needs and reality. In the Czech Republic the award is known as the Edie. In Israel it is called the Israel Youth Award.

A Four-Track Program

The Award program consists of four tracks:

1. Sports or physical activity
2. Hobbies
3. Hikes and challenge expeditions
4. Contribution to the community

The program is carried out with the full backing of the youth’s family. It was felt that the program was uniquely suited to WIZO’s structure and educational goals, and easily adapted to the boarding schools at the WIZO schools and youth villages.

The program also suits WIZO’s educational approach which requires observation and regulation of students and their studies, and encouraging each individual pupil to realize his or her fullest potential. In addition, it emphasizes the importance between education and the general community, which has always been one of WIZO’s most important values.

Another factor which is important is that achievements in studies are not an absolute requirement for succeeding with the Israel Youth Award, which enables students who have learning difficulties to participate as well. All six WIZO youth villages have agreed to participate, and today there are 260 WIZO students in the program.

Bronze, Silver and Gold

The program is divided into three award stages: bronze, silver and gold, like in the Olympics. The bronze award requires a commitment of one hour a week in each area of activity over the course of six to eight months. The silver requires two hours each week, and the gold requires three hours each week.

Much of the activity already exists in WIZO schools and youth villages, but the Award program introduces a systematic methodology, and creates a synergy between the areas.

To show how it works, Moshe described one student at a WIZO school who in addition to her studies is a counselor in the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement. She insisted that she had no time for a hobby, one of the required tracks. She was told that if she wanted to qualify for the award, and be a well-rounded individual, she had to develop at least one hobby. So she did.

Doing Wonders at Ahuzat Yeladim

“We have found the Award program to be a tremendous aid in our work” said Yossi Saragosi, the director of the Ahuzat Yeladim
The Zionist Youth Movements

Zionist youth movements were established in Eastern and Central Europe in the early twentieth century. Their goal was the national revival of the Jewish people in their own homeland. All emphasized aliya (immigration to the Land of Israel) and community, with many also focusing on a return to nature. Blau-Weiss is considered to have been the first Zionist youth movement. It was established in Germany in 1912, and inspired by the culture of outings, hikes and scouting activities prevalent in the general German youth movement, the Wandervogel. With the rise of anti-Semitism, pogroms in Eastern Europe and the barring of Jewish members from German youth groups, the Zionist youth movements grew throughout Eastern and Central Europe. The Jewish youth movement with the largest membership and most significant impact, 70,000 members in Poland alone, was Hashomer Hatzair, which promoted a socialist-Zionist ideology.

Youth movement graduates who came on aliyah were the founders of the kibbutzim and the first moshavim in Eretz Israel.

Boarding School (sponsored by WIZO Australia). Ahuzat Yeladim absorbs and educates youth from 12 to 18 from all over the country who have difficult behavioral problems, some of whom have criminal profiles or have been hospitalized. Forty percent of the students arrive at the boarding school as a result of a court order.

“We haven’t regretted for even a moment that we decided to participate in the Israel Youth Award Program.” Amir, the coordinator of cultural activities for the past six years, together with Inbal, who helps guide the youth in the program, described how they organized 28 different extra-curricular cultural activities connected to the program. Fifteen students began the program, and 12 have remained throughout.

Shai Steals the Show

The star of the show was 15-year-old Shai. He described how he originally comes from Tel Aviv, and now lives in the boarding school. Amir and Inbal said that the Award program has done wonders for him.

Shai prepared a written presentation, and without any stage fright, described all of the things he has accomplished in the course of the Award program. He was particularly proud of his contribution to the community in Haifa. He gives a few hours each week to an NGO called Hesed (Mercy) which provides food to the needy and homeless in Haifa. A photo of a smiling Shai giving out food appeared on the screen, to “prove” that he was telling the truth. He said that he gets great satisfaction when he helps other people. Shai was also very proud of the fact that his hobby is going to the gym to work out on a regular basis. Amir added that another Ahuzat Yeladim student participating in the program, Chen Lavi, listed his hobby as “rapper” (you can read the lyrics of his rap song “Won’t Exchange Israel” in WIZO Review No 318, page 16).

Yossi said that Shai also helps at the boarding school – he cooks and he also helps to care for the animals in the animal corner. He added that Shai makes use of all the Award tracks to improve his skills. A bonus element of the hiking track is that the participants at Ahuzat Yeladim will be going on a special Extreme Challenge trip by jeep, a 10-hour-trek, which will combine riding with walking. Moshe said that every WIZO youth who participates in the program has a booklet where they register their activities. When they complete the Israel Youth Award project they receive a special certificate at a public award ceremony.

Participants in the “extreme challenge” phase of the program in water and on horse-back.

At the Prize ceremony at the WIZO Hadassim school

Shai cooking and distributing food to the needy in Haifa

A WIZO Nahalal volunteer who teaches bike riding to physically challenged youth
“WIZO and I”

Dr. Dan Almagor, a well-known Israeli playwright, songwriter, translator and TV personality, presented a moving testimony to his mother, who was “an ordinary WIZO volunteer,” and to WIZO, at the WIZO Israel conference dedicated to the movement’s 85th anniversary. As a child, he didn’t know what “WIZO” meant, but he knew it was the right answer to the question “where is Mother?”

“My mother, may her memory be blessed, was a saint”,
Thus Bialik began his well-known poem.
My mother, Zehava Elblinger, was a devoted member of WIZO.
Not a Chairperson, not a Deputy, but an ordinary volunteer.

A saint? She herself would certainly oppose being called “saint”
But from my childhood I remember her taking advantage of every spare minute and quietly collecting, with her friends from the WIZO Rehovot branch, used clothing for the needy, always hurrying to organize a ‘bazaar’ for the hungry, the weak, the aged.
And when she would go out for a ‘Movie Day’
It wasn’t to the cinema, but to collect money for a sick person or a child, From street to street and door to door.
I didn’t understand what the word ‘WIZO’ meant; But I knew it was always the right answer to the question “Where is Mother?”
That my worried little sister asked.
She and her friends were always busy: cooking and baking cakes, Cutting and sewing and embroidering and knitting “Clothing for a refugee”, “a hot meal” for the immigrants in the transit camp,Searching for a day care center for homeless children, counselors for a confused young mother.
Our apartment was modest. The food was modest too, as in all the apartments in the area then;
But when WIZO was the subject – her hand was always open and generous.
My mother, may her memory be blessed, passed away before the age of fifty.
Not a painless death, suitable for saints, but in prolonged and painful suffering.
Even during the final days of her life she worried, “Will they collect enough clothing for the ‘bazaar’?”
And we asked ourselves: If, up there, they really weigh punishment and reward – How is it that all the many good deeds, though small, did not bring her merit?
And today, when I am twenty years older than the age at which she passed on, I do not know if Bialik’s mother was truly a saint,
But I am proud that my mother was a WIZO volunteer,
A devoted volunteer
An ordinary volunteer.
New Federation Established

Starting In Serbia

A friendship which developed between the wife of the Serbian ambassador to Israel, and Esther Mor, chairperson of the World WIZO Fundraising Department, led to the establishment of another new WIZO Federation

Ingrid Rockberger
Every WIZO woman knows the value of good contacts, and Esther Mor’s friendship with Jelena Isakov, wife of the Serbian ambassador to Israel, brought unexpected results. Esther had become friendly with Jelena through the International Women’s Club, a rather exclusive club in Israel, whose members are mainly diplomatic wives and Israeli women.

For the past two years, Esther has invited Jelena to the “Friends of WIZO” Sponsor a Child lunch and fashion show. (see page 37 for a report and photo of this year’s event).

Jelena was delighted to come and insisted on giving a donation to sponsor a child, rather than coming as an invited guest. “I kept saying to her jokingly, ‘we’ll have to open WIZO in Serbia,’ says Esther, when we spoke in her office in World WIZO headquarters in Tel Aviv. ‘To my amazement, one day she said ‘you know something Esther, I have spoken so much about WIZO in Serbia, that they want to open a WIZO there.’ I really thought she was joking, but she wasn’t!”

Jelena had been in touch with the Jewish community in Subotica, in the north of the country, specifically with Gina and Tole Karadzic. They were both extremely enthusiastic. Before speaking officially with Esther, Jelena had spoken to representatives at the Serbian Foreign Ministry, to make sure there would be no problem in opening a WIZO Federation in Serbia.

An official invitation

Soon, an official invitation arrived for Esther via the Serbian Foreign Ministry. All arrangements were made and the itinerary organized for a 4-day trip to Subotica and Novi Sad. At the beginning of June, Esther set off accompanied by Jelena as her official guide and translator.

Before departing Esther made sure she was well prepared: “I took loads of WIZO material: CDs, WIZO Reviews, WIZO pins and many gifts. I checked with the World WIZO Organization Department about what I had to do to establish the federation and make members. I thought about giving them a project to start with and chose a multi-purpose day care center which has no sponsor in the deprived Shapira neighborhood of Tel Aviv. I decided on renovating one room so I visited the center, we took photos and made an album so they could see what is needed.”

On arrival in Subotica Jelena and Esther were greeted by Derdei (pronounced Gergei) Karadzic. “I nicknamed her Gina, and that name stuck for our whole visit,” says Esther. “The first day was just social; she had arranged a meeting with other members of the Jewish community for the next morning.” Jelena had warned Esther: “They will smother you with kindness, they will make sure that every five minutes you will be eating something else” – and they did, particularly the local very strong arak-type drink ‘drakia’!

Gina and Tole

Gina was so excited and happy at Esther’s visit, especially meeting somebody Jewish and from Israel! She sang all the Hebrew songs she knew: “the happiness was bursting out of her eyes, she was so emotional,” related Esther.

On that first day, Gina told Esther her own story. As a two-year-old she was sent to Theresienstadt, where, she says, she was well treated. Fortunately she survived, as did her mother and brother, but her father did not survive. Gina is married to Tole “a giant of a man,” says Esther, “I tucked under his arm!” Tole is not Jewish but very pro-Jewish and Israel – he encourages Gina to keep her connections with the Jewish community. They have two daughters and a son, and several grandchildren. Tole is head of the Serbian football federation and he has arranged for an Israeli youth team to come to Serbia to play in a soccer tournament in September.

Synagogues in Subotica

During World War II, the town’s synagogues were not bombed and there remains a huge synagogue built in 1902 which the community is unable to care for, and they have ‘given’ to the municipality to maintain as a historical site and for cultural

WIZO History in Serbia

WIZO groups were formed in Serbia (then part of Yugoslavia) in the late 1920s, with a large group in Belgrade and other towns. When the Nazis occupied Austria in 1938 many Jews fled to Yugoslavia and WIZO members there took care of refugee children and helped finance their journeys to Palestine, thus saving many children from the Nazis. When the country was occupied by the Nazis in 1941, many people fled to Italy. Many WIZO activists who remained behind died in concentration camps. There are some heroic tales of WIZO volunteers who remained to help the community for as long as possible. After the war, the federation tried to revive itself, even sending a delegate to the first post-war World WIZO conference in 1946, but soon afterwards it was disbanded.
purposes. The World Monuments Fund listed the synagogue as a ‘precious, endangered, cultural site’ in 1996, 2000 and 2002. Three quarters of the community perished in the Holocaust and the survivors re-established the Jewish community, although the majority of them immigrated to Israel in 1948 when the state was founded.

Next to the big synagogue is a small one with a community center which is used today. Gina’s brother Tommy is a committed and leading member of the Jewish community in Subotica; he keeps the synagogue going and makes sure they have a minyan for services – indeed it is one of the few places in Serbia where there is a minyan. He and his wife, Katya have close links with Israel as they represent an Israeli company in Serbia.

Joining WIZO – a Commitment for Life
Here, in the community center they hold ceremonies, events, celebrations and fundraisers for the center. And it was here the next morning that Esther met with the leaders of the Jewish community. She sat with them for over two hours explaining all about WIZO. At the end of her talk, they unanimously decided they wanted to form a federation with Gina as their president.

“I explained that is a commitment for life and once they get really involved they will be hooked as we all are! Gina and Katya, who will be vice-president, are extremely enthusiastic and agreed to support one room in the day care center. I gave them WIZO pins and a new mezuzah for the community center and welcomed them to the WIZO family.”

A Serbian Kabbalat Shabbat
That evening, Esther was invited to join the community for Kabbalat Shabbat at the synagogue and community center, where she was given the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles. All those present were delighted and emotional to see her. The synagogue is very traditional, still very Ashkenazi; men and women sat separately, both with their heads covered. They were singing the songs and prayers in Hebrew which Esther found difficult to understand until she realized they were using the old Ashkenazi pronunciation. The community has prayer books which they have produced themselves. One side is in Hebrew, the other a Serbian transliteration of the Hebrew words with a translation at the bottom. At the Kabbalat Shabbat they sang all the traditional songs to welcome Shabbat, after which the president of the community welcomed Esther and asked her to say a few words. She told those attending how happy she was to be present and told them about WIZO, distributing the latest copy of WIZO Review so they could get an idea of the organization. They were all so happy and enthusiastic, and again Esther welcomed them all into the WIZO family!

Driving to Novi Sad
On the Sunday morning Esther and Jelena, drove to Novi Sad where they met with Yosip Sosberger, a leader of the town’s Jewish community. In 1930 when Serbia was part of Yugoslavia, a WIZO federation existed with a branch in Novi Sad, where the mother of ex Israeli Justice Minister and Holocaust survivor Tommy Lapid, who died recently, was a member. Yosip gave Esther some documents relating to the branch, which we are getting translated. Today in Novi Sad there are about 600 Jews, a community which is not as close-knit as that in Subotica. However, Yosip promised he would try to get the women together to restart WIZO there.

