WIZO Salutes its Leaders

Rivka Lazovsky
Rebecca Sieff
Raya Jaglom
Helena Glaser
Aya Dinstein
Ruth Izakson
Hadassah Samuel
Dear Chaverot,

As you can imagine, as I write this just three weeks before the EGM, things are ‘kinda busy’ at WIZO HQ in Tel Aviv. Everyone is working extra hard with all the preparations for the conference, to make sure you all have a great time and go home totally motivated to continue volunteering for WIZO. We often use the terms ‘seeing is believing’ and ‘WIZO turns lives around’ – and although these phrases sound cliché, they are in fact very true - as you will see in some of our features in this magazine.

The theme of the conference is ‘Women Taking the Lead’ – and there are many examples in the magazine of outstanding, dynamic and highly educated and professional women who find time to contribute to WIZO.

In this issue we have interviews with Tova Ben-Dov, (p.8) outgoing president, who talks about her 50 years of volunteerism – a true example of devotion and commitment to the State of Israel and WIZO, and Tamar Lazarus, (p.16) Tova’s daughter and immediate past president of WIZO South Africa. Tamar talks about WIZO’s efforts to reach out to all members of the South African community as well as dealing with BDS and anti-Semitism.

Our ‘donor appreciation’ article features Jana Falic, Co-President of WIZO USA. I can only say that to know Jana is an honour and a privilege. There are not many people who can match her dynamism and Zionism. (p.11)

We continue with the second part of our feature interviewing veteran and young WIZO women. Take time to read what these ladies say...there are many words of wisdom and motivation. (p.12)

Many of our WIZO buildings are several decades old and need renovating and re-building. Thanks to wonderfully generous donations from federations and individual donors, 2015 was a truly bumper year. With new technology and safety measures, numerous playgrounds were updated and furnished with the latest equipment to ensure our toddlers have a good time and keep safe. Take a look at some of them on pages 18-21.

We are always looking for our human interest stories and examples of people who readily admit ‘WIZO turned their lives around’. Read the stories of two such people, Vlad Doron and Limor Akua. When we meet people like Vlad and Limor, we feel proud that we are helping people have a better life than they would without WIZO. (pages 22-24)

Many people don’t realise that the building next to WIZO headquarters in Tel Aviv, partially concealed behind lush green foliage is the WIZO Parents Home. Here, WIZO veterans and others, live out the last years of their lives in a warm and homely environment. Behind those walls are numerous fascinating life stories - we feature one on page 25: Tirza Kshepitsky, who survived the Holocaust by masquerading as a gentle Polish girl, describes some of her experiences.

Laurienne Baitz, our Aviv representative to the World WIZO Executive comes to the end of her term of office at this conference. She has been a wonderful roving ambassador and has visited, inspired and IGNITED young women around the globe. Read her farewell column on page 28.

Living abroad you probably think you cannot volunteer for WIZO in Israel; our article on pages 30-31 shows just how you can! If you come to Israel for even a short time, we can find somewhere for you to volunteer and really feel part of WIZO.

WIZO in Israel (p.32) features the WIZO Israel conference and the numerous events and media coverage of the International Day of Violence Against Women.

Once again, last but not least – WIZO Around the World. It is so exciting to see your wide range of interesting and imaginative ideas for cultural and fundraising events. (p.34)

Finally, finally, a warm welcome to new presidents of Brazil – Silene Balassiano, Panama – Betty Btesh, and South Africa – Monyeen Castle – good luck ladies.

For those reading this at the conference – ENJOY!

Ingrid Rockberger
Editor

Who’s who on the front cover

Rebecca Sieff
WIZO Founding President – 1920-1966

Hadassah Samuel
Chairperson 1949-1951

Rosa Ginossar
Chairperson 1951-1963, President 1966-1970

Raya Jaglom

Aya Dinstein
Chairperson 1970-1978

Ruth Izakson
Chairperson 1978-1984

Michal Modai
Chairperson 1984-1996, President 1996-2004

Helena Glaser
Chairperson 1996-2004, President 2004-2012

Tova Ben-Dov
Chairperson 2004-2012, President 2012-2016

Professor Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson 2012 - present
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The next issue of WIZO Review will be on-line only. Look out for it through the World WIZO website and Facebook in the spring. The issue for Rosh Hashanah will be printed and mailed as usual.
Dear Chaverot,

It seems strange that after 50 years of being a WIZO volunteer, holding senior executive positions, delivering thousands of speeches – sitting down to write my last WIZO Review column, I find myself lost for words, because I am choked with profound emotion.

How does one summarize 50 years of WIZO voluntarism? How does one count the tens of thousands of children that became successful teachers, career soldiers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, researchers, actors, authors, entrepreneurs, engineers, technicians, architects, artists, social activists etc… that now pass down to their children and grandchildren the WIZO values we instilled in them? How does one thank all the loyal employees and committed WIZO chaverot who shared this exceptional journey with me; who like me believe in WIZO’s goals and strive to implement them and help WIZO to raise the level of its accomplishments time and time again?

Truth be told, I have been blessed. I was born to parents that instilled in my siblings and me healthy Jewish and Zionist values and the freedom to develop ourselves to our hearts’ desire. In turn I bestowed this on my own children and strived to provide my WIZO children with the same conditions. I was fortunate to have worked with and learnt from some extraordinary WIZO role models and I hope in my own humble way I have added to the fountain of knowledge and foundations that make WIZO what it is today.

I hope like my predecessors I motivated and inspired others to continue implementing the WIZO goals set forth by our Founding Mothers, that in essence remain the same - turning Zionist ideology and dreams into WIZO reality by preserving the past, providing for the present and guaranteeing the future.

WIZO constantly adapts its activities to the fast moving and ever changing reality in which we live, and to the situation in our region, while you, our federations have to contend with anti-Semitism, BDS and global terror, in addition to local problems that have an impact on your activities.

Notwithstanding, our WIZO commitment never quivers, never fails to rise to the occasion. In times of national crises in Israel and in your own countries, WIZO always answers the call to join in the national effort and opens its WIZO heart and embrace to all those in need.

Now looking to its centennial, WIZO is secure in its strong foundations, accumulated experience, acquired knowhow, volunteers, benefactors and employees – each playing a significant role in its collective success and strength.

But we must also guarantee WIZO’s future. We must encourage young women to join WIZO, and empower them to follow in our footsteps, to continue our work.

What is my legacy? Vision, team-work, cooperation, creativity, never say never, impossible or no chance – and faith; dreams can come true. There is always a solution. There is always someone ready to lend a helping hand. There is always hope and light at the end of the darkest tunnel. Have faith in yourself, in what you do and in WIZO.