We cannot end this article without a few words about the special Jelena Isakov who brought WIZO into Serbia. Jelena was an orphan, and as a young child lived in foster homes before being adopted by a wonderful couple. Her ‘father’ was Yugoslavian ambassador to England. She always knew she was adopted and when she met Esther and heard about WIZO she could personally identify with the children WIZO cares for. Because of this, she wanted to help and get involved, and felt something should be done in her country as well, and she persuaded her husband to make the connections. Our sincere thanks to you, Jelena!

The big synagogue in Subotica
As I write this article, I am sitting in the warm sun, enjoying the calm of summer. Away from school pressures, social commitments and the day-to-day responsibilities that come with managing family life. What I know to be my normal everyday life in America, like so many other places in the world, is so different from the lives our Israeli sisters lead. To know peace, calm, happiness and security is not a given, it’s a dream and always a prayer away. Since attending the World Conference in January 2008, I have been working harder for WIZO, and sharing our vision for a strong and peaceful Israel with anyone who will listen. This past June, I had the privilege of addressing a packed room of young women at the WIZO “Children for our Children Fashion Show and Luncheon” held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in New York City. So many of the women who were there that afternoon knew nothing about WIZO other than that it raised money for Israel. Many thought it was a very religious, Hebrew-speaking, Israeli organization and the barrier to entry, therefore, was very high. A hush came over the room when I explained that I was just like each one of the women sitting there, and that they each had the power to affect other lives and make meaningful contributions to better a child’s future. These women realized that they could all be Aviv women. It is with this in mind that I am so excited to invite you to join me at the WIZO Aviv International Seminar which will take place in Israel from November 30 to December 4, 2008. I assure you that it will be a life-changing opportunity to meet with women from around the globe with the united purpose of bettering the lives of Israeli women and children, while strengthening the bond between World Jewry and the State of Israel. We have an amazing program planned. The Aviv Seminar is intended for women up to the age of 50 who would like to become more actively involved in WIZO. Seminars will provide empowerment tools for membership recruitment, fundraising, and leadership. We will be educated about the ongoing political situation in Israel, will tour WIZO projects and take side trips to see the country. I guarantee that this will be an extraordinary adventure that will enrich your lives.

Marci Waterman
Aviv Representative to the World WIZO Executive

JOIN US AT AVIV 2008!

The corridors are buzzing in World WIZO headquarters in Tel Aviv as preparations are well underway for the upcoming Aviv Seminar. If you know anyone who has attended one of our seminars you will have heard what an uplifting, unforgettable experience it is, so you won’t want to miss out!

At every Seminar, young WIZO women meet other women just like themselves from the four corners of the earth – women who care about their community, care about the destiny of the Jewish people, care about Israel, care about WIZO.

The Aviv Seminar experience forges deep and everlasting friendships, and in many cases, some years later, these same friends find themselves as presidents of their federations.

You have heard over and over again ‘seeing is believing’ – and there is no better way of putting it – it’s the simple truth; we will take you to some of our projects where you will see with your own eyes the difference WIZO makes to the less privileged members of Israeli society. You will hear Israeli women from diverse backgrounds tell you how WIZO has given them a new lease on life.

We will also take you to some of the most important landmarks on the Israeli scene…..and of course we know and understand you want time to chat, exchange ideas, and discuss your mutual problems with each other. There’ll be ample time for that; we will moderate workshops on membership recruitment and fundraising, and we look forward to hearing from you – your ideas and successful campaigns and recruitment drives you have carried out.

And last, but not least, on a more serious note we will have discussions on our Jewish identity and what lies ahead for Zionism and Judaism in the 21st century.

And… we almost forgot - there’ll be plenty of fun-time!

Don’t miss the 2008 International Aviv Seminar – sign up now!

From the 2006 seminar: Andrea Zisman (USA) making friends with WIZO day care center children
Samuel Falic’s Extraordinary Bar Mitzvah

He was one of the 12 people honored with lighting the torch on Independence Day in Jerusalem, followed by a wonderful party together with 1,200 guests at WIZO Nir Haemek Youth Village, has there ever been such an incredible way of celebrating a bar mitzvah?

Judit Groisman

Samuel Falic could not have imagined a more exciting two weeks. WIZO USA Vice-President Jana Falic, along with her husband Simon, decided to celebrate the bar mitzvah of their beloved son Samuel Moshe in Eretz Israel. They chose Israel as the location because the day of this momentous occasion coincided with that of the establishment of the state of Israel 60 years ago. Over 250 guests from the United States, Panama, Chile, Canada and Israel participated in an unforgettable experience that lasted eleven days. Their children Tila and Moshe Levi, Lisa and Gabriel Groisman and Shena, along with their parents Nili and Fima Falic and Pola Lekach, their grandchildren Danelle, Yona and Joseph, brothers Jerome and Debbie, Leon and Gila and their children, all traveled to Israel for the event.

Eleven Incredible Days

The focus of the trip was to rediscover the history and spirituality of the people of Israel and to attract those who had drifted away back to their roots. Daily trips were meticulously planned, and included the most significant historic, religious and politically meaningful sites in the country. After marking an emotional Memorial Day where the guests participated in solemn

Jerome, Simon and Leon Falic carrying the Torah scroll they donated to the Nir Haemek Synagogue

Family accompanying the brothers to the dedication ceremony
A Letter of Thanks to the Falic Family

They were all their children

The Falic Family from the United States organized a bar mitzvah celebration at WIZO Nir Haemek, a combination of a party and independence. It was a party that no one who was there will ever forget.

Ya’acov Shlezinger

What follows are excerpts from an article that appeared in the local Afula newspaper

This is a letter of thanks to a family that brought me moments of joy and inspiration, the likes of which I haven’t experienced in many years.

On the eve of Independence Day, after days of speculation about the fate of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, or in other words what lies ahead for all of us in Israel, a good family from the United States arrived and caused me and over 1,000 other people a sense of uplifting that no prime minister or other leader could provide.

This open thank you is being sent to the Falic family from Miami that decided to celebrate their son Samuel’s bar mitzvah, together with all of the students and teachers at the WIZO Nir Haemek school and youth village. I was there, and saw how the son was honored with the lighting of one of the 12 torches at the official Independence Day ceremony in Jerusalem, and how afterwards he flew to Nir Haemek in a helicopter, in order to arrive in time to celebrate with all the 1,000 guests, that he didn’t know personally, but was happy to invite to celebrate his joyous occasion with him, which was celebrated on our day of independence…

Total Zionism

The Falic Family from Miami arrived in Israel to be here on Independence Day in order to celebrate together with us. They brought with them another 250 guests, and created an event which was total Zionism, love of the land and love for each other, and they inspired many others with their ecstatic enthusiasm, with many of the American guests waving big Israeli flags without a single American flag. They entered the plaza carrying Samuel on their shoulders, with Hassidic songs playing on the loudspeakers in the background, flags waving in the breeze and images of the Western Wall showing on giant screens the size of three buildings overhead. This wondrous spectacle drew everyone into dancing circles. The fact that kids who only recently came on aliya, and kids who come from very deprived circumstances, were celebrating Yom Haatzmaut together with this well-off family from the United States, gave me a rare sense of uplifting. Seeing the youth from the Na’aleh program, who had come from Germany, South America and Eastern Europe, without their parents, to study at WIZO Nir Haemek, joining the hora circle together with the Falics and their guests, was an extraordinarily heartwarming sight.

Not the Alps but Jerusalem

The Falic family showed a video clip on the huge screens. The bar mitzvah boy was not seen traveling in Europe, or on the beaches of Miami. He was not seen skiing on the Alps or in other exotic locations. He and his family were seen visiting Israeli locations, from Metulla in the north to the Negev in the south. They were seen together with soldiers alongside tanks and planes, at the Sea of Galilee, at Massada, near the Western Wall and many other symbolic places. Samuel told all of the viewers of the film that, although he lives in the United States, his heart is with us, and he thinks and breathes the Holy Land…

Holding our hands, pushing us forward

The Falic family originally came from Tiberias, and after it succeeded in the United States, it knows how to share its success with others. And what it does it does out of pure Zionism, and it helps us to keep going. The students and graduates of the youth village today benefit from buildings, classrooms, a sports center, a performance hall, laboratories and much more, all thanks to the contributions of donors like the Falic family…

The Falic family is one of those families that is always there for us, holding our hands, and pushing us forward. They deserve all our honor and respect.
place. All 1,200 Nir Haemek students accompanied by their parents participated in what turned out to be one of the biggest private Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations in the country. Tall structures covered with Israeli flags surrounded the big field on the side of the school. A huge stage was set up where Nir Haemek dancers, as well as famous acts like Kobi Peretz and Subliminal, a very popular Israeli rap group, performed for the excited crowd. Video games and all sort of entertainment were made available to the children, as well as their favorite foods and drinks. From a huge platform built in the center of the field, the Falic guests enjoyed the party and watched in awe on two gigantic screens the majestic torch lighting ceremony, which marked the country’s achievements in all spheres of life, being held on Mount Herzl at the same time.

### Samuel Lights one of the 12 Torches

Their very own son, Samuel Moshe, had been selected by the Knesset to light one of the twelve torches representing the Twelve Tribes. Samuel proudly represented the connection between Diaspora youth and the homeland, and their hearts were filled with pride and joy. It was the culmination of a lifelong dream for Jana and Simon Falic and they shared it with unparalleled joy and generosity with the WIZO family. A grandiose display of fireworks marked the conclusion of a celebration that will forever live in the hearts of the children of Nir Haemek, the people of Afula and all those fortunate to be part of this incredible experience.
“We still dream of being a light unto the Nations”

All who were present at or viewed the 2008 Israel Prize ceremony on Israel’s 60th Independence Day were inspired by the greeting on behalf of all the prize recipients presented by historian Prof. Anita Shapira. Since WIZO was one of the Israel Prize winners for 2008, we are proud to publish major excerpts from her presentation in WIZO Review.

Prof. Anita Shapira
Photo: Muki Schwartz

Looking around on this occasion at my fellow Israel Prize recipients, I see several people who, like me, arrived here as refugees, seeking to rebuild their ruined lives, their shattered beliefs and lost hopes. This country, now celebrating its 60th anniversary, was literally a last port of refuge for people like us. It offered them the stability of an identity, a language and a culture.

In one of his articles, the writer Yosef Chaim Brenner ponders that had Bialik and Tchernikovsk been killed in a pogrom in their childhood, we would have no idea today of what we had missed, what potential Jewish cultural riches we were deprived of. That thought strikes my heart when I think of the impressive achievements of the few refugees who did survive the devastation of the Holocaust: how many Einsteins and Freuds, Bubers and Gershom Shaloms, how many writers and poets, scholars, social activists and reformers, prominent scientists and humanitarians, sages and great national leaders might have been among those 1.5 million children who were sent to their death? How much more enriched might the Jewish people, the State of Israel and all of humankind have been had those budding souls been able to fulfill their promise?

Our great miracle is, that having risen from the ashes despite that history, we have rebuilt a society and a culture; but we survivors can never forget that we are no more than a remnant of what the Jewish people once was. As survivors, we bear a great responsibility to our past and our future. Poet Nathan Alterman spoke of: “how thin is the line between before the Holocaust and the eve of a celebration.” Our lives still walk that narrow bridge between the Holocaust and the eve of celebration.

Sixty Years Have Passed

Sixty years have passed since the turbulent days of 1948. The generation that witnessed and participated in the establishment of the State of Israel is dying out. Those in whom the emerging State instilled pride, excitement and tears of joy are gradually fading from our national landscape. Now we have the privilege of seeing a fourth generation of Israelis growing up, a generation of young people who have never experienced the pain of having two “motherlands”, the one we had to abandon and the new one we adopted, a pain that was felt by immigrants from anywhere and everywhere, who left behind them the aromas of home, their childhood scenery, a language and culture that was familiar to them, and had to learn their new “mother tongue” from their own children. For our fourth generation Israeli identity is a given, something they take for granted. They may listen nostalgically to their grandparents’ reminiscences and take “roots” trips to distant lands, but their feet are firmly planted on Israeli soil. The “new Israel” is tolerant towards others arriving from the Diaspora and seeking to preserve the culture of their countries of origin; the threat that the nation’s founding generation felt from other cultures – Yiddish, Arabic – is no longer a reality. Today “Israeliness” is well enough established for them to be tolerant of other identities and beliefs.

Striving to Fulfill the Founders’ Dreams

It seems that the waves of immigration from the Former Soviet Union exhausted the potential for mass immigration. They represented the end of an era. From now on immigrants will be people who are attracted to Israel, those at whose heartstrings this country pulls so hard that they are willing to leave their homes for it. And so this nation of refugees, having fulfilled its initial purpose, must now strive to establish a society that the founders of Zionism dreamed of. The Jewish State was meant to be much like any other state, but at the same time it was to be the most enlightened of all, even, according to some people’s dreams, “a light unto the nations”.

What is the real meaning of that phrase? Everyone has his own idea of what constitutes an ideal country, yet there seems to be a general agreement that social justice, care of the weak, a courageous struggle for peace and reconciliation with the Palestinian people, the cultivation of culture and human values, the endeavor to excel in all areas of science and the arts – that all these are goals which must figure prominently on our national agenda in the coming decade. They are simple goals that should be taken almost for granted. They may have been eroded by excessive exposure in the media and politics, but nothing is more real.

Beneath the hedonism of the consumer society lies a longing for renewed idealism, spiritual elevation, a longing which can serve as the basis for uplifting our society and our nation.
Breathing new life
WIZO in the Knesset

Shana Shechtman is the lobbyist representing WIZO in the Knesset; her goal is to explain WIZO’s work and position to Knesset members, encourage them towards legislation in line with the organization’s views and to attempt to influence their vote.

Shana Shechtman is the lobbyist representing WIZO in the Knesset; her goal is to explain WIZO’s work and position to Knesset members, encourage them towards legislation in line with the organization’s views and to attempt to influence their vote.
Shana Pulls the Strings

Is the Constitution now being drawn up discriminatory? Or a bill to extend the powers of the Rabbinical Courts? WIZO does not stand idly by. In the past year WIZO has decided to become more involved in parliamentary activity and now has its own lobbyist in the Knesset. Shana Shechterman is not averse to delivering a 50 second “elevator speech,” as long as her voice is heard and the legislators listen.

Esther Tal
Photos: Sharon Hakim

A
n increasing number of lobbyists have become active in the Knesset, working to further the interests of their own organization and talking directly with Knesset members. WIZO, in its attempts to promote the status of women in Israel, has not lagged behind this trend. Shana Shechterman is the lobbyist representing WIZO in the Knesset; her goal is to explain WIZO’s work and position to Knesset members, encourage them towards legislation in line with the organization’s views and to attempt to influence their vote.

“The importance of our presence in the Knesset is to influence decision makers at the stage when resolutions are passed”, explains Sarit Arbel, Director of WIZO Israel, herself a long-time lobbyist who also lectures on the subject. “We need a lobbyist in the Knesset to make an impact on all matters connected with the status of women, all issues that are gender oriented or affect women in any way. If, for instance, I know that a meeting is being held in the Knesset on extending the powers of the Rabbinical Courts, I will stop the process by lobbying, since I know that the Rabbinical Courts discriminate against women”.

Why was Shechterman your particular choice for the position?
“We were looking for a feminist with awareness of the need to promote women in Israeli society, someone articulate, who knows how to present herself and her cause, has excellent interpersonal communications and understands how the system works. We felt that Shechterman satisfied all those requirements and we are confident that she will be an effective lobbyist”. Arbel adds that Shechterman, a young married woman studying for an MA, who has a highly organized agenda, can serve as a role model for young women in general.

The Right Person in the Right Place
Shechterman used to volunteer at the Rape Crisis Center and also worked for the Israel Women’s Network, and it was this activity that formed the beginning of her social consciousness. She says that she was attracted by the opportunity to join a really significant organization like WIZO, to act on its behalf and contribute to society. This is why she gladly accepted the position of lobbyist when it was offered to her. She identifies with WIZO totally and her motivation and energy rub off on everyone she comes into contact with.

Shana is the right person in the right place. She is impressive and radiates seriousness, responsibility and authority, and her personal charm is guaranteed to captivate her audience. She is
"There are the times when I apply the ‘elevator speech’ method. I put my message across in 50 seconds, persuade that person of the justice of my cause and expect a positive response." Shana Shechterman

What difficulties do you see ahead?
“One of the main problems I have to deal with is WIZO’s image. It is important to me that people should know and understand the range and scope of WIZO’s activities. It is an organization that is very active on behalf of women, but unfortunately only those who have first-hand experience with us, such as children at risk and single mothers, are aware of our extraordinary activities. Others think that our work consists mostly of day care centers, fashion shows and bazaars. The media does not cover the organization as often as we would like, perhaps because WIZO concentrates more on actually getting things done and less on image”.

Shechterman says that it has become clear that it is not enough to get things done; the organization’s profile must also be raised. “We do so much, all of it important, and we should not only be proud of this, but also make sure it is widely publicized”. Beyond that, as in all social activity, she has to contend with stereotypes, mainly regarding feminism and gender characterization. But the knowledge that she is representing such a large-scale, prominent organization gives her the strength to fulfill her job with pride.

Elevator Speeches
Shechterman confirms that she also uses the “elevator speech” as a working tool. “It has sometimes happened that I have not managed to arrange a meeting with a particular Knesset member to discuss some issue I want to promote, and suddenly I happen to see him or her waiting for the elevator. Those are the times when I apply the “elevator speech” method – that is, I put my message across in 50 seconds, persuade that person of the justice of my cause and expect a positive response”.

Can you cite any real successes to date?
“It is not easy to measure success in the short period I have served in this position. Nevertheless, I will mention two achievements. First, in collaboration with the College of Management we are promoting a proposed amendment to the National Insurance Law, that was drafted by two female students at attorney Naomi Levenkorn’s law firm, to the effect that women who have been subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace, and can prove that they were damaged by it, will be recognized as victims of a work accident and be eligible for financial compensation. The proposal was placed on the Knesset’s agenda and we are involved in talks with the Knesset Legal Department and with National Insurance on the matter.
“Second, the campaign for equality in the Constitution reverberated strongly and was highly successful. The Knesset’s Constitution Committee heard us. We drew the attention of many organizations and the general public to the fact that the Constitution which is currently being drawn up does not meet accepted standards of equality and is not in line with other developed countries”.

Do you have any time left over after work and studies for family life?
I am married, but I am not a mother and my partner is very understanding and supportive. My studies are related to my lobbying activity, and in effect these two aspects of my life are symbiotic. Of course the combination of work and study does involve some difficulty and sometimes it is exhausting. But I can manage it”.  

Do you have any ambitions to become a politician?
“Not at all! I want to remain in the public sector, which means being active in social organizations and not-for-profit NGO’s”.
Remembering Ruth Izakson: Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive, 1978-1984
Tova Ben Dov
Chairperson World WIZO Executive

Ruth Izakson came from a family that was among the founders of Tel Aviv. Her mother, Sima Zisling, was Chairperson of WIZO Tel Aviv and her two aunts were also active in WIZO. Her sister, Dalia Gottan is a long time activist in WIZO and today serves as a member of the World WIZO Comptroller Committee and Chairperson of WIZO Israel’s Veteran Chaverot Forum.

Ruth was born in Tel Aviv in 1922. Her father, Yitzhak Zisling, was Commander of the Haganah defense forces in Tel Aviv and Chairman of Maccabi Tel Aviv. She studied at the Gymnasia Herzliya high school, served in the Haganah and studied history and Jewish studies at the Hebrew University. In 1944 she married Eliyahu Izakson, who was from a well-known family. They had three children, Orni, Arbel and Meron.

Coming from a family of WIZO women it was understood that Ruth would continue in their path by volunteering for the benefit of the public through WIZO. Volunteer work played a major role in her life.

Rising in the WIZO ranks
An artist friend of sisters Suzy Eban and Ora Herzog, Mrs. Ambash, suggested that Ruth should become active in WIZO Herzliya Pituach, and within a short time she became the chairperson of the branch. She then became active in WIZO Israel and was deputy to Chairperson Hannah Levin. Ruth soon assumed responsibility within World WIZO for Jewish education and culture around the world. She initiated many publications and programs to promote the Hebrew language and culture.

Ruth organized seminars, conferences and Bible Day events in Europe, Canada, South Africa and South America. In 1976 she was appointed Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive and served in this position until 1984. In 1980 she was invited to be the main speaker at a WIZO Assembly of Latin American Countries, held in Montevideo, and one year later, in Johannesburg, South Africa. In 1983, she was the guest of honor in a local conference of WIZO Melbourne, Australia. She was received enthusiastically and always inspired the WIZO chaverot. Michal Modai, Honorary Life President of World WIZO, who succeeded her as Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive says: “Ruth was an enthusiastic Zionist with every bone of her body. Ruth placed the rights of children in Israel as her top priority.”

A woman of many talents
After serving as the Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive for seven years, and following 27 years of activity for WIZO in which she collected donations and initiated many projects, Ruth retired from WIZO. She completed an MA in History at Tel Aviv University, and served as Chairperson of the Friends of the Habima Theater. She was also President of the Founding Families of Tel Aviv non profit organization, and until her death played a central role in the organization of the festivities for the 100th anniversary of Tel Aviv, the city which she loved, which will be held in 2009.

Ruth was an active partner and took a central role in the public work of her late husband, Eliyahu, who was the President of the Farmer’s Association in Israel, Chairman of the International Trade Association and Norwegian Consul-General in Israel. They lived in their Herzliya home for 50 years, combining Israeli tradition with local and international activities, a social center for Jewish, social and cultural activities.

“An ideal woman”
It is no wonder that Ruth was loved by many sectors of the public in Israel. She was an impressive speaker who spoke with knowledge and pride when evaluating the situation. Although she was never involved in politics, and would not accept any public appointment, her Jewish and Zionist views were well known, together with her love for Israel, the people and the State. Despite her public work, Ruth’s husband, children and afterwards, their partners and children, were always the focal point of her life. Dan Tolkovsky, an old friend from the days of the Gymnasia Herzliya and a commander of the Israeli Air Force, called her “the ideal woman.”

My personal friend
Ruth Izakson was my personal friend. She introduced me to WIZO in Herzliya Pituach, she believed in me and trained me to continue in her path. To me, Ruth was a unique personality who wanted to help those in need, and was always in touch with their needs, a woman with a generous heart and an aristocratic soul. May we continue to benefit from her teachings in WIZO and to spread her humane and cultural legacy. May she rest in peace.
Interview with a WIZO President

Marina Nanyova:
The Unique Story of Bulgarian Jewry

The Bulgarian Jews were saved from the horrors of the Holocaust by the Bulgarian people. Marina Nanyova describes the story of Bulgarian Jewry with a mixture of pride about the past and concern for the future.

Hillel Schenker

We met WIZO Bulgaria President Marina Nanyova and her young friend Natalia Pilova in the Tel Aviv Hilton during the 24th World WIZO EGM in January, 2008. They were excited to be in Israel and to tell their story.

You are the president of WIZO Bulgaria. Tell us a little about your background.

I was born in Bulgaria, and grew up in Plovdiv, Bulgaria’s second largest city after our capital Sofia. My mother, Sarina Issak (Kovo) Pentcheva – Medition is Jewish, and she married a non-Jewish Bulgarian attorney.

During the Soviet period, was there a Jewish community and education?

There has always been a Jewish community, and my mother was the chair of the Jewish community in Plovdiv for 15 years during the socialist period.

We were very lucky that we did not perish in the Holocaust.

Was it the King who saved the Jews?

You are not the only one who thinks it was the Czar (King). There was also a monument in Yad Vashem in the honor of the King. After they studied the issue, the monument was returned to Bulgaria.

So how were the Bulgarian Jews saved?

The movement to save them started immediately after the racist law “In defense of the nation” was voted by the Bulgarian Parliament at a session led by Deputy Chair Mr. Peshev. Later he changed his attitude and helped save the Jews in Bulgaria. Immediately after the law was passed, groups of intellectuals, professional associations and people from the anti-Nazi, anti-Fascist underground movement, started to protest with letters and actions before the King. This movement gained strength when the Germans were defeated by the Soviets in the battle of Stalingrad in 1943. Politicians began to think, although we are allied to the Germans, what is going to happen if the Germans lose the war?

The first protest against fascism in the world took place in Leipzig, led by Georgi Dimitrov, who had been accused of setting fire to the Reichstag (German parliament).

A year and a half later, lists of the Bulgarian Jews were ready and the police started to gather them in schools to prepare to remove them to Poland.

I heard what happened in Plovdiv from Shoshana (who passed away last year), the daughter of Rabbi Shmuel.

In Plovdiv, a great number of Jews were given two hours to gather their possessions and ordered to come to the schoolyard where the Germans were located. Just at that moment the clerk who used to work with the Christian church passed by. He immediately ran to the Bishop and told him what was happening to the Jews, and that the Nazis wanted to put them on the trains. All of this was organized in a few hours. The Bishop, who was a very close friend of Rabbi Shmuel, traveled to Sofia and met the King, who mobilized the Christian religious institutions to stand in defense of the Jews. This happened in all walks of life. The unions of doctors, lawyers, the shoemakers, they all wanted to stop the trains. Most of them were connected to the underground movement.

Meanwhile, Jews and other prominent Bulgarians from Kjustendil, led by Mr Peshev, who was an MP from the region also started a campaign to save the Bulgarian Jews.

We were very lucky.

What was life like after the war, during the Soviet period?

After September 9th, 1944, the Jews were able to organize themselves as a community, and this continued for another 7-8 years, thanks to Regina Silberstein, the head of WIZO in Bulgaria, who began to negotiate personally with Georgi Dimitrov. She succeeded to convince him that Jews who wanted to go to Palestine should be allowed to go. WIZO was banned during the war, but aliya, increased after the war.

We know that many Jews came from Bulgaria to Jaffa and Bat-
Yam after the war and during the early years of the State. Many of them joined WIZO.
During WWII there were about 50,000 Jews in Bulgaria, and after the **aliya**, only about 7,000 remained. These were mainly people who had been involved in the underground and believed that socialism would develop and prosper.

**Your mother stayed in Bulgaria?**
Yes, she stayed in Bulgaria, and her sister moved to Israel in 1949. My cousin was two years old when her family came to Israel and went to live in Kfar Saba.

**You know there was an Israeli minister who came from Bulgaria, Victor Shemtov, who was very well-known as a Bulgarian. Today he is over 90, and lives in Jerusalem.**
Yes, he is well-known. And also the first commander of the Israeli paratroopers was a Bulgarian, though I don’t remember his name.

Until 1957, the Jewish community was functioning normally. And then, many activities were banned.

**When was it possible to re-establish WIZO in Bulgaria?**
Only in 1991, three years after the democratic changes.

**When was it possible to re-establish WIZO in Bulgaria?**

At that time I was living abroad, in Copenhagen, because my husband was working with the Bulgarian airlines. He later worked in Harare, Zimbabwe, so I lived there for a while as well. We returned to Bulgaria in 1997. I had worked for 20 years in an export-import enterprise before I left Bulgaria.