I will continue to be an active WIZO member as Honourary Life President and look forward to meeting you at future WIZO events.

God Bless

Affectionately,

Tova Ben-Dov
President World WIZO
Dear Chaverot,

Since I was elected Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive four years ago, I have shared with you my vision, my thoughts and the outstanding work WIZO has carried out in these challenging times.

One of my top priorities has always been to strengthen the bond between the WIZO chaverot in Israel and in the federations. I was pleased to be invited to several of our WIZO federations across the globe and present the fruits of our miraculous work in Israel and its positive impact. I met committed WIZO women who shared with me their brilliant ideas to keep WIZO a strong and vibrant movement. These wonderful chaverot are devoted to the State of Israel, the Jewish People and WIZO.

The bond between WIZO federations and our projects in Israel allows us to provide vital support to different parts of Israeli society through educating our children and youth, empowering women and caring for all those who need us.

During the past four years, WIZO has opened new day care centres, bringing our total to 184 across Israel. The dedicated staff allows working mothers to leave their children with the full knowledge that they are getting the best care, best nutrition, and the best education with the most advanced pedagogical tools.

Thanks to the support of WIZO’s federations around the world, we were able to open the doors of our youth villages and Beit Heuss to entire families from the south of Israel during Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014. Thanks to your generous donations, WIZO has been able to build additional rocket-proof shelters in our day care centres to help protect our children.

Our schools and youth villages continue to give children from all sectors of Israeli society and children from other countries, a new chance in life – WIZO turns their lives around! With dedicated teachers and counsellors, these children reach heights they never dreamed of. Through the excellent education and care they receive, many excel in their studies and achieve national and international prizes.

WIZO Israel continues to advance the status of women in Israel both through legislation and through our network of thousands of volunteers in the WIZO women’s centres from Kiryat Shemona to Eilat. At these centres, WIZO runs a variety of support and empowerment workshops for women and teenage girls of all social levels.

For 95 years, WIZO has worked with numerous Israeli governments to meet the changing needs of Israeli society – and we will continue to do so, to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Together with you, we will create new projects of hope.

My next term of office will see WIZO approaching its centennial, a very significant milestone in the history of our movement. I am certain that we will continue to develop WIZO to be an even more modern, relevant and vital movement. As partners, we will ensure that WIZO will continue to be a leading organisation, supporting women and children and Israeli society, as we have been doing since 1920.

We have hundreds of institutions all over Israel. Today, WIZO is needed more than ever. We have an important task to fulfill. Let us work together to create a better and stronger Israel.

With warm regards,

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson
World WIZO Executive
Visitor from Vienna

“The most valuable commodity in a country is its children. Any investment in this area is repaid many times: joy of life, hope for the future, wealth, peace. Each child, regardless of its origin, religion, skin colour, has the same right to advancement and education.

“I saw that the children in this day care centre are happy and content. I noticed that the staff are all highly motivated and are totally engaged in caring for the children. I am proud that WIZO Austria – and particularly the city of Vienna has contributed to it. We can be happy and assured that the children here are receiving a good foundation for their lives.”

This was the reaction of Dr Ingrid Nowotny, wife of the Governor of the National Bank of Austria and friends, on a visit to the Jessi Rubins Day Care Centre (sponsored by WIZO Austria) in Rehovot. Dr Nowotny, who is a supporter of WIZO in Vienna, as is her husband Ewald, who recently sponsored a WIZO Austria event, was accompanied on the visit by Chair of the World WIZO Executive Professor Rivka Lazovsky and Janine Gelley, Chair of World WIZO Organisation and Tourism Division.

Golden WIZO Students

The excitement was palpable amongst the approximately 200 young people, 55 of them from WIZO youth villages, and guests, who assembled in the garden of the elegant residence of the British Ambassador Mr. David Quarrey to receive the gold awards of the International Youth Award Scheme.

Students from WIZO Nir Ha’emek, WIZO Nahalal, WIZO Nachlat Yehuda and WIZO Hadassim were among those who received awards.

Present at the ceremony were President of World WIZO Tova Ben-Dov, Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive Professor Rivka Lazovsky, Chairperson of World WIZO Education Division Dr. Carmela Dekel and other members of the World WIZO Executive. Moshe Bitman, WIZO’s coordinator for the scheme, was presented with a special certificate of recognition.

Sarai Sanker from WIZO Hadassim was given the honour of addressing the guests on behalf of all the graduates. She explained how much participating in the award has done for her own evolution as she participated in meaningful community services, volunteering and sports activities. “I was able to believe in myself, realize my talents and increase my self-confidence. And look at me now, giving a speech in public – and in English! Who would have believed it?”

The International Youth Award scheme is an offshoot of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award presented to youth and young adults for completing a series of self-improvement challenges.
Twin Bat-mitzvahs

Talia and Aimee Shaw, twin granddaughters of WIZOuk Honorary President Jill Shaw, have grown up with WIZO. As well as their grandmother, Jill, their great-grandmother, the late Rosemary Isaacs was a great WIZO activist and donor. As part of their bat-mitzvah celebrations, the twins were delighted to make a family visit to the Gruss Community Centre in Afula.

WIZOuk supports the centre’s bar/batmitzvah programme for underprivileged youngsters, and the Shaw twins were looking forward to meeting some of the participants in this year’s programme. The visitors were most warmly welcomed by new director, Daniel Benn, his assistants and some of the teenagers for whom the centre is a lifeline. It is their ‘home away from home’, where they can participate in many courses which enrich their lives, as well as provide hours of worthwhile and enjoyable activities after school.

New WIZO dcc Graces North Tel Aviv

On a beautiful winter’s day in Tel Aviv, WIZO was delighted to dedicate a new state-of-the-art day care centre in the city’s up-and-coming Kochav Hatzafon neighbourhood, mainly populated with young families. The centre was built in cooperation with the Tel Aviv Municipality, and WIZO donors Myrna and Isaac Kaye, for whom the centre is named.

Eighty-five children between the ages of six months and three years attend the centre, which was completed in September, and amongst other top-class facilities, includes an ecological garden.

After a ribbon cutting ceremony and affixing the centre’s mezuzah by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, attendees sat down in a kindergarten classroom where they were entertained by the centre’s children, bedecked in white t-shirts printed with the words “I love Myrna & Isaac.”

In thanking the couple for their generous donation, Professor Rivka Lazovsky, Chair of the World WIZO Executive declared: “Today, Myrna and Isaac Kaye are dedicating the last word in child daycare, which is equipped to give Israeli children the best in education and nutrition as well as a solid foundation for their futures. By helping these children, the Kaye family and we at WIZO are ensuring the future generations of the State of Israel.”

A New Playground for the Children

Renata Perez, formerly of Geneva, now a Tel Aviv resident, generously donated two new playgrounds in memory of her parents Nathan and Ilse Gordon, at the WIZO Maurice and Gabriela Goldschleger Day Care Centre in Tel Aviv.

Pnina Litvin, who has been managing the facility for over 15 years, and WIZO’s preschool supervisor, Yael Yarom, greeted Renata, her family and friends. The children greeted the guests with song and dance and all enjoyed a kabbalat Shabbat ceremony.

While in the sensory motor room, Pnina and Yael described the centre’s activities. One hundred and twenty children attend the centre on a daily basis. Because of the growing number of local children, the Ministry of Economy will fund the building of two additional classrooms.

Renata and her guests were overwhelmed with the warm welcome and loving hospitality. Renata promised that she would make a significant donation in honour of her 91st birthday.

The visitors gained a great deal from the visit and are now looking forward to helping WIZO in their own way back in the UK.
January 2016 marks the end of Tova Ben-Dov’s term as president of World WIZO, a milestone in her impressive 50-year career with the organisation, which began on the auspicious day that she signed up for WIZO membership at her local branch in Herzliya.

This career has included her leading and enriching the movement in positions as varied as chairperson of the Building and Development Department, treasurer of World WIZO, chairperson of the World WIZO Executive, and of course her current four-year term as president. To an outsider, the only thing more astonishing, perhaps, than the timespan of Tova’s work for WIZO is the fact that all of it was done on a volunteer basis. Aside from the well-deserved recognition she has received over the years from within WIZO, Tova is also the recipient of the Yakir Tel Aviv Prize, in appreciation of her contribution to the city of Tel Aviv.

Tova is a tall, slender, elegant figure. When watching her climb the stairs of a stage in order to deliver a speech, or when sitting down with her to discuss WIZO-related issues, one cannot help but notice her passion, animation and devotion that one imagines have been there from the start and seem not to have waned over the years. Tova speaks at length, with insistence and vigour, about the organisation that is so close to her heart.

It is beyond a small article to detail the decades of work that Tova has done as a part of WIZO. So instead, I sat down with her to try and summarize her great contribution by seeing it through her eyes and in her words. Here are several excerpts from my question and answer session with a lady who is, in every way, a reflection of WIZO - an empowered Zionist woman.
What have you enjoyed most during your many decades as a WIZO volunteer?

“I truly love working one-on-one with people from abroad and across the whole spectrum of Israeli society, from battered women to bereaved families and mothers of newborn babies. I most enjoy the personal aspect of creating a bond beyond a donor or a federation and a particular project – which is something unique to WIZO. Choosing projects, meeting donors, and then fitting one to another - creating an intimate, ongoing relationship between the two – for me it’s like watching the birth of a child – rewarding and amazing. It is something completely different than blindly sending in a cheque to an organisation and then having no idea where your money is going. For me, fundraising is about building relationships. I love it, and I know that the donors love it too.”

You’ve spent the majority of your life volunteering in one way or another. What are your core causes when it comes to volunteer work and social betterment?

“I’ve always been passionate about education. A child needs education as much as he or she needs food and love. One of the first things I did as chairperson of the World WIZO Executive was to launch a campaign that tried to develop technical and vocational education for children who were not academically outstanding. I believed that Israel needs its mechanics and technicians just as much as it needs computer programmers and bioengineers. I found great value in the fact that WIZO enabled a ‘weaker’ student to still be able to graduate from the educational system with a diploma and an ‘entrance’ into society. By now it is taken for granted that one of WIZO’s main efforts is to give children with special needs the tools to excel in Israeli society.”

What sets WIZO apart from other organisations?

“First of all, we are not an organisation. We are a movement. One of the greatest differences is that you can’t compare WIZO executive members and chairpersons to those of other organisations, period. At WIZO, it’s not simply a title of honour - they actually work. I myself am in the office every day: writing letters, lobbying politicians, visiting projects, accompanying donors, etc. Secondly, WIZO’s vision and the motivation behind its work are different: creating a better society in Israel for future generations. Lastly, the phenomenon of full-time volunteers sets WIZO apart and, in my opinion, gives it a unique advantage and distinction among non-profits.”

What, if any, reactions from the Israeli public have stayed with you?

“After the terrible summer of 2006, when rockets were falling on northern Israel non-stop, I oversaw an emergency project which raised approximately $3,000,000 from our federations and quickly set up WIZO-funded evacuation teams to aid families fleeing their homes. WIZO opened its schools and day care centres as shelters for thousands of displaced families. When it was all over, WIZO received letters of thanks from the families. I’ll never forget one that said: ‘You showered us with rockets of love.’”

Are there any particular projects that are close to your heart?

“I will never forget when we opened our first rocket-proof day care centre in Sderot, a community that has suffered rocket fire from Gaza during several wars and on a constant basis. It is a life-saving building that not only protects the children and staff but also lets mothers go on with their normal lives as much as possible, even during war-time. This was the first rocket-proof day care centre in the whole country, generously financed by Bruce z”l and Ruth Rappoport.

“Then there was the chess programme. For my 75th birthday; instead of throwing an expensive party, I wanted to donate money to WIZO in a creative way. That year, Boris Gelfand had won second place at the international chess championships. My husband follows those kinds of things. He came up with the idea of starting chess courses for the children in our youth village dormitories. I approached the Israeli Chess Federation and we set up a programme in conjunction with them. This led to an annual tournament for the children of our youth villages.”

“When someone asked my husband, ‘Why chess?’ he replied, “Because it’s one of the strengths of the Jewish people! We may not be the greatest Olympic athletes. However, the logical thinking, ‘the yiddishe kopf’ involved in chess is one of our greatest strengths – so let’s use it!”

(1 to r) Sallie Lewis, wife of the then US Ambassador to Israel, Rada Carmel, and Tova at the WIZO Club in Daliat HaCarmel Druze Women’s Centre
What would you change in terms of the non-profit landscape in Israel?

“There is not enough cooperation between non-profit organisations – which is a shame. So much could be achieved by working together more; in the end, we all have many of the same Zionist, social and humanitarian goals. During my time as chairperson of the World WIZO Executive I was always striving to work more with the other women’s organisations, especially to obtain more assistance from the government. We are much stronger when we work together.”

What is a common misconception about you?