I joined WIZO in 1998. I was invited to join the movement by the late Stella Illel, the chair of WIZO Sofia. The national Federation was headed by a very prominent actress, Luna Davidova a very beautiful woman, who is still alive. Then Nina Aladjem, a very prominent musician became the chairperson. Unfortunately, she passed away, and Ruth Levy, an inspector in the Ministry of Education became chairperson for two years; it was she who maintained good relations between the Ministry of Education and the newly reestablished Jewish school.

After she completed her term I was elected to the position. I had been working fulltime in 2006 -2007 as manager of a project at a home for children with mental disabilities in the village of Gorsky Senovetz. I found it was very difficult to work fulltime and devote myself to running WIZO, so I left my job. As the Bulgarian saying goes – “it is impossible to carry two watermelons under one arm.”

**How many members are there today in WIZO Bulgaria?**
Before the EGM we said we have about 200 members. At the time we didn’t have exact figures from all of our branches. I now believe that we have about 350 members, and there are about 3-5000 Jews in Bulgaria, so this is a very high percentage. We have seven WIZO branches in the country.

**Is there any anti-Semitism in Bulgaria today?**
If we compare the situation to other countries, like Poland and France, I would say no.

The government and the local authorities are against anti-Semitism.

But we do have youngsters, some of them skinheads, who don’t understand what it means and what they are doing. If someone gives them money, they will write anti-Semitic slogans, graffiti. They desecrated Jewish graves in cemeteries, and monuments in Plovdiv, Kjustendil and Sofia.
Interview with a WIZO President

In Plovdiv, we wanted to build a monument outside the synagogue in memory of Bulgarian Jews who perished in the two world wars and the underground, fighting against the Nazis and fascism, so that everyone could see it. But when these incidents started to happen, we decided to build it inside the yard of the synagogue.

What type of activities is WIZO doing today in Bulgaria?
We are visiting lonely and sick elderly Jews. We have helped children from single parent and divorced families, especially in the last year of their education – for their graduation, when they are preparing for examinations to enter higher education institutions. Now, in the current circumstances of liberal democracy, much of the social support from the state is not functioning. For example, the system which requires husbands to pay alimony is not running smoothly for various reasons. There are husbands and even mothers, who have emigrated and left their children behind. There are some Jewish children who are suffering from this situation. We are trying to help single mothers and paying some small amounts to children from poor families. At WIZO we receive a small budget from the Jewish community, and decided to give this money to help the Jewish children. Today this is done through the Jewish Community offices.

Do you also have cultural activities?
Most of our activities are cultural. We have a lot of members who can perform, and we celebrate all of the Jewish holidays. WIZO organizes these activities and spreads the news about them. We send out invitations and newsletters, and also spread the word by direct contact with each other.

What about the younger generation?
They are very interested. The younger generation is well organized. They have activities together like going to the cinema and other events. These activities take place mainly in Sofia. There are also Jewish study programs, Bible studies and other topics. We have tried to organize a WIZO Aviv group, so far without success.

How do you feel being at the World WIZO EGM, with all the other women from Israel and around the world?
This is my first time at a World WIZO conference, and it’s a wonderful experience. I find that it’s a very informative event, but I wish there was more attention to the real work that we do back home in our Federations. I would like to see more workshops that provided skills for our activities.

Being with all of the chaverot from around the world and seeing the WIZO projects in the field has been an experience that I will never forget.
And I discovered that not only my relatives, but everyone in Israel knows about WIZO’s work. You just mention WIZO to someone, and they know and have respect for the activities of the movement.

What would you like to wish for WIZO’s future?
I hope that WIZO will continue to develop and will be far ahead among the NGOs, in every way, its methodology, honesty and openness. I wish that it will continue to be an organization that the government and the people of Israel can rely on. I was also happy to see both Jewish and Arab children at WIZO day care centers. This was amazing to see, compared to some of the images that we get from the mass media. I hope that this is a beginning that may bring peace.

Things You Didn’t Know About Me

Family: My husband’s name is Viktor Nanyov Nanyov, and our family is spread around the world. Our son Philip lives with his family in Christchurch, New Zealand, and they have three children. Our daughter Mina lives in Barcelona, and our younger son Ivan lives with us in Sofia. Ivan and Mina have helped me a lot with my WIZO work.

Education: I have studied many subjects. I attendedkiev’s Polytechnic Institute to become an electrical engineer. I did graduate studies in foreign trade, commerce, macro economy, international transport and law. While living in Copenhagen I studied to be a professional cleaner or hygiene assistant, which I found very useful in domestic family life. And finally, I studied airfare calculations, bookings and computer ticketing- the ‘IATA’ courses for work in a travel agency.

Hobbies: I like reading, music, hiking, meeting friends, helping people, playing and being with my grandchildren and surfing the Net.

My favorite composers are Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schuman, Liszt, Bach, Dvorzak, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Mendelsohn, Bernstein, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Radion Schedrin, Pancho Vladigerov, Marin Goleminov, Spasov, Lazarov . Carl Nilsen, Verdi, Gabaydulina, Gershun, Kitaro, and many others - my favorite TV channel is the classical MEZZO.

My favorite authors are Chekhov, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Shakespeare’s sonnets and dramas, Pablo Neruda poems and prose, Muriani, Hulio Kortasar, Gani Ruadary, Shakespeare’s sonnets and dramas, Pablo Neruda poems and prose, Muriani, Hulio Kortasar, Gani Ruadary, Udy Allan, Umberto Eko, Deepak Chopra, A.B. Yehoshua and many others. I have read almost everything published in Bulgaria by Erich Fromm.
I also love cinema, French, Italian, Soviet, Israeli, Bulgarian and other films, particularly Fellini, Carlos Suara films, which I usually watch at home on TV.

Israel: I love the miracle of Israel. My first visit was in 1992 on the occasion of the Bar Mitzvah of my cousin’s son. There are two states which I respect and admire: Israel and Denmark.
For the past few months, it’s been hard not to notice the presence of an attractive and energetic young woman on the 5th floor of WIZO House in Tel Aviv. Curiosity got the better of us, so we asked and discovered that she is Nikki Feig, a young American who has been volunteering at World WIZO.

Nikki, how long have you been working at WIZO?
I’ve been at WIZO since the beginning of April.

This is part of your period in the Otzma program. Could you explain what Otzma is?
Otzma is a 10-month volunteer program, where we work at a variety of settings throughout Israel. There are 47 young people on the program and they are all from the United States. From August through November I was at an ulpan studying Hebrew in Beersheva in the mornings, and in the afternoons I volunteered at an elementary school helping with English and math homework.

In December I volunteered in the army for three weeks. During that period we filled sandbags and put up shooting posts. We were allowed to wear uniforms and see what it’s like to be in the army. I actually got to shoot a gun, which was really exciting.

From January to March we lived in our Partnership 2000 city, known as P2K. Those of us from New York volunteered in Rehovot, where I did a number of different things. I put together an English newspaper in an elementary school, and helped the kids write in English. At a high school I helped the students to prepare for the bagrut matriculation tests. I sat in the class, had conversations with them and helped them practice their English.

I also worked in a special needs program twice a week, playing games with the kids, gymnastics, etc. I also worked with two after school programs for Ethiopian kids, also helping them with their English homework.

How did you find WIZO?
The third and final part of our program was devoted to the
I worked in the World WIZO Fundraising Department, did research on different donors and foundations. I did a lot of administrative work, but also did translations from Hebrew to English.

Is your Hebrew good enough to do that?
I had to look up words, but I got help from the people I worked with. I translated and edited proposals and other important information.

Did you manage to visit some of the WIZO projects?
I went to see a WIZO day care center in Bat Yam, which was very interesting. I had a very busy schedule connected to the Otzma program, with special education days, which sometimes took place on days when I could have seen other WIZO projects.

How do you summarize the experience?
It’s really a once in a life-time experience. I know a lot of people who have been to Israel, but I don’t know of anyone who has had so many varied opportunities to volunteer, and to experience different aspects of Israeli life. This is something I’ll always remember, and always look back at.

How did you become interested in Israel?
I came for the first time four summers ago with my family for a few weeks. And in college, during my junior year, when it was time to look for places to study abroad, I realized that I wanted to spend some time in Israel. Since my very first visit I had fallen in love with Israel, and knew I had to come back.

What are your plans now that you’re going back to the States?
I have a B.A. from Brandeis University, with a major in American Studies and a minor in Journalism and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. I’m going home for the summer, and then I’ll decide whether I want to return to Israel, or find a job in New York. This summer I’d like to get a paid internship at a Jewish organization in New York. If I come back to Israel, I’d love to get a job here because I love Tel Aviv.

Would you recommend that other people come to do an internship in WIZO?
Definitely - I had a great experience, and really learned an incredible amount here. I think what WIZO does is great. They really better the lives of people in Israel, everyone”

Nikki Feig

“I would definitely recommend being an intern in WIZO. I had a great experience, and really learned an incredible amount here. I think what WIZO does is great. They really better the lives of people in Israel, everyone”

Nikki Feig

“Like Jerusalem, but I really love Tel Aviv, the beach and the culture. I went through all the Jewish organizations here, researched them on the Internet, and that’s how I found WIZO”

Nikki Feig

Beit Shemesh, and other places that I probably would have never gone to. I really saw the country, not just Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

What was your experience like in WIZO?
It was a really good experience. I love the people who I worked with, and really learned a lot. They took me in, and helped me to learn so much.
WIZO Rehovot

A Warm World of Activity

Rehovot is associated with Chaim Weizmann, the first president of the State of Israel, and husband of Vera Weizmann, one of World WIZO’s historic founders in England. It is also the home of a vibrant WIZO branch, a beehive of warm, caring activity to improve the lives of the women and children of the city.

Sima Borkovski
Photos: Alon Borkovski

Rehovot is known as the City of Science and Culture, due to the Weizmann Institute of Science situated in the city. However, in addition to the academics attached to the Institute who are resident in the town, Rehovot’s population is also comprised of weaker elements such as new immigrants, single mothers and children at risk that experience great social and financial difficulties. WIZO Rehovot carries out a wide range of programs and activities to answer the needs of those deprived parts of society. The beginning of this blessed activity began in 1923 when new immigrants from Yemen arrived in Israel and settled in the nearby neighborhood of Sha’aryim.

“The men were educated in the Cheder (traditional Jewish elementary school) and therefore had some knowledge of Hebrew as well as reading and writing skills, so it was easier for them to adjust and find work. However, the women were illiterate and had no knowledge of the language nor reading and writing skills,” explains Ora Fish, chairperson of the Rehovot WIZO Center. “The branch was founded in 1923 with the support of WIZO England in order to assist those women to acquire language skills. Afterwards the first WIZO day care center was established to enable the women to go to work. Ever since then we do our best to assist women and promote them. We still have Hebrew classes for new immigrants to assist their absorption into Israeli society.”

“When I became chairperson one of my first actions was to change our title from ‘branch’ to ‘center’ since I felt the word ‘branch’ belittled our achievements and did not reflect the variety of our activities,” states Fish. “Our activities are targeted at the advancement of women, yet we also care for children and adolescents at risk. Our legal advice bureau aids women with their legal and domestic problems. But unlike other legal bureaus that close their doors during the summer vacation ours remains open, since it is during the summer that more women suffer from domestic problems and need our help. We were also the first to open a special section for religious couples to comply with their specific needs. There was one case that required my personal intervention, as I had to persuade a man to cooperate with our consultants. Eventually the couple’s marriage was saved thanks to our efforts,” she says with a smile.

Ora is aided by a team of eight chaverot on the WIZO Rehovot Executive who are in charge of the different projects and activities.
Listening to the children

One special program dedicated to children with behavior or violence problems is the “good hour with a child” which has operated since December 2007. “This program helps elementary schools cope with students with behavioral problems usually caused by emotional neglect,” explains Ayala Itoni, the project’s coordinator. “Our volunteers arrive at the school once a week for one hour of quality time with the child during which they play games together. But the main purpose of these meetings is to give the child emotional support. Some of these children’s parents are hard working people who leave the house very early and return very late and the child spends hours on his own. One of our volunteers discovered during her meetings with her student that the girl’s father had moved out of the house and this was the reason for her misbehavior,” she reveals.

“The volunteers who participate in the project need to be sensitive and have some kind of educational training. We get very positive feedback from the schools that see a great change in these students’ behavior. Nonetheless, our goal is not to educate them but merely to provide them with the attention they need.”

A warm, replacement family

As sad as it might be, there are many children whose fate is much worse than those mentioned above since their families are practically dysfunctional and incapable of caring for them. These young children (aged 6 to 9) do not return to their homes after school but arrive at a special home where they spend the rest of the afternoon. Only in the evening they return to their homes after they are fed and taken care of.

“Our volunteers arrive at the center once a week and do all sorts of fun activities with the children,” says Rachel Kivetz, who is in charge of welfare issues at the WIZO center. Kivetz, an impressive, meticulously dressed woman, speaks passionately about the children who find refuge in this center. “This center functions as a home for these children and the staff, together with our volunteers, is their replacement for a family,” she explains.

“The children know that once they enter this center they need to obey a set of behavioral rules and respect each other and the staff. Since their parents are often incapable of setting borders or teaching them basic manners they learn these values here,” says Hagit Knopler, a social worker and director of the city’s therapeutic centers.

“Children with special talents are encouraged to express them. For example, one of the children who has a great knowledge of the Bible studied the subject and ran an activity about it for the rest of the group. We also conduct group sessions and allow the children to speak about the things that bother them,” she concludes.

Ethiopian children have special needs

The Sranga WIZO day care center is a therapeutic center for children at risk with three age groups – babies, toddlers and pre-school children. These children, most of them of Ethiopian origin, spend most hours of the day away from their families. WIZO volunteers support this center with their activities and the branch helps finance various cultural activities for the children.