“A friend once told me, ‘Everyone knows that a person cannot be your friend unless they’re a member of WIZO!’ That is complete nonsense. However, I do believe that everyone can and should give back to the community, in some fashion. I have yet to meet anyone that isn’t capable of taking at least one hour a week out of their terribly important lives to do something for someone. One hour? You can’t find one hour?!”

What is the greatest challenge facing WIZO in the near future?

“There are a few challenges facing WIZO. In a broad sense membership is a problem – especially attracting new, younger members. Young women will have fresh ideas, as well as professionalism, technological fluency and many other things that could benefit WIZO. We need to engage them not only as volunteers but as executive members and leaders. In addition, WIZO’s greatest untapped resources are the husbands and sons of our chaverot - or simply MEN, in general. WIZO must figure out how to get men more involved.”

What in Israel, or in the organisation, has changed during your WIZO career?

“Sadly, the greatest change in Israel has been the way that people think about volunteer work and social betterment. Israel was once a country of sharing, giving and work for the common good. We all took for granted the idea that every individual worked for the benefit of the whole community – the nation. After the Yom Kippur War, the mentality changed. People used to ask, ‘What can I give, what can I do?’ whereas now they only think, ‘What do I get out of it?’”

What is your main core value?

“I place great emphasis on Zionism. It was my great motivator when I started at WIZO and today, it is even more important not only for Israelis but for the Jewish people.”

What will your life be like post-presidency?

“The World WIZO Constitution states that a past-president continues to be a part of the executive committee for eight years. Of course, I’ll maintain relationships with the donors I cultivated and the projects I was responsible for. Everyone who worked with me will still have a door to knock on; I won’t disappear. The truth is, I can’t stay away from WIZO, it’s in my DNA. That being said, I hope to have more free time for family, friends and leisure. Hopefully, I’ll also be able to sleep a little longer!”

Tova receiving the Yakir Tel Aviv Award from Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai

Tova at the chess tournament in CHW-Hadassim School and Youth Village
When Jana Falic speaks about herself, she starts by talking about her parents, Boris z"l and Pola Lekach. "I am a daughter of survivors," she states proudly. "My dad was a Jewish Russian soldier who was a hero. He saved many Jews. And he was a Zionist – he took me to Israel when I was two and a half years old. He gave me love for Israel. My mother survived the Nazis, and her grandson served in the IDF."

For Jana, Zionism means a belief in the Jewish nation, and she truly is Zionist to the bone, which is why she is so active in WIZO. "When she was little", her mother recalls, "I would take her to WIZO meetings; she always asked to come with me."

Born in Chile, Jana was raised in Panama, where she was introduced to WIZO by her mother, family and friends. When she was 18 years old, she met Simon Falic, with whom she shares a vision of Eretz Israel, Medinat Israel, and Am Israel. Together they have raised three daughters, a son and 11 grandchildren – all of whom are fully committed to the continuity of the Jewish people in its homeland. When asked about his wife, Simon admiringly remarks, "She has a vision of what she wants. She pushes and she inspires other people to use their skills to achieve that goal." And her mother-in-law, Nili Falic adds, "Zionism, children, WIZO; when Jana makes up her mind that it’s going to be a part of her life, the sky is the limit."

Moving to the USA
Jana and Simon moved to the USA 36 years ago, where Jana founded WIZO Aviv in Miami. She joined WIZO Florida’s Executive Board and today she serves as the co-president of WIZO USA. Mercedes Ivcher, founding co-president of WIZO USA, says that she saw Jana’s potential from day one. "Her charm, her smile, she attracted all the young people – she brought young leadership to WIZO." And to this day, WIZO Florida thrives on the continuous flow of young leadership, dedicated to bettering Israeli society through WIZO.

Whether chairing an event to raise funds for the WIZO Nir HaEmek Youth Village, or speaking at the dedication ceremony of playgrounds at the Pilavin Gates WIZO Day Care Centre in Rishon LeZion, Jana’s charm is unmatchable. No matter whether she speaks in English, Spanish, Hebrew, Russian or Yiddish – she speaks straight from the heart, and her words enter the hearts of all who hear her. She makes people understand they are part of something much, much bigger than themselves. As Judit Groisman, WIZO USA Vice President, says, “She wakes up one morning and says ‘I have a dream, and the way she says it, you can’t say no. She’s a tornado of happiness!”

Supporting numerous projects and events
WIZO and its many beneficiaries throughout Israel are grateful for the many gifts the Falic family has bestowed. These include installing a state-of-the-art auditorium in WIZO Nir HaEmek Youth Village, refurbishing the Miami Beach Ramat Gan Youth Centre, renovating the Falic Family Day Care Centre in Maale Adumim and the latest renovation in the Givat Ze’ev day care centre, her ongoing support for the Menifa programme in the Rebecca Sieff Centre in Beit HaKerem, and also underwriting endless events for WIZO Florida and World WIZO.

In Jana’s own words, WIZO means family. “A family of over 200,000 talented and committed volunteers from all over the world, whose hard work enables us to improve the lives of children and entire families in Israel. These volunteers are my sisters, and together we are caring for the same causes and ideals,” she says. “In every child who enters a WIZO day care centre, I see my own children and grandchildren. With each and every person who benefits from one of over 800 WIZO programmes, my heart fills with joy and pride. I am honoured to be a part of such a large and meaningful family and feel blessed to be able to enhance the lives of my WIZO family.”
From the Past to the Future

As WIZO celebrates 95 years, and as we look around the country and see WIZO’s touch all over the map, be it day care centres, youth villages or women’s centres, we can be justifiably proud. WIZO Review posed relevant questions to our senior members and our future generation around the world. This is Part Two of our special feature.

We asked our seniors:
- When did you join WIZO?
- Why did you join?
- What was the atmosphere in the Jewish world at that time regarding Israel?
- What advice would you give to the younger generation of WIZO?

We asked our future generation:
- How long have you been active in WIZO?
- What motivated you to join the movement?
- How will you motivate others of your generation to be involved?
- What do you think are the greatest challenges facing young Jews today?

Here are their responses...

BRAZIL

Mery Israel Benchimol, 84: “I have been a member of WIZO Amazonas for more than 50 years. In 1960, my mother-in-law Lili Benchimol invited me to work with some women in our community. The Manaus community has always been small, and I have always wanted to promote Judaism in rural regions where there were no synagogues or other forms of Jewish life.”

“I wanted to create roots, so that future generations could live in the Amazon without losing their Jewish identity. For the past 50 years I have sent magazines, newsletters and activities about Judaism to the Amazonas countryside. Our community has always supported the State of Israel, and the Maya Rosenberg School in Rehovot [sponsored by WIZO Brazil], because we believe that education is very important for the future of a nation.”