“We see great importance in improving the parents’ relations with their children and teaching them parenting skills. Therefore parents are invited to participate in various events at the center and joint activities for parents and children are initiated.”

This center is also supported by the WIZO Rehovot English-speaking group, consisting of new and veteran English-speaking
immigrants, who raise money for the benefit and welfare of the children. The group finances a monthly entertainment activity for the children and special presents for the holidays on Rosh Hashana, Hanuka, Purim and Pesach. “Most of these children rarely receive any presents at home,” says 75-year-old Margot Levi, who declares she is the youngest in her group. “Though it is difficult for us to communicate with the children, we enjoy seeing the light in their eyes when they receive their presents. However, we are not getting younger and it seems that young people do not have time for charity work,” she says sadly.

Hope for the young and hopeless

“Beit Hanana’a” (Home for The Girls) functions as a haven for 30 adolescent girls aged 12 -18 who come from severely dysfunctional families. These girls suffer from neglect and abuse and their distress was articulated in songs written during a special rap workshop. “My father uses drugs/my mother smokes/my brother is still innocent, my sister ignorant/the father unemployed so is the mother and I started smoking/all my friends left me and I had enough of this life”.

“We started with one group of 13-year-old girls but gradually we grew and expanded our groups,” says Michal Rozen, a social worker and coordinator of the center. “We aim to help these girls escape the cycle of poverty and abuse and give them the security and the tools they need in order to help themselves.” Visiting the center I see a group of young girls sitting in the main living room and chatting cheerfully with each other. It is obvious these girls feel at home in this place. Today is a special day since they are about to leave for a day trip arranged especially for them.

“I couldn’t imagine this place without the help of the two WIZO volunteers who come once a week and do their best to help me,” says Rozen. “Each one of them contributes in a different way to the home. These girls are not easy to work with; some of them are quite sassy and can even be rude, therefore you need to have special strengths to cope with them. One of the volunteers conducts English classes which the girls truly appreciate, another helps me with the cooking and with our daily errands but mostly these wonderful women set a great example for these girls who see in them some kind of aunts or grandmothers.”

Widows’ support group

The center facilitates various social ventures for the women of Rehovot, and one of the most successful ones is “the widows’ support group” coordinated by Irit Tevet. “This very special women’s circle has operated for two years and offers support to a group of 18 widows ranging in age from 40 to 60. Some of the women joined the group a short while after their loss and some had endured their pain for several years. The women are given tools of self management and empowerment but mostly they are given the opportunity to share their pain with other women who have experienced the same kind of bereavement”.

“I feel that all of us women are in the same boat and this is the only place where I can truly open my heart and express my pain,” says Daniela Kedmi, whose husband died of an illness about two years ago. “I feel these meetings give me the support and strength I need to keep going and allow me to reveal my anguish and take off the mask I put on for other people”. All of the activities we have described are done in association with the Rehovot Municipality, its social workers and the Ministry of Education. Since the municipality always suffers from a shortfall in funding resources, the projects run by the WIZO chaverot help to fill the gap, and are greatly appreciated.

Other activities run by the WIZO chavero in Rehovot include a Bigudit (second hand clothes and toys project) and a new cooperative venture with an auction house, where silverware, paintings and other valuables are sold to help finance WIZO projects.

We have highlighted just a few of the many activities of the Rehovot Women’s Center. There is no doubt that without the support and help of the WIZO volunteers, these weaker members of society would be so much worse off. 
Helping Victims of Violence

Hand In Hand Along The Way

“My husband’s beatings were relentless. I was afraid that in a moment of madness he might kill me,” whispers Pnina recalling her darkest moments. Today, many years after getting divorced and rebuilding her life, she has decided to close the circle and volunteer for WIZO’s Hand in Hand project, designed to help battered women through the police procedure.

Esther Tal
One morning, when I arrived at the police station, I saw A, a woman aged about 40. Her arms and legs were trembling uncontrollably. At first I thought she might be a drug addict in the throes of an attack. She had cuts on her neck and arms, her clothes were torn and she was totally hysterical. The police officers asked me if I could calm her down. Once she was a little calmer, A. mumbled: “He came out from his apartment, grabbed hold of me and started to attack me. He chased me with a knife on the stairwell. I was lucky to get away.” Irit Feldman, a volunteer with a WIZO project to accompany battered women at police stations, describes one of many difficult cases she has come into contact with through her work.

The project to accompany and support battered women at the police station has been in place in Ramat Gan for nine years; it was set up in answer to an urgent need. “Unfortunately”, reveals Nurit Kaufman, a social worker in charge of domestic violence at WIZO Israel, “we discovered that previous complaints by some of the women who had been murdered had not been dealt with by the authorities. Kaufman explains that the project aims to connect WIZO’s Center for the Treatment and Prevention of Domestic Violence with women who go to the police to file a complaint and with the abusive men, thus encouraging the victim and the abuser to receive treatment. “If victims of violence can be treated, perhaps we can manage to reduce the number of casualties”, adds Kaufman.

When I point out that the murder of women by their partners frequently still makes the headlines, Kaufman nods in agreement. “We cannot prevent all cases of murder”, she observes regretfully, “but we are working towards reducing the numbers. The volunteers go to the police once a week and meet women filing repeat complaints, those who continue to suffer and put up with their harsh reality. Such women are unable to bring about a change in their lives and are in need of help.”

Kaufman underlines the importance of the volunteers’ training at the Center for the Treatment and Prevention of Domestic Violence, where they receive information about violence and learn how to approach victims of violence who come to the police station: the core of the approach is to listen and display empathy, without being judgmental and without offering any advice.

All Hope is Lost

Hazelman, a volunteer for the project, is at the Ramat Gan police station when a woman arrives to complain about her partner’s violence. She goes over to the woman, introduces herself and hears her story. “I am neither a police officer nor an investigator.” It’s all done before the woman is questioned. Hazelman refers the women she meets at the police station to the WIZO Center for the Prevention of Violence. She provides all the necessary information, gives them the Center’s telephone number, points out that they are not obliged to go there, but also explains that it is important to keep the address on them in case they do decide to seek help.

She says that victims of violence who arrive at the police station are in a difficult and vulnerable emotional state. “Women do not turn to the police the first time they are beaten or feel threatened. They come only when they feel that all hope is lost”, she explains. “The common denominator between all these women is a profound fear. They hesitate over whether to complain or withdraw, to cancel the complaint or see it through.”

“My job is to explain to the women the importance of filing a complaint, encourage them to do so, and then refer them to the Center for the Prevention of Violence”. Hazelman further clarifies that the act of submitting a complaint must be made together with the support of the Center. The women need a warm hug, some protection and the strength to carry on. Where it is necessary to refer them to a battered women’s shelter, she brings in a social worker from the Center for the Prevention of Violence. “Some women refuse the help offered to them and prefer to act independently, as was the case with A.

A lives with her two children in the same building as her ex-husband, in fact in the apartment directly opposite his. He would watch through the peephole in his door and take note of everyone entering her apartment. Although they were no longer married, he still wanted to control all her movements and would not allow her to invite anyone into her home. When he discovered that in spite of his warning her boyfriend came to her apartment, he chased her and injured her with a knife.

Hazelman told A. that she must immediately move to an abused women’s shelter to protect herself, but she refused to do so. She insisted that everything would work out: she would go to her sister in the south, and in the meantime her ex-husband would be arrested. “There is nothing I can do in such cases”, explains Hazelman. “We confirmed that the woman did in fact go to her sister and she gave us the address of a place where her former husband might be hiding. Eventually, this violent man was arrested and sent to jail. Since then we have had no further contact with her”.

Escaping the Cycle of Violence

Hazelman clarifies that the volunteers’ task is to show the women what to do and where to go, but they cannot and must not exert any influence on them. In order for change to occur, the woman herself must want it and understand that if she does not help herself, no-one else will help her.

When asked whether her meetings with these women take an emotional toll on her, Hazelman replied: “I see the light at the end of the tunnel. I see women who come to the Center, receive treatment and escape the cycle of violence. Nothing could be more gratifying than that”.

A few years ago WIZO’s Jerusalem branch also joined the project, as did the Haifa branch more recently. It was Haifa that gave it the name “Hand in Hand”. Twenty-one volunteers in Haifa took the training course designed by WIZO together with the Haifa Police, the Civil Defense and the Municipal Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. “The course is designed to qualify the volunteers to work within the Civil Defense framework. Without formal qualification we do not have the right to intervene at the police station”, explains Ora Salomon, another of the project’s volunteers.
Suffering in Silence

One of the Haifa volunteers is Pnina (not her real name). She is 60 years old, divorced, with no children and she herself was beaten by her husband for over 20 years. Nothing had prepared her for what life had in store. She started out as a young woman full of life and zest, with an appetite for enjoyment and going out to have fun with her girlfriends. She met her future husband in a dance club after she was discharged from the army. “He seemed like a nice guy, good looking, serious, quiet, even a little withdrawn. He asked me to go out with him and that was how it began. We dated for a year and a half. At that time he was working for the civilian shipping companies and was away at sea for long periods. Looking back, I wonder if perhaps I did not know him well enough before we married, but back then it was not the norm to go out with someone for more than a year without formalizing the relationship”, Pnina recalls. She married at age 22 and in the early days there were no signs of violence at all. “He was just an absolutely normal guy, a typical Israeli. He had been in a youth movement, served in the Merchant Navy, but when we married he decided to quit and had to look for new work. He tried his hand at various jobs, moved around from place to place, but never managed to find permanent work. That was probably when he started to feel frustrated”, says Pnina, trying to understand the root of the problem, analyzing in detail the chain of events that led to the outbreak of violence.

“There were many signs that something was not right in our relationship, but I did not take the trouble to stop and take stock of my life. I was young and inexperienced and even if everything wasn’t rosy, I did not attach too much importance to it”, she says, describing a marriage that showed early signs of problems. What made you decide to end your marriage?

“My mother fell ill and I wanted to go and visit her. He reacted with outbursts of anger, hurling insults at me. Suddenly I felt like I did not even know him. He did not expect me to stand up to him, but I did and that made him even angrier. Then I spent a few days in another room. I continued living at home because I had nowhere else to go and because the attorney I hired advised me to try as far as possible to stay at home so that I would not lose my rights to the property. I endured three years of physical and emotional suffering. At that time there was no such thing as restraining or protection orders”.

Please describe what you went through

“Before every hearing at the Rabbinical Court he would raise the stakes and try to demand more money. Afterwards he ran wild at home. His beatings were relentless and more than once the police were called in. Every time I tried to get to the phone he would beat me, which also meant that sometimes I was unable to call the police. I would wait for the morning to go and file a complaint with them. One time he held a large bread knife to cut through the telephone cables, and I was sure he meant to kill me. He threatened me and my whole body trembled. I was afraid that in a moment of madness he might really kill me”.

Who did you share your distress with?

“This was a period when leaving home was not an acceptable option. I didn’t know how to tell my parents that I wanted a divorce. For a whole year no-one else knew what I was going through”.

Weren’t you afraid to go on living with him?

“I was very scared, but there was nothing I could do. I was working, my family lived far away and I had no friends locally because I did not grow up in this area. I carried on suffering in silence and isolated myself.”

How did you feel when your marriage ended?

“I blamed myself, thought I was in the wrong. I needed someone to guide me. I went to a psychologist and after five or six sessions she told me: ‘You are fine. Go on with your life. I have the impression you will be able to recoup your strength and stand on your own two feet’. She empowered me, gave me the strength to hold my head up and move forwards with hope in my heart.”

And did you manage to rebuild your life?

“I had a relationship with another man and I would like to find one again now. I don’t want to be alone. But marriage in the Rabbinical Court?! I will never set foot in there again.”

What prompted you to volunteer for the Hand in Hand project?

“There must be some kind of baggage, some remnant of what I went through. I can’t bear to hear about a man daring to raise a hand to a woman, it makes my blood boil. I know how a battered woman feels and what emotional condition she is in when she comes to the police station in the morning after a sleepless night. I am able to empathize with her and understand her better. My job within this project is to help battered women, listen to them, assist them in filling out the police forms and accompany them to the various authorities. I am prepared for the challenge and am there for them”.

“If victims of violence can be treated, perhaps we can manage to reduce the number of casualties,” says social worker Nurit Kaufman.
In the middle of May, the 15th Conference of WIZO Druze Women was held in the impressive stadium adjacent to the Prophet Jethro’s tomb near the ancient site of Hittin, not far from Tiberias. Rada Kamal, the chairperson of WIZO Dalyat al-Carmel, who initiated and organized the conference, invited 1,200 Druze women who came to the event in busses. The stadium was filled to capacity, and some of the women sat outside and watched the proceedings on huge screens.

Lena Kamal, Rada’s younger daughter greeted the guests, and Rada welcomed “all of her sisters” to the holy site. She spoke about Druze history, and emphasized that the aspiration of their community is to integrate into the surrounding society while preserving their cultural heritage. Today, she noted with pride, there are many doctors, lawyers and other professionals among the Druze community.

The WIZO branch in Dalyat al-Carmel was founded about 30 years ago, and it has significantly contributed to advancing the status of women in Druze society.

The event featured a panel discussion with Salman Nasser (MA in history), Dr. Randa Abbas (doctorate in education) and Dr. Aialiyah Al-Kassam Abu Rish, (doctorate in Arabic language). The moderator, Nabil Nasraladin, a poet, writer and lecturer who promotes Jewish-Druze dialogue, asked each panelist to talk about their education and their professional activities. There was also a presentation on the history and development of women within Druze society.