Deborah Aben-Athar Unger, 44, a physician by profession, joined WIZO Pará soon after her marriage 23 years ago. “My mother had been involved for many years, as well as my mother-in-law and some aunts; they all encouraged me to join, and I admired all their activities. Whenever we have an event, where possible, we show a short video or someone gives a talk about WIZO in Israel and as a worldwide movement. This motivates non-members to join us.”

“I think one of the greatest challenges for my generation is to find the time [to volunteer] as most of us are busy with our families and are at the peak of our careers. Social networks and technology make it a lot easier to promote activities, as you don’t have to attend in person. This is actually a pity because it is much nicer to attend an event, meet people, chat and make new friends.”

Xandel Weinstein, 81, of WIZO Rio Grande do Sul, joined WIZO in 1950. “At that time all the Nazi atrocities from the Second World War were being revealed and our community was impelled by a sense of solidarity with the world Jewish community. WIZO became our bridge to help the newborn state of Israel.”

“Even though Israel is now a developed and modern country, the younger generation must understand that the State still needs the Diaspora. Being part of WIZO gives you the opportunity to be hasbarah ambassadors for Israel and strengthen the wider Jewish community.”

Ruth Cohen, 80, from Rio de Janeiro joined WIZO the same year as the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948.

“My motivation to join WIZO was my Zionist upbringing and the rebirth of the Jewish homeland – at that time there was an atmosphere of euphoria and happiness and total commitment to the new State of Israel.”

“My advice to the younger WIZO women of today is: follow in the footsteps of the founding mothers, always look forward and ensure WIZO’s continuity – WIZO’s future is in your hands!”

Cynthia Kalili, 46, is president of WIZO São Paulo Tzeirot (Aviv) group, and has been a member for seven years.

“I joined because I wanted to help people by doing volunteer work. I really want to motivate others of my generation to join us….I think the best way is to show them the work that WIZO does and invite them to participate in our activities. I know this won’t be easy in today’s world. Many of my generation have a lack of faith, do not support Zionism and they are influenced by the manipulation of the international media against Israel and the Jewish people.”
Celebrating

Alegra Bromfman, 85, from WIZO Paraná has been a member for 54 years. “I was invited to a meeting by a friend, not knowing much about it, only that it was a volunteer organisation to help Israel. The chaverot were very welcoming and I was soon given a position as the Corrente Magazine correspondent. Together with other more experienced chaverot I soon learnt the value of being part of WIZO.”

“I would tell the younger generation that WIZO is a strength which creates a circular chain of energy. WIZO is for people to give of themselves and not expect rewards – but feel the reward of doing something useful and important, being part of something big and fighting for an ideal.”

“We are the fruits of yesterday, and tomorrow will bear the fruits from today.”

Sara Paciornik, 42, from WIZO Paraná, a third generation WIZO member, has been involved in WIZO since 2006.

“I grew up seeing how motivated my mother was and understood the importance of the organisation. I soon realised how gratifying it is to see the fruits of our work and how we can see the results over a number of years.”

“I hope to reach out to new members by promoting our work and showing the example of the vision of our founding mothers, and how this has been carried out by generations of WIZO women, working for a better society in the State of Israel.”

“The challenges facing my generation are many. We must keep our traditions, follow the example of previous generations and believe in our history. We need to keep learning. With knowledge and understanding of our past, we will be stronger and be able to recruit more volunteers. We must be open to new and modern methods, ready and determined to be able to make choices. I chose to be a WIZO activist because I found in this organisation the opportunity to do all this.”

Luciana Katz, 36 has been a WIZO member for many years, but became more involved in 2012 when an Aviv group was formed in Brasília.

“I joined because I was interested to learn and experience more about Jewish culture and traditions with the chaverot and their families, and about life in Israel, the needs of the people and to feel a connection with Eretz Israel.”

“I would motivate others of my generation by conveying to them how important it is to feel part of the community and through WIZO they can see how gratifying volunteering is for a common cause. The big reward is the opportunity to help. Attending the International Aviv Seminar is really important to understand more about WIZO, and our connection to Eretz Yisrael. This is a tip for those who haven’t been to one yet!”

“My daughter suggested creating ‘Kids’ WIZO’, which I think is a good start. If we do our job, are committed with love and joy, we are giving an example to future generations.”

Challenges facing your generation? “The main challenge is to keep focused; we must be proud of our people. We are facing two major challenges – one internally – that is the fight against assimilation, and externally – the fight against external pressure and public opinion which is not always in favour of Israel. We need to be informed so we can show the positive aspects of Israel and Judaism.”

CHILE

Jocelyn Kohn, 37, president of SHALOM, one of Chile’s youngest groups has been active in the group for some eight years although was ‘made a member’ by her mother when she was bat mitzvah.

“As I was growing up I remember how one day our family became ‘more Jewish’, my mother became involved in WIZO, and visited Israel for the first time. My family started participating more in the community, which gave us a sense of belonging we did not have before. So in a way, WIZO is an important part of my Jewish identity.”

Jocelyn has tried to motivate other young women to join, but finds it is not easy. “There are tons of reasons not to join, but I believe once you participate and get involved you become passionate about WIZO.”

Jocelyn sees anti-Semitism, education and communication as the three big challenges facing her generation. With the media and Internet: “Anti-Semitism blooms and spreads fast and far. To be strong and stand together is crucial. As Jewish women, we need to stay informed, learn and adapt constantly.”

Deborah Kuperman, president of Maayan, one of Chile’s biggest Aviv groups, has been active in WIZO since she was married 27 years ago. “WIZO is very important to me because I am following in the footsteps of my mother. Today, I am president of the Maayan group in Santiago.”

Deborah feels the best way to motivate her generation is to show them the work that WIZO does, and the important contribution that WIZO makes to Israeli society. “It is important to have activities which are geared to today’s young women.”

“My generation must maintain the link with Israel and our Jewish community, avoid assimilation and teach our children our values and traditions to be passed on to future generations.”
Renee Cogan, Past President of WIZO Chile, clearly remembers when she started in WIZO around the time the State of Israel was founded: “There was great excitement in our community when the State of Israel was created, which aroused our dormant Zionist spirit. I was 28 years old with a young family and strong Jewish roots. I felt I wanted to do something for the young State – and then WIZO appeared on my horizon!”

“I formed a small group with some friends called the Avodah group; our WIZO head office provided us with cultural and publicity material and we were on our way! After being president of WIZO Avodah for several terms of office I was eventually elected president of WIZO Chile, a position I held for over 25 years.”

“I took on the presidency during very difficult times for the country and I felt a great challenge and huge responsibility. During this long period I was totally committed to WIZO. My Executive fully supported me which enabled the federation to grow and succeed even in times of great crisis in Chilean society.”

Renee has one piece of advice for the younger generation: commitment. “You should volunteer all your available free time for the organisation and contribute your knowledge and capabilities. It might seem like ‘work’, but this work for a wonderful cause will give you the greatest satisfaction and stimulation – better education than any university! And in the end you will emerge a better human being.”

MEXICO

Sara Goldberg, 88, Honorary Life Member of World WIZO and Lifetime Honorary President of WIZO Mexico, joined WIZO 64 years ago. She joined because she wanted to actively support WIZO’s aims and activities.

“At that time in our community, the most important thing was to continue with our Jewish traditions and support the State of Israel. Many of our young people were active in Zionist youth clubs and even went to volunteer on kibbutzim in Israel.”

“My advice to the younger women of today is that they must understand the importance of our work; they should learn everything related to Zionism and be active in strengthening Israeli society and maintaining the link between Israel and the Diaspora.”

Valentine Random Alfille, 27, is president of the younger group of WIZO Mexico, the Ahava Group, and has been active in WIZO for two years. She joined because she wanted to do something for others, particularly in Israel. Why WIZO? “I decided on WIZO because I was inspired by various members of my family who are active in the organisation.”

“My plan to get other members of my generation involved is to show them the work that WIZO does, what we can achieve together and how others benefit from what we do.”

“My generation has many challenges: we were born with many privileges and sometimes forget that not everyone is as lucky as we are. Our biggest challenge is not to forget these people and work to try to give them a better life.”

PARAGUAY

Miriam Brudner has been a WIZO member for 47 years. At that time, as a Jewish woman, she felt she wanted to support Israel in some way and WIZO seemed the right path for her. “At that time, everyone in our community was very aware of and interested in the news we received from Israel and we all wanted to be part of the building up of the State”

Miriam’s advice to the younger generation: “Do not lose your way. We must be aware that without Israel we are adrift.”

Rosana Baran has been a WIZO member for eight years. Rosana was motivated to join WIZO because “I have always worked at the community level and when I learned more about the work of WIZO, I felt that this was the place I wanted to develop my potential. I wanted to work on behalf of children and women at risk.”

Rosana feels that the way to motivate other young women is “to show the work that has been done and most importantly by showing who benefits from the fruits of this labour. We must protect all children and women in need.”

“The biggest challenges facing young Jews today are assimilation and apathy, and lack of interest in the State of Israel.”

SOUTH AFRICA

Barbara Sandler, Honorary Life Vice-Chairman Bnoth Zion WIZO Cape Town: “I think I joined WIZO while still in my mother’s womb in 1933! But I joined ‘officially’ in 1952 when I was a young married woman. I joined because I was a supporter of Zionism and Israel as the home of the Jewish people.”

“My advice to the young women of today is ‘do not forget that the input of your generation is vital to our continuity. It is for you to pass on the love and support for Israel as the legitimate country of the Jewish people, for which we have prayed for, worked for and been part of its creation. WIZO needs your support to continue its work caring for...”
Celebrating age of 12. “My mother came to Israel (Palestine) in 1914. has been involved in WIZO from the tender Miriam Falk UK SWITZERLAND following the teachings and ethos of the Jewish people. “WIZO has led the way all the aspects of our people’s needs. WIZO has led the way following the teachings and ethos of the Jewish people.”

**Lilian Sarembock** - Honorary Secretary Bnoth Zion WIZO Cape Town, joined WIZO in 1958. “My motivation was the realisation that WIZO is all-important to every Jewish woman and girl. At the time I joined, the atmosphere within the Jewish world was very tense. We were all heartbroken after the Holocaust when we learned of the atrocities that had taken place. We were determined to overcome our endless problems. My advice to the young women of today is to remember our heritage.”

**SWITZERLAND**

**Tal Trost Ben-Hamo** is an Aviv Member of WIZO in Zurich, and has been active in WIZO since 2008. She feels it is important “to make our children aware of the fact that we here in Switzerland have a good life and can help other children in Israel who live under difficult situations. We can teach our kids that charity starts at an early stage of life. We organise events for children in order to raise money for underprivileged children in Israel, and also try to make attractive events for young women as well, in order to involve them and be active.”

“One of the challenges facing my generation today is that people are less interested in charity work and donating. We are overloaded with charity organisations, which are all competing with each other and generally people are donating much less than they did some years ago.”

**Ruth Dreyfuss** is a past president of the Swiss Federation, and became active in WIZO in her 20s. Living in La Chaux-de-Fonds, a small town with a small Jewish community, as a young mother she took part in several WIZO activities.

“I would visit relatives in Israel and see WIZO projects at the same time; my family was always supportive of Israel, all of which motivated me.”

“Today nearly every young woman has a job and doesn’t always have the time to be involved in charity work. I always used to tell my women: go to Israel alone or with your family, visit a few institutions to see the necessities of the socially deprived families. Hopefully it gave them the motivation to realise they should do something worthwhile. My motto is also “seeing is believing”.

**UK**

**Miriam Falk** has been involved in WIZO from the tender age of 12. “My mother came to Israel (Palestine) in 1914.

At the time, she was working for the British Government as Head of the CID (Criminal Investigation Department). In 1948 when the State of Israel was created, my mother became General Secretary of WIZO in Jerusalem. That’s when it started for me.”

Miriam’s mother was a great influence and motivation for Miriam. When she married in 1962 she went to live in South London, where there was no WIZO group at the time – so she started a young group – Bromley Aviv. In the late 1960s Miriam started another WIZO group in Kingston, Surrey. Both groups are still flourishing over 50 years later!

“During that time there was a great deal of support for Israel in the UK and elsewhere in the Diaspora. WIZO was thriving and new groups were being set up all over the UK.”

There is no doubt that a big part of Miriam’s life is connected to WIZO. When she moved to another part of London in 2006, she founded yet another group – WIZO in the Wood – which, 10 years later, is also still going strong.

Miriam feels that it is of the utmost importance for every WIZO member to motivate the younger members of her family. Her granddaughter, Hannah, was made a life member at birth. “It is so important for the younger generation to be WIZO’s ambassadors of today. Miriam arranged for Hannah to go on the Young WIZOuk trip to Israel “to see what I saw through my mother all those years ago and to motivate her to be the eyes and ears of the new generation of WIZO and to carry on our important legacy of continuing to help the citizens of Israel.”