The event concluded with a religious evening featuring five sheiks, moderated by Sheikh Jamil Zoheir. Religious songs were sung between the presentations of each panelist. All of the participants in the event volunteered their services.

Spanish speakers from all over Israel gathered together at WIZO House in Tel Aviv for a salute to WIZO chaverot from Latin America that was initiated by WIZO Israel Chairperson Yochy Feller and organized by the Guidance, Culture and Development Department of WIZO Israel chaired by Etty Ashtar. The hall was filled to capacity with 280 excited and emotional chaverot.

Spanish was in the air, as Etty described how the first group of WIZO chaverot from Latin America was organized by the late and beloved Yedida Lahav back in 1972. Over the years Spanish-speaking groups were founded right across the Israeli WIZO map.

Yochy Feller welcomed everyone present with a few spicy words of Spanish. Among the guests of honor were Sylvia Vilanski-da Gonzales from the Mexican Embassy, Moira Pinto-Kuala, the wife of the Brazilian Ambassador, David de la Rosa, the former Colombian Ambassador and his wife Grace and Mr. Leon Amir, President of the Association of Immigrants from Latin America, Spain and Portugal. Feller said that just as Herzl’s vision produced a state which is now celebrating its 60th anniversary, the vision of Spanish-speaking WIZO groups has produced 23 different groups that are active in 20 WIZO centers throughout Israel.

World WIZO Chairperson Tova Ben-Dov, who doesn’t speak Spanish, spoke to the
chaverot from the depths of her heart, in Hebrew and Yiddish! And World WIZO President Helena Glaser sent her greetings from afar, since she was on a WIZO mission abroad.

Perla Blatt, chairperson of the Spanish-speaking groups in Israel, described the contribution of the Latin American chaverot to WIZO and to Israel. Also addressing the occasion were the wife of the Uruguayan Ambassador, Graziela Casses, Ambassador de la Rosa and Mr. Leon.

After a series of wonderful songs by the WIZO-Ron Choir and the singer Dganit Dado, Mrs. Ana Proineki, who was born in Argentina, spoke about the bridge between veteran and young immigrants from Latin America.

Special citations were given to four outstanding groups – two from Ashkelon and two from Beersheva. At the close of the festivities, Perla Blatt thanked WIZO Israel for organizing such a wonderful event.

**Singing in the Sun**

The hall was alive with the sound of music, at the gathering of WIZO choirs from around the country which took place at WIZO House in Tel Aviv. A large audience was thrilled to discover the musical richness of the various choirs.

“There will always be a song in our hearts” said Etty Ashtar, chairperson of WIZO Israel’s Training Division, which convened the event in honor of 60 years of the State of Israel and 88 years of WIZO.

“These choirs are a refreshing example of the way culture and song can link different parts of society,” said WIZO Israel chairperson Yochy Feller. The idea for the gathering originated with Miriam Berger, the director of the WIZO Ran Choir, founded 26 years ago by WIZO chaverot who were immigrants from Latin America, conducted by Avi Cohen Tarika. The WIZO Netanya Choir was founded 20 years ago, and is directed by Rena Markovitz and conducted by Bela Saminov. Next was the Tikva (Hope) Choir from WIZO Kfar Saba, also founded by Spanish-speaking chaverot which included five male singers, and conducted by Nachman Shtopolblatt. Dora Gerassi, the 80 year old veteran of the recently disbanded Bulgarian choir from WIZO Jaffa sang a number of breath-taking songs in Ladino. She was followed by Ida Farchi, another WIZO veteran of 45 years, who founded the Jaffa choir. A recent addition to the WIZO choir family is “Quinta Plus” in Ramla. Six young highly trained female immigrants from Russia. The final choir was the largest – the Nechama Choir – featuring 20 female and 10 male singers whose home is the WIZO Center in Pisgat Zev neighborhood of Jerusalem.
For a second successive year, top Israeli fashion designer Yaron Minowski donated a fashion show to Friends of WIZO for Sponsor a Child. As last year, to create a more personal touch, in addition to the professional models, Yaron dressed some Friends of WIZO members in his creations to show they are not only suitable for model-like figures.

This year, the event was hosted by Rebecca Shirling at her home in Herzlia Pituach, where approximately 100 guests, including members of the World WIZO Executive and several ambassadors’ wives, enjoyed a wonderful function in a beautiful setting. Musical accompaniment was by young musicians from WIZO’s Leo Baek School in Haifa, and, most important of all, a substantial amount was raised for Sponsor a Child.

Remembering Ralph Klein

All Israelis, including the WIZO family, mourned the passing of legendary basketball coach Ralph Klein, who is considered the man who put professional basketball on the Israeli map.

Klein was born to an affluent Jewish family in Berlin in 1931. His father perished in Auschwitz, but Ralph, his mother, brother and sister were saved from the Nazis due to the efforts of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg.

As a teenager, he lived in Hungary with his mother, where he learned how to play basketball, and then he immigrated to Israel in 1951. He played basketball for Maccabi Tel Aviv and the Israeli national team, and went on to become the coach who led the team to win the European Championship in 1977. It was on that occasion that American-Israeli basketball star Tal Brody shouted “Anachnu al hamapa!” (We are on the map!).

Above all, Ralph was a mensch, a real human being. He always retained a sense of modesty while demonstrating genuine, charismatic leadership.

After he retired from coaching Maccabi Tel Aviv and the Israeli National Team he continued his love for basketball by teaching youth and coaching girls’ teams.

At WIZO he is known and loved as the man who coached the WIZO Hadassim Girls’ Team to the national high school championship. Recent immigrant from Kyrgyzstan Ksenya Mishnikova, a member of the team, said that Klein had a special place in her heart. “He was like a grandfather to me” (see “Ksenya Finds a Home in Hadassim” – WIZO Review, Spring 2007).

WIZO Director General Haim Zamorsky says that “eight years ago, when the first girls’ basketball team was founded at WIZO Hadassim, Ralph Klein was there, volunteering his services, and together with coach Erez Dagan, built the team until it won the national championship and even traveled to Brazil to participate in the international high school championship.”

“That day when he first arrived was the beginning of a love affair between WIZO and Ralph Klein. He was so proud of the Hadassim girls that he inspired them to great achievements.”

“It was Ralph who suggested to the WIZO Executive that the Hadassim girls’ team be named after my beloved daughter Dana, who loved basketball and was killed in a traffic accident during her army service. Ralph also gave his blessings and auspices to the annual basketball tournament held in her memory.”

“About a month before he died, Ralph asked to meet me and coach Erez Dagan. We thought he wanted to bid farewell to us, but what he really wanted to talk about was the future of the WIZO Dana Hadassim basketball team.”

“Thank you Ralph for giving me the opportunity to know you and your unique and rare approach to life. You were a genuine educator, in all senses of the word. Ralph Klein and WIZO were a real love story,” says Haim.
UNITED KINGDOM

First Susi Bradfield Aviv Award honors two exceptional volunteers

Susi Bradfield, who passed away last year, was an inspiration to all who knew her. Her charitable acts paid testimony to her love of Israel. WIZO.uk has created a special award in recognition of her contribution to WIZO, the ‘Susi Bradfield Aviv Award’, which honors Aviv members for their outstanding volunteerism. The first recipients of the award were Rotem Aviv Chairman Ronit Collis-Madari and Shemesh Aviv Chairman Gloria Besser. They received inscribed glass trophies and their names are the first to be inscribed on a new Aviv plaque mounted at WIZO.uk’s London head office. Presenting the awards, WIZO Aviv Chairman Michelle Wolff paid tribute to Gloria and Ronit for their altruistic dedication and organization of countless events raising many tens of thousands of pounds for WIZO projects in Israel.

A gold leaf for Lady Jakobovits

World WIZO Chairperson Tova Ben Dov was the guest speaker at a lunch honoring Lady Jakobovits, wife of the late Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits, as Eshet Chayil on her ‘special’ birthday. Mrs. Leila Wynbourne MBE presented Lady Jakobovits with a certificate marking the gold leaf inscribed in her name on the WIZO.uk Tree of Life, which hangs in head office.

Sponsor a Child luncheon

Sixty guests attended WIZO.uk’s annual Sponsor a Child Luncheon in June at the central London home of Suzanne Goodman. Guest speaker, World WIZO Chairperson Tova Ben Dov, briefed guests on the situation in Israel in its 60th birthday. The luncheon raised over £60,000 towards funding WIZO.uk projects in Israel.

Rebecca Sieff Day celebrated in Manchester – the city where it all began

In celebration of WIZO.uk’s 90th anniversary, World WIZO President Helena Glaser traveled to Manchester, where, in 1918, due to the tireless work and initiative of Rebecca Sieff, a Women’s Zionist Federation, the forerunner of WIZO, was formed. Helena delivered the keynote address at the Federation’s Rebecca Sieff Day awards luncheon, which was held at the South Manchester Synagogue, and attended by more than 300 WIZO members from all over the country. Mrs. Naomi Cohen of Olim WIZO received the 2008 London Rebecca Sieff Award and 82 year-old Mrs. Alma Morris of Southport WIZO received the Regional Award. The Lily Sieff Award was awarded to WIZO.uk Vice President Susan Ronson for her outstanding dedication to WIZO. WIZO.uk Chairman Loraine Warren
presented WIZO.uk Vice-chairman Jill Shaw with the WIZO Woman of Valor pin. She praised WIZO.uk for raising an extra £1 million during its 90th anniversary year.

Leeds Blue & White Gala Dinner
Leeds WIZO held its 90th celebration dinner, the Blue & White Gala Dinner, at Leeds Civic Hall attended by the Lord and Lady Mayor of Leeds and 230 guests. The gala raised close to £40,000. Guest speaker Professor Lord Robert Winston spoke of his connection to WIZO, which began with his late mother, the outstanding Jewish community worker Ruth Winston-Fox. He linked his work on the care and development of children to WIZO’s work caring for children in Israel.

Kingston’s 40 glorious years
In its 40-year history, Kingston WIZO has had 17 chairmen. At the group’s 40th party hosted by Mindi and Ronald Ison, 12 of them, together with founder members, were present. Current chairman Jackie Gordon welcomed 50 guests who enjoyed supper prepared by long-serving catering officer Esther Brady and her team. Gina Monty, WIZO.uk Honorary Life President, spoke about WIZO’s work from its beginnings in Manchester in 1918 to the 100 projects that WIZO.uk now maintains in Israel. Anne Lyons, past recipient of the Rebecca Sieff Award and founder chairman Marianne Cohen spoke about Kingston WIZO’s many fundraising successes from celebrity lunches, fashion shows and jazz evenings to theater outings, bridge suppers and charity shops.

Newcastle WIZO relaunch
The champagne flowed when Newcastle WIZO held a ‘relaunch’ celebration brunch for 70 guests at the home of Pamela and Howard Gold. Bernard Roberts spoke movingly about his late mother, Sonia, first chairman of the Rosa Wollstein group. Beit Shemesh Benefit in Soho
Over 300 Young WIZO partygoers danced the night away at the newly launched Maya Club in London’s Soho and raised over £7,000 towards the WIZO Beit Shemesh Day Care Center which cares for vulnerable children through educational and therapeutic services.

Bagels and bowls for Jewish Women’s Week
North London Aviv group Shemesh held a successful bagel and bowling evening and raised £1000 for ‘Jewish Women’s Week,’ WIZO.uk’s leading fundraising campaign.

CANADA
Montreal tees off for the children
Spring and summer saw Canadian Hadassah WIZO (CHW) holding various...
fundraising events across the country. In July, CHW Montreal held their 34th annual Pro-Am golf tournament at the Hillsdale Golf and Country Club. Longstanding supporters, and CHW Male Life Associates, Joseph Balinsky and Gary Hutman chaired the tournament, with founding chairs Myer and Zees Wenger. The CHW chaverot worked as volunteers on registration and par 3’s. Fifty-four teams comprised of three amateurs and one professional from the Quebec Professional Golfers Association competed. Guests were treated to brunch, cocktails and dinner. As well as prizes, there was a silent and live auction. Funds raised exceeded all targets in support of the ‘C’ in CHW – the children who will benefit from Canadian Hadassah WIZO’s projects in Israel.

Toronto’s new campaign asks only once

Earlier in the year, CHW Toronto, instead of holding a series of smaller events, launched their new ‘one-ask’ fundraiser, “The One Campaign,” at Toronto’s CNIB Center. The guest speaker for the evening was Ari Sandel, 2007 Academy Award winning director, producer and writer of the live action short film, “West Bank Story,” which was shown to an enthralled audience. The event included a red carpet dinner, dessert reception and silent auction.

WIZO New York celebrated Israel’s 60 years of independence and 25 years of WIZO New York in brilliant style with a gala at the Museum of Jewish Heritage. Over 400 people attended the event chaired by Haley and Jason Binn, Gail and Berndt Perl, and Mira and Beny Sofer. The gala included dinner, dancing and a spectacular performance by Israel’s ‘Revital’ dance troupe. Gail Perl, Haley Binn, Mira Sofer and Evelyn Sommer greeted the guests. Consul General Asaf Shariv presented the official greeting of the State of Israel. Mireille Manocherian, Mona Sterling, Marci Waterman and Brenda Abuaf created a special journal depicting the history of
Children for our Children

WIZO New York, under the leadership of chapter chair Gail Perl, held its 10th annual Children for Our Children Spring Fashion Show & Luncheon at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in May. New York Executive member Victoria Sakhai chaired the event. The Benefit Committee chairs were Lauren Schor Geller and Marjorie Harris, the journal coordinators were Marcy Sakhai and Marci Waterman. Jackie Siegal chaired the raffle and silent auction. Mireille Manocherian coordinated the fashion show, which featured 85 young models, children of supporters and friends. Jessica Kaliman chaired the ‘Hand in Hand’ - a special walk by young mothers, grandmothers and babies. This year’s luncheon also featured a ‘Shalom to WIZO’ chaired by Jacky Teplitzky and a silent auction and raffle. Proceeds of the event will benefit the babies, toddlers, children and youth at risk in 300 WIZO facilities across Israel.