**Hannah Eskenazy, 23**, Miriam Falk’s granddaughter, has been a life member of WIZO from the day she was born. In recent years she has been very involved in her grandmother’s current group “WIZO in the Wood,” where she has been a great asset in managing the group’s events.

“At the beginning of May 2015, along with six other young entrepreneurs, I spent five days in Israel (mainly Jerusalem) visiting some of WIZO’s amazing 800 projects. With this experience, along with the memories and connections made, I am now so excited to start helping to bring WIZO to the younger generation, and be involved in this inspirational movement! By using my professional skills, I hope to get my generation motivated through a variety of events that will be both relevant, inviting and exciting.”

“I feel that the one of the greatest challenges facing my generation today is keeping our Jewish identity strong, be it through encouraging traditional Jewish views and values within the young society, or keeping up Friday nights and/or other traditions (such as kashrut) in the home.”

“It is a great worry of mine that my generation will not have as strong a Jewish connection as that of the older generation. The current society is of a ‘right here right now’ mindset and is less concerned with ‘investing now for the future’.”
Having recently completed her term of office as president of WIZO South Africa, Tamar talks about her life in South Africa and an overview of WIZO and the community

Tamar Lazarus – Born into WIZO

David Sarna

One would not be wrong to believe that Tamar Lazarus was destined to be a WIZO executive. She was born and raised in Tel Aviv, to a mother, Tova Ben-Dov (currently the outgoing president of World WIZO) who was, at the time, already a committed WIZO volunteer. “I was born into WIZO,” says Tamar. “As far back as I can remember, my mother was involved.” Tamar recently completed her term as president of WIZO South Africa; she lives in Cape Town with her husband Ronald. “I have one daughter, Alice, living in Amsterdam. My son, Dylan lives in Cape Town and my younger son, Jesse is currently living in Durban.”

“Not only did I accompany my mother to many WIZO functions as a kid, WIZO was literally my second home! After school (The Tzeitlin High School, situated around the corner from WIZO’s headquarters in Tel Aviv) let out, I would cross the street to wait for my mother to finish work.”

The move to South Africa

At the same time that Tamar finished her compulsory military service in the IDF, her parents were sent on shlichut to Durban, South Africa on behalf of Keren HaYesod. Tamar travelled to South Africa for what was meant to be a visit lasting a month or two. “I planned to come back to Tel Aviv to study,” says Lazarus. “However, within the first week of that trip I met the man who would be my future husband. That was three children and 32 years ago. I’m still here,” laughs Tamar. Eventually, Tamar, her husband and family moved from Durban to Cape Town, where they now reside.

For Tamar, getting involved in WIZO in South Africa was her way to acclimate and integrate with her new surroundings and the local Jewish community. “For me it was a natural way to socialize and meet people. I started at the branch level, became a chairman of Durban, and eventually the president of the South African federation.”

The Durban Conference

One of the defining moments of Tamar’s volunteer career with WIZO was the UN World Conference against Racism in 2001, which sparked a lot of controversy and media attention around the world for its blatant anti-Semitic and anti-Israel overtones.

“Perhaps the defining moment of my time working for WIZO in Durban, and, oddly enough, also part of my reason for leaving the city, was that shameful conference. It was shocking and eye-opening. It came at a time when Jewish...”

All-embracing community

Being the leader of a Jewish organisation in Africa has its unique benefits and challenges. “The South African Jewish...”
community, which numbers between 60,000 and 70,000 people, many of whom are not affiliated, is a very well-structured and close-knit community. Care from birth to old-age is excellent; there are many institutions and services. There is also very strong support for Israel. We try to keep Jewish community members on the political far left and far right, involved. We try not to ostracize anybody. There are WIZO groups in every city with a large Jewish population: Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth. There are also WIZO groups in smaller communities throughout the provinces. Unfortunately, the smaller communities are aging, young people are moving to large cities, and these smaller groups are slowly suffering."

Tamar stresses the fact that perhaps, what most sets WIZO activists in South Africa apart, is their geographical distance. “The women who are involved in WIZO South Africa are extremely devoted to a cause that is so far away, something they can neither see nor touch. It shouldn’t be taken for granted. Their hearts are just so large. Many of them have never even seen a WIZO project or been to Israel and they are still so involved.”

Another unique aspect of WIZO work in Africa’s southernmost country is the fact that it benefits from the help of many Christian Zionists, Tamar points out. “We have many Christian volunteers at the gift shop at the Port Elizabeth branch. It’s fantastic.”

Tamar sums up, “The Zionist movement in South Africa is amazing. It is an honour to be involved at a high level.”

**Challenge for the future**

However, WIZO South Africa, as with any federation, has its struggles as well. “I am having a hard time with AVIV. I find that young people today are looking for immediately gratifying projects, without patience for sitting on committees or projects that require long-term commitments. Today’s young men and women are achievers who want to see results right away. This might be okay when it comes to fundraising or PR, but it is a problem for WIZO leadership.”

Like many Jewish communities around the world, South African Jews must face rising tides of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment. “The BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement originated in South Africa, based on the experience of apartheid. During the Durban conference, the concept of Israel as an apartheid state grew in popularity, which also fed the concept of boycotting Israel. In South Africa the ANC, the leading political party, has very strong connections with the Palestinians, even Hamas. Here, it’s an issue of misinformation and lack of information about the reality in Israel, as well as an issue of politics: South Africa has a very strong Muslim community - that votes.”

While Israel is currently dealing with the new law that encourages EU member states to label products produced in West Bank settlements, “In South Africa, labelling has been going on for a long time already,” reports Tamar. The South African BDS movement has even hosted former Palestinian terrorist Leila Khaled at events. “With what’s going on now in France – how does one dare support terrorists!? Especially a terrorist who isn’t remorseful at all?”

Anti-Semitism is not the difficulty for a Jewish community leader in South Africa. There exist equally complex issues within the community itself, says Tamar. “Intermarriage is a challenge. And I also find that the Jewish community is becoming more religious, which raises issues that didn’t exist before. Here, we have Chabad, Orthodox and Reform communities. WIZO and other Jewish organisations try to compromise between different voices and people with different needs.”

Perhaps, more than other issues, money is the greatest. “These days, WIZO South Africa has to compete with many other organisations when it comes to fundraising. The distance from Israel is also a problem that could be solved with more funding. We try to get members to come and view the projects but it is a major issue. It’s not that they don’t want to come, but they don’t all have the funds. As odd as it may sound, one of the main problems is the exchange rate of Rand to the Dollar. You’d be surprised what a major factor that is in raising funds and sending WIZO members to Israel.”