SAN FRANCISCO

Hativka around the world

In celebration of Israel’s 60th birthday, WIZO Nativ San Francisco collaborated with the Scouts Movement, kindergartens and elementary schools in the towns of Sunnyvale and Cupertino to participate in ‘Hatikva’, where Israel’s national anthem was sung with a global participation of millions of Jews. The chapter also put on a drawing competition on the subject “Israel is 60!” Another successful Independence Day event was the dance party organized in Palo Alto by chapter chair Galit Rand and the WIZO Nativ Board: Galit Ashman, Sarit Burstein, Sara Goren, Gaby Kasan, Biana Kelmer, Lior Kogot, Ronit Melamud, Idit Oren, Betty Paz, Ruth Rosenwald, Pazit Rubin, Sima Sapir, Anat Shmariahu, Nili Tzarnotzky, Ronit Vassoly and Zehavit Wolf. The Israeli Consulate and many local businesses sponsored the party.

FLORIDA

WIZO Ahava Sponsor a Child

Around 230 participants attended WIZO FL Ahava Chapter’s Sponsor a Child event in Boca Raton, honoring distinguished donors Gerald & Carol Long and Harry & Katie Sugarman. World WIZO Executive Chairperson Tova Ben Dov was the guest speaker. Following Tova’s inspiring words, guests enjoyed a musical celebration of Israel’s 60th anniversary of independence.

Florida honors outstanding volunteers

WIZO Florida President Anita Friedman and WIZO Florida Vice Presidents Jana Falic and Beverly Koplowitz hosted a dinner in recognition of their tireless volunteer force. Seventy chaverot attended the event which celebrated the endeavors and accomplishments of their most prolific volunteers. WIZO Florida Volunteer of the
Year awards went to Evelyn Faigenblat and Lisa Groisman for their outstanding contribution to WIZO. Perla Vainberg, Corinne Camhi, Hellen Jena and Yvette Moldenberg received Volunteer Recognition Awards for “Ten Years of Outstanding Dedication.”

Honoring mothers, sponsoring children

Over 200 chaverot assembled to honor their mothers by sponsoring a child at a superb Mother’s Day Sponsor a Child luncheon, which included a bazaar and two very interesting guest speakers, Israeli Consul for Consular Affairs Eliyahu Yifrach and Jayme Barrett. Eliyahu Yifrach captivated the audience with recollections of his childhood growing up in the WIZO Nir Haemek Youth Village, and Jayme Barrett, author of the best seller “Feng Shui Your Life” shared tips from his book.

EUROPE

AUSTRIA

Visibly impressed by WIZO’s crucial work for Israel

An informative event hosted by WIZO Austria’s Dr. Yana Hauptman, Karin Maier-Winter, Galina Naishatt and Irma Pani, together with WIZO Austria President Rita Dauber and WIZO Austria Chairperson Dr. Hava Bugajer, shed light on the powerful impressions and emotions that WIZO members took home from the World WIZO EGM, which was held in Tel Aviv in January.

Dina Baraness gave a PowerPoint presentation and three poignant movies were shown. Around 30 – 40 participants attended the event, entitled “Together, we can move more.” After seeing evidence of the crucial role WIZO plays in the wellbeing of Israel, many of the guests - women in their 30’s and 40’s - signed up to become part of the WIZO family.

DENMARK

World WIZO President visits wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen

WIZO Denmark members together with WIZO Denmark President Dorrit Raiter, were delighted to welcome World WIZO President, Helena Glaser on her very first visit to Copenhagen. Helena’s itinerary included a tour of the Danish Parliament, accompanied by HE former minister Arne Melchior, uncle to Knesset Member Michael Melchior.

Mrs. Janne Laursen, Managing Director of the Jewish Museum, outlined the demography and history of Denmark’s Jewish population. Helena also visited the Copenhagen Synagogue where Chief Rabbi
Bent Lexner described events during World War II when the Torah Scrolls were hidden in a nearby school. Helena also visited the Jewish school and nursery. Around 70 people, including WIZO members, supporters and dignitaries from the Jewish community attended a reception held at the official residence of His Excellency David Walzer, Israel’s Ambassador and Mrs. Zipi Walzer, where Helena spoke of WIZO and its projects. At a meeting of Aviv members, Helena addressed chaverot expounding on WIZO’s essential work. Past president Kaja Sårde hosted a buffet at her home where Helena met with Kaja’s mother, Mara Igelski, who is still active in WIZO at the age of 95. For WIZO Denmark, the visit of the President of World WIZO was indeed inspirational, reaffirming their commitment to WIZO and the improvement in the quality of life of Israeli women and children.

FRANCE

Luncheon at the Salon Hoche

WIZO France held their 15th National Solidarity luncheon at the Salon Hoche in Paris to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. His Excellency Mr. David Kornbluth, Israel’s Ambassador to UNESCO headed the guest list of this excellent event as well as ex-government ministers Simone Veil, and Nicole Guedj, the Chief Rabbi Gilles Berheim and CRIF President Mr. Richard Prasquier. Proceeds of the luncheon were earmarked for WIZO France’s newly-renovated day care center in Ganei Tikvah.

‘Secret’ film premiere draws celebrity crowd

The premiere of Alexandre Arcady’s film, “Tu peux garder un secret” (‘You can keep a secret’) took place at the impressive Publicis Cinema on the Champs Elysees in Paris. Attended by the film’s director and numerous stars from the big screen, the premiere was very well received and guests enjoyed lavish cocktails after the performance.

A winning day for WIZO at Golf de Fourqueux

Over 200 players competed in WIZO France’s major fundraising golf tournament, now in its 30th successful year, held at the Golf de Fourqueux Club in Ile De France. Special guests were Israel’s Ambassador to UNESCO His Excellency Mr. David Kornbluth and WIZO France President Nathalie Cohen-Beizerman. After an afternoon spent on the golf course, participants enjoyed the trophy presentations, cocktails and an excellent dinner and raffle with spectacular prizes as well as surprise gifts.
At the Israeli Ambassador’s Residence

His Excellency Mr. Avi Granot, Israel’s Ambassador to Finland hosted WIZO Finland sponsors at his official residence. Addressing the gathering, the ambassador spoke of the important role WIZO plays in Israel and thanked sponsors for their support. WIZO Finland President Eva Bensky reported on the board’s trip to Israel and gave an update on WIZO Finland’s project, the Shaviv Home. Violinist Helena Floman and Eva Jacob playing accordion entertained guests with traditional Jewish music. The embassy cook, assisted by board members, created a delicious buffet, which was clearly appreciated by guests, some of whom had travelled several hours to Helsinki.

WIZO Finland’s visit to Tallinn, Estonia

The WIZO Finland Board visited Tallinn, a 90-minute boat trip from Helsinki, where Eva Lantee-Reintamm, WIZO Estonia Board member and art historian, hosted the group and shared little-known facts surrounding the history of the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. WIZO Estonia President Revekka Blumberg joined the group in the Jewish Community Center, which houses the Jewish School. After an excellent lunch in an elegant restaurant housed in the synagogue building, the day ended in the KUMU, the new award-winning art museum. It was a particularly wonderful day, especially rewarding for WIZO sisters to come together across the Gulf of Finland, so close yet, for so many years, so far away.

GERMANY

Excellent support makes Frankfurt’s Lunapark a big hit

This year’s Lunapark took place at the Ignatz Bubis Community Center. Long before the fun and games began, the organizing team (Linda Martin, Gila Ushvayev and Minka Wildberger) were busy making sure everything was in place for a truly memorable day. When the moment finally arrived, even the poor weather could not dampen the spirits of the participants, young and old, who were intent on enjoying themselves. The atmosphere was almost electric and while the children reveled in numerous activities from football shoots to sliding, the toddlers tumbled over the soft climbing apparatus in “Kidland.” At the cake buffet, everybody indulged their sweet tooth, and no one went hungry with the delicious pasta dishes on offer. The ever-popular raffle attracted a huge crowd who flocked to buy tickets. For the first time, the Israeli company ‘Castro’ presented its stylish fashions and proceeds of the sale were donated to the Lunapark. Awards were given out for the most beautiful costume as well as many superb consolation prizes.

GREECE

Greek solidarity with Sderot

WIZO Aviv Athens gathered at the Jewish
Youth Center to spread the word to presidents and members of the Central Jewish Council and Athens Jewish Community of the plight of the southern Israeli town of Sderot, which has been the target of some 2,000 rockets this year. Two informational videos on Sderot were shown, and both WIZO Greece President Heather Nahmias and secretary Betty Ferera, spoke about the circumstances endured by the town’s residents. Greek chaverot were proud to show off their World WIZO “Help Sderot” T-shirts.

Greece celebrates its Bat Mitzvah girls

The Athens Synagogue was decorated with happy-faced gerbera flowers in five different colors, each color matching the ribbons on the dresses of the five girls who celebrated their Bat Mitzvah one wonderful day in June. Blessed by the Chief Rabbi of Greece, the girls spoke eloquently and sang traditional songs accompanied by a small chorus, as proud parents, relatives and friends looked on. WIZO Aviv ladies offered each girl a small exclusive jewel for their special day.

SPAIN

Candy-sweet success

When Spanish chaverot held their sale of homemade candies, cakes and pastries, people came from all over Spain to buy the mouth-watering sweet delicacies resulting in wonderful attendance and excellent profits to benefit WIZO projects.

SWEDEN

Malmo hosts bi-annual WIZO conference

Malmo, Sweden’s third largest city hosted the national WIZO conference, which is held every two years. Despite the fact that WIZO Malmo has only 200 members, what they lack in numbers is more than compensated by their boundless enthusiasm and commitment. World WIZO President Helena Glaser did not fail to notice this when she addressed the members at the conference held at the end of May. Conference organizers, WIZO Malmo Chairperson Christel Lernesjö and WIZO Malmo Vice-Chairperson Bella Danowsky had prepared an interesting and diverse program for the participants. Keynote speaker Helena Glaser’s various speeches were inspirational and left a strong impression on those attending. Among other speakers was Swedish journalist Per Svensson, who tried to explain (but not justify) the underlying reasons why the Swedish media usually takes a pro-Palestinian view and somewhat biased way of reporting events from the Middle East. An interesting debate followed.

There were also workshops to motivate the members from different cities to find new fundraising ideas and ways to attract younger members. A resolution was formed in which the conference participants expressed sympathy for the residents of Sderot and an appeal was made to the Swedish media to present more balanced news reports from the Middle East.
SWITZERLAND

WIZO Switzerland’s first steps make great strides for “Sponsor a Child”

Shibat Shannona, Executive Director of the Center for New Leadership, impressed members of WIZO Switzerland’s General Assembly in May when she spoke on the current state of relations between Israel and the world. That same month, WIZO Switzerland President Anne Argi, together with her husband Edouard, hosted dinner for 30 to honor World WIZO President Helena Glaser who was in Geneva to participate in the pre-conference of Durban 2 at the United Nations. WIZO Basel co-hosted the Swiss premiere of “Tango Viola” at the Keren Kayemet L’Yisrael in Lucern, in support of the WIZO Maalot Music School. The performance was directed by composer Benjamin Yusupov with the participation of violist David Aaron Carpenter. The evening, initiated and organized by WIZO Basel’s Mrs. Yvette, was very successful. His Excellency Mr. Ilan Elgar Israel’s Ambassador to Switzerland and WIZO Switzerland President Anne Argi attended. Mrs. Josy Argi hosted a luncheon in support of children at risk. Over 90 ladies enjoyed a delicious homemade buffet, tombola and small bazaar. Cloudless skies added to the ambiance of an event that was truly sensational.

Mrs. Eva Wyler, president of WIZO Zürich, hosted the “Sponsor a Child” luncheon at her magnificent home. World WIZO Fundraising Department liaison Mrs. Betty Crystal made a particularly moving appeal, to which the 30 ladies present responded generously. This ‘first step’ in Switzerland’s Sponsor a Child project proved to be a great stride in the right direction. Mrs. Lucie Gideon, former WIZO Switzerland president and Mrs. Anne Argi, current WIZO Switzerland president were amongst the guests.

INDIA

Currying favor with Israel

When WIZO India, founded just one year ago, held their Pesach luncheon with Rebbetzin Rivki Holtzberg, they dined on traditional Ashkenazi dishes instead of their usual highly spiced Indian fare. In May, WIZO India celebrated Israel’s 60th birthday with an event attended by Daniel Zohar Zonshine, Israel’s Consul General in Mumbai who was welcomed by WIZO India President Yael Jhirad. The celebration began with the national anthem of India and a rousing rendition of the ‘Hatikva’ after which video highlights of World WIZO’s 24th EGM, which Mrs. Jhirad attended, were shown. The gathering listened to her anecdotes from the EGM, where she described many of the women that she met there as ‘real heroines’. Mr. Zonshine explained the hardships facing the citizens of Sderot. Refreshments were served and a book on women’s rights in the bible was presented to each member.

At a meeting held in June, guest speaker Dr. Reeta Sonawat from the Human Development Faculty at the Women’s University in Mumbai, spoke on “How education can be enhanced by the family.” WIZO India chaverot were glad to learn some extremely constructive tips.
In July, at the Habonim room of the Knesseth Eliyahoo synagogue, guest speaker Eetta Prince Gibson, editor in chief of *The Jerusalem Report* won hearts speaking on the pivotal role played by women in society. Two new members were inducted, Rimona Divekar and Eva Agarwarkarby.

**LATIN AMERICA**

**ARGENTINA**

Recruiting new members at the Israeli Ambassador’s residence

His Excellency Mr. Rafael Eldad, Israel Ambassador to Argentina, recently hosted WIZO Joven at his official residence, where his wife Mrs. Batia Eldad warmly welcomed the guests. Over 50 people attended including many young women who had been invited with the purpose of attracting them to become part of the warm WIZO family. Moved by emotionally charged speeches, and impressed by the perfect organization of the *chaverot*, they took up the cause and signed up to become new and committed WIZO Joven members.

**Music and Solidarity at Miraflores**

As part of OSFA-Argentina WIZO’s program, “Music & Solidarity,” Mr. & Mrs. Abolsky hosted a new concert in their beautiful home in the Miraflores Gated Community. Over 100 guests were enthralled, not only by the delightful concert, but also by the delicious luncheon.

**BRAZIL**

**WIZO Rio’s “Israel in Concert” wows the audience**

Five hundred excited guests watched WIZO Rio’s “Israel in Concert” show at the Veneza Theater in celebration of Israel’s 60th. They sang along to Israeli music hits over the years. Conductor Mauro Perelman along with Brazil’s premier Israeli music soloists, Varda Usiglio, Tania Novak and Nety Szpilman elicited great emotion and cheering from the audience. The Niteroi Hebrew Society Choir were accompanied by WIZO *chaverot* Sara Lewkowicz playing the accordion, Lucia Morelambaum playing the clarinet, Sheila Zagury playing the clavier and Sueli Faria playing saxophone and flute. Joao Mario played bass, and Fabiano Salek played the drums. The stunning evening was attended by many public figures, including Her Excellency Mrs. Tzipora Rimon, Israel’s Ambassador to Brazil.

**Fun and friendship at Rio’s Fraternity Fair**

WIZO Rio Grande do Sul’s 2008 Fraternity Fair in celebration of Israel’s 60th anniversary welcomed special guest, Porto Alegre’s First Lady, Mrs. Isabel Fogaça. Each year the fair, consisting of members of its 27 WIZO groups, takes on an innovative theme. This year’s subject was *Bikurim* (first fruits), as the 2008 Fraternity Fair took place during the Shavuot festival. Students from the Brazilian-Israelite School
and youngsters from the Zionist Youth Movements took part. Israeli dancing, a fashion show and the participation of young children all added up to a fantastic event. A special tribute was paid to WIZO volunteer for over 40 years, Mrs. Flora Litvin. It was truly heartwarming to witness the devotion and jubilation of the WIZO Rio Grande do Sul chaverot.

**WIZO President wins Pedro Ernesto Merit Prize**

Sarita Schaffel, president of WIZO Brazil was proud to accept the Rio de Janeiro Municipality Aldermen Chamber’s Pedro Ernesto Merit Prize, awarded to her at a special tribute dinner for Israel’s 60th anniversary. Over 350 people attended, including many heads of local authorities who complimented the young Israeli state on its democratic spirit and advancement in the sciences, medical research, agriculture and high-tech. In her acceptance speech, Mrs. Shaffel spoke of WIZO’s significant role both in Israel and the Diaspora. She explained how WIZO, now in its 88th year, assisted the State of Israel even before its independence 60 years ago and has continued to do so through the various stages of its existence.

Discussing relationships at the 2008 WIZO Brazil Seminar

The 2008 WIZO Brazil Seminar comprised of over 80 members from various chapters took place at a splendid resort in the Sao Paulo countryside in June. The theme for the seminar, “Let’s discuss relationships: You, WIZO, the World and I”, set the scene for friendly discourse on relationships. The weekend program kicked off with the Shabbat candle lighting ceremony organized by WIZO Sao Paulo, accompanied by their own harmonious Sharsheret chorus. The program continued the following morning with journalist Jaime Spitzcovsky’s hasbarah (advocacy) presentation facilitating a workshop carried out by the WIZO Rio Grande do Sul Center. After such serious dialogue, there was time to relax at WIZO Rio de Janeiro Chapter’s blue and white themed Saturday evening party. On Sunday, Ms Tatiana Wernikoff, well-known expert in the field of organizational psychology led a very educational session on group dynamics. Such seminars underscore WIZO’s values in motivating and empowering its members, as evidenced in the many compliments received from the participants.

**CHILE**

Accolade for Marisol

WIZO Chile’s Vina del Mar chapter president, Marisol Garriga, was recently awarded the Jewish Agency Theodore Herzl Prize given to young community leaders under the age of 45 years old for outstanding leadership and devotion to Israel and Zionism. She joins another outstanding young WIZO leader, South Africa’s Tamar Lazarus, (reported in previous issue) as recipient of this prestigious prize.

Top Models, Competitive Bridge, a “Balcony for Golda” and Babies

The Avodah branch organized a fashion show for women modeled by WIZO chaverot from the various groups throughout Chile. Taking to the catwalk in elegant fashion wearing beautiful clothes from the Autumn/Winter collections from well-known local boutiques, WIZO members proudly proclaimed, “We are all top models now.”

Held at WIZO headquarters, “Bridge Championship – Israel Cup 60 Years” organized by the Anne Frank and Jerusalem chapters, attracted many...
enthusiastic players who competed in the tournament.
The atmosphere of the Israeli Stadium’s auditorium was electric when WIZO Chile presented the play, “Balcony for Golda,” featuring top Mexican actress, Fanny Sarfati. In celebration of Israel’s 60th birthday, the play depicted significant periods in the life of the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, known affectionately as “the strong-willed, straight-talking, gray-haired grandmother of the Jewish people.”
The Director of Sotero del Rio Hospital and staff of the Maternity Ward, were delighted to receive a large quantity of clothes for new-born babies from the chaverot of WIZO Chile’s Athid Group. The symbolic donation was given in honor of Israel’s 60th birthday. The Mayor of Puente Alto, Mr. Manuel Ossandon, was present to thank the chaverot personally.

MEXICO
Leading and Learning
Vice-Director of Promotions Susie Kraig presented a seminar for WIZO group presidents, giving them the crucial tools to perform in the most productive way as leaders. Worried about the pressures on younger groups, WIZO Mexico President Bahie Zaga, together with Treasurer Ana Neumann, Organization Director Rackel Alfille and Vice Director of Organization Susy Speckman, held a morning workshop inviting younger members to voice their concerns and share their ideas for improvement. All suggestions were taken on board and younger members were reassured that their leaders were listening, reaffirming their commitment to WIZO and instilling new enthusiasm into their vital efforts.

Remembrance and Reunification
In the presence of survivor Mr. Shie Gilbert and his son Aaron, WIZO Mexico gathered to remember those slain in the Holocaust. Aaron spoke to the audience about his life as the son of a survivor. Cantor Leibele Jinich sang the El Maleh Rahamim and read “Auschwitz,” a poem by Leon Felipe. A message from Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was read out and chaverot took part in the play, “WIZO, Yesterday and Today,” depicting WIZO’s role in Israel’s 60 years. The video, “Israel Then and Now” was shown. Violeta Berdichevsky and Miriam Kably sang for the crowd.

In celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, Dr. Yael Zyman expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict gave an interesting lecture on “The Art of Ruling the Spiritual Jerusalem,” which participants felt brought them even closer to their beloved city of Jerusalem. Such events stir WIZO Mexico to perform selflessly in their quest to do the best they can for WIZO and Israel.

For the children
Under the banner, “You can’t see their faces, but you can make their lives better,” the “Adopt a Child” project was launched with the sole aim of improving the lives of children in Israel. Videos were shown: one of a doctor of philosophy who spent his formative years in WIZO’s Nir Haemek Youth Village in Afula, and one that told of the essential care given by WIZO to a child who needed a kidney transplant. Fourteen-year-old Esther Shabot delighted the audience with a medley of beautiful songs. Karen Silverstein gave a talk on “The Children of the Present are the Men of the Future.” The Yajad group visited the Jewish schools and invited all the children to take part in an Israeli flag contest, with prizes given
for the best. They were then hung at the ‘Bingo for Children’ event. The flags were dispatched to Israel to the children at the various WIZO centers to let them know that Mexico is with them all the way!

**SOUTH AFRICA**

Brenda brings bonuses to fundraising campaign

“A ‘fighter pilot,’ activist, wife, mother, grandmother, leader, WIZO woman and dear, dear friend.* These were just some of the endearing terms used to describe World WIZO Public Relations Department Chairperson Brenda Katten who flew from Israel to South Africa to launch WIZO South Africa’s 2008 Fundraising Campaign. Brenda’s *shlichut* took her to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria where she gave keynote speeches at campaign launches in each city, addressing chaverot, donors, WIZO patrons, Aviv members, and the wider community on WIZO’s crucial work in Israel. Brenda also addressed students at Johannesburg’s Witwatersrand University, dispelling the myth that Israel practices apartheid.

In a live interview on Durban’s Radio 702, she explained WIZO’s role in improving the status of women. In Port Elizabeth, a predominantly non-Jewish audience of 300, many from church groups, listened intently to Brenda’s illuminating talk entitled ‘Presenting Israel,’ and her eloquent, persuasive public speaking in all cities paid dividends to WIZO South Africa’s funds as donors increased their pledges.

On her return to Tel Aviv, Brenda reported to the World WIZO Executive on the steadfast Zionist commitment of South African Jewry, and paid tribute to WIZO South Africa’s President, Campaign Convenors and Executive for organizing such a full and dynamic program.

A Tribute to Jane

“They say that if you find a job you love, you never have to work again.” Those are the words Jane Levitas told the audience, which included family, friends and WIZO colleagues at her retirement tribute. Jane, WIZO South Africa’s much loved Hasbarah convenor, joined WIZO 64 years ago, motivated by a love for Israel and Zionism and a burning passion to play her part in the building of the Jewish State. She became national Hasbarah officer and editor of “News and Views” – a role she fulfilled until her retirement in April.

Colleagues described her as “an encyclopaedia, dictionary, computer and true Jewish intellectual.” She travelled to all parts of South Africa spreading the WIZO word and holding the banner for Israel. From speech writing to articles, Jane’s amazing knowledge knew no bounds. Charming lady and stalwart of the South African Jewish community, she will certainly be a hard act to follow.

**Poker Tournament yields high numbers**

WIZO Aviv’s Reshet branch knows a thing or two about poker, “when to hold’em and when to fold ‘em.” When the group held their annual poker tournament in June, players competed to win seats at Sun City’s Million Dollar Poker Tournament and the Pigg’s Peak All Africa Poker Tournament, as well as an assortment of tremendous prizes including game park trips, air tickets and diamond jewelry.

This popular event has become a high point in the Reshet branch’s calendar, eagerly anticipated by would-be champions. Of course, the real winner was WIZO South Africa projects in Israel as the tournament brings in a huge amount of revenue with the stars of the evening being the tireless chaverot of WIZO Aviv Reshet branch.
Parade of the Organizations

The ladies of WIZO Johannesburg celebrated Yom Ha’atzmaut with a packed to capacity crowd at The Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, where WIZO was proud to march in the Parade of Organizations. Over 9000 people came out to celebrate Israel’s 60th Year of Independence.

Elise Gifts finds smart new home

In July, WIZO Elise, one of South Africa’s founding branches, in operation over 40 years, opened their new gift shop, ‘Elise Gifts’ in Johannesburg’s Genesis Shopping Centre.

‘Elise Gifts’ was started by the late Elise Kaplan and Marlene Mitchell who arranged small gifts for a donor. Over the years the shop has had many different homes and has now set up shop in this very chic mall. Rabbi Michael Katz joined members of WIZO Johannesburg and the Elise Branch in inaugurating the new store and fixed a mezuzah on the door frame.

Illana’s ‘Kugel’ amuses Australian audience

Fun has always been a vital ingredient in WIZO Australia’s successful fundraisers. This year the laughs were louder than ever. In June, the Perth-based WIZO Aviva group presented Illana Klevansky’s one-woman satirical musical comedy entitled “Kugel” – a South African term used to describe a Jewish Australian/American/English princess. The audience, a sell-out crowd of some 650 people, enjoyed the tale told in monologue and song of the “kugel” migrating to a new country and growing old ‘disgracefully.’ WIZO Aviva member Illana Klevansky, who published a book called “The Kugel Book” in South Africa before moving to Australia, has written and produced many shows for WIZO and spent the last two years writing the script and songs of “Kugel” solely for the benefit of WIZO. A team of WIZO women ably assisted the technical director Heather Kur, and music director Gaby Gunders, backstage.

Earlier in the year, WIZO Aviva produced a ‘non-calendar’, in a bid to emulate the “Calendar Girls” of movie fame. Recipients of this very humorous brochure were given the chance to donate in order to avoid such pin-up ‘exposure’ but that did not stop a few brave girls posing in dressing gowns and hair curlers for the front of the brochure.

Kidz for WIZO is the crowning glory in Victoria

Victoria’s Beth Weizmann Community Center was buzzing with excitement, as the winners of the ‘Kidz for WIZO 2008’ competition were unveiled at a fun-filled event. Sixteen candidates representing each of the WIZO groups took part. The three winners from the WIZO Eilat group could not attend as they live in Israel so their very proud great-grandfather Abrasha Feigen took the crown on their behalf in front of families, friends and supporters who filled the room, cheering enthusiastically.

WIZO around the World is edited by Tricia Schwitzer
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Art & Design

HIGH SCHOOL

You, too, can play a role in enabling the students of WIZO-Leo Baeck High School to be at the vanguard of Israeli arts education. Help us carry out needed renovations to the 60-year old building which houses the school.

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US $ 85,000  Sponsorship - equipment

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