**Unique WIZO**

However, Tamar stresses the fact that the international aspect of WIZO is what sets it apart and makes it an exciting organisation to be a part of. “WIZO was globalized before the rest of the world. It has always been the uniqueness of WIZO. Wherever you are, one can find a WIZO group. For example, the annual Shabbat Project shows the power of the international aspect: pictures and posts online and on Facebook show how WIZO chaverot mobilize, come together and organise events, simultaneously one day a year, all around the world – it’s amazing. As a movement, we can’t work in isolation. In addition to being worldwide – I strongly believe that WIZO needs to be powerful on a community level. It should be a solid part of the community. Therefore, as a WIZO member I also go to lots of community functions, and as a leader, I encourage people to not commit themselves only to WIZO. The volunteering and community service that is part of the history and essence of WIZO is what sets it apart from purely fundraising organisations. We should never lose that.”
Developing WIZO

Thanks to our Federations, WIZO has provided our children, youth and women with state-of-the-art facilities. This is just a glimpse of a few of the renovations made possible by our generous donors in 2015.
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Ken Hashalom DCC, Beer Sheva, Mary Bendet Foundation, WIZO Switzerland

Evelyn & Fred Sommer Dormitory, WIZO Nir HaEmek Youth Village, WIZO USA

House of Dreams DCC, Tel Aviv, Friends of WIZO

Eva & Paul Wyler DCC, Nahariya, WIZO Switzerland

Agamim DCC, Netanya, WIZO Switzerland
Raya Jaglom DCC, French Hill, Jerusalem, South Africa

Maurice & Gabriela Goldschleger DCC, WIZO Switzerland

Dorm Tet, CHW-WIZO Nahalal Youth Village, WIZO USA

Zinman (KH) DCC, WIZO Chile

Emergency and Safety Features, Rebecca Sieff Centre for the Family, Jerusalem, WIZO UK

Beit Heuss, WIZO Germany

Astronomy Lab, WIZO Nir HaEmek Youth Village, WIZO USA

Mishpachton for children at risk, CHW Hadassim Youth Village, WIZO Denmark
The WIZO Meyerhof Day Care Centre, funded by WIZO USA, has been continuously operating in the city of Rehovot for over 35 years, since 1977. The centre serves the neighbourhood of Shikun Milchan – a community made up of many immigrant and single parent families at the lowest socio-economic level of Israeli society.

The centre provides quality day care services for 71 infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers from the area, every day from 7am until 4pm. For the past three years, the day care centre has been under the direction of Limor Akua. While on the surface, Limor’s work at the centre might seem commonplace, under the surface lies a powerful story of female empowerment, mutual commitment and the power of WIZO. I sat down for a conversation with Limor to learn how she came to be the director of the Meyerhof Day Care Centre.

Limor, tell me about how you first became a part of WIZO?

“I was born and raised in Rehovot. When I was 16 years old, my parents divorced and my mother and I were left in a very difficult situation. I began looking for work that I could do as a student, and happened upon the WIZO day care centre in my neighbourhood of Kfar Gvirol. The director of the centre, Ayala Elimelech, took me in and gave me an after-school job.”

How long have you been working for WIZO?

“Twenty three years.”

Can you tell me more about the journey from a 16-year-old day care assistant to where you are now?

“Well, I worked at the day care centre for four years, after school. When I turned 20 I was officially employed as a full-time day care worker, under the same director, Ayala. I wound up spending 20 years at that center. In 2012, when a position became available, I was promoted to managerial level at the Meyerhof Centre.”

Is it true that WIZO day care has been your first and ONLY job?

“Yes. That’s true.”

Tell me about your progress within the system...

“The organisation made sure that I progressed. For example, WIZO sponsored many continuing education courses for me. On a day-to-day basis, Ayala Elimelech, the director of the centre where I worked, supported me tremendously and pushed me forward; she gave me responsibilities of all kinds that she didn’t have to, as my boss. It was the amazing set of skills that Ayala gave me that caused a small crisis in me – all of a sudden I realized that I wanted more – to be an administrator. The work itself caused a desire for advancement.”

In 2013, you became director of the Meyerhof Day Care Centre

“Yes. I was ready for management for a long time, as I said. Funnily enough, it started as a temporary position. Simultaneously, I started studying to get my managerial certification in Tel Aviv, another step that WIZO helped me with. WIZO did everything imaginable to make the learning process easy and worthwhile – in terms of everything from scheduling, benefits and even scholarships.”

What has changed at the centre during your three years as director?

“The centre has become a part of the Ma’on Ve’Od programme, which is basically a basket of additional services that a day care centre is able to provide, a product of increased tuition and donations. The kids are now able to participate in extra-curricular activities, enjoy children’s theatre performances twice a month and eat hot meat meals; before the programme we had a dairy-only kitchen. The additional payment from the parents was very hard to obtain because of their particularly low socio-economic situation. But somehow, I managed to convince them of the programme’s value. The meat meals wouldn’t have been

WIZO Changes Lives

What WIZO Did For Me: Limor Akua

A powerful story of how WIZO cultivated a young girl seeking direction into one of its professional leaders

David Sarna
possible without the renovation of our kitchen – thanks to a donation from WIZO USA. In addition to that programme, the centre is also open for more hours throughout the year and also operates a ‘summer day-camp,’ which allows parents to maintain their professional lives throughout the year, when the public education and day care system is on vacation.”

“Last but not least, the centre recently received a fantastic donation that allowed us to renovate one of our outdoor playgrounds. We are very grateful for that.”

**Does the centre have any immediate needs?**

“Our day care centre is unique because of its population. I have found in the past three years that many of the children in my care have serious language problems. These very young children come from immigrant homes where there is little or no Hebrew and often, poor literacy in general. At the day care centre their communication and comprehension problems become apparent. So, I would like to build a language enrichment programme for these kids – projects that deal with language in general and Hebrew in particular.”

**What, if anything would you change about the day care centre?**

“The biggest thing that I would like to change is not something within the walls of the centre but outside. Up until this year, the day care centre always had a majority of children born to ‘native’ Israeli families. This year, the population of the day care centre has suddenly become 50% ethnically Ethiopian. We also care for a small number of Arab children and children from Russian families, as we always have. Lately, I’ve noticed that parents who are thinking about sending their children to our day care centre react adversely when they discover the ethnic diversity we have here. There is, unfortunately, an element of racism that I’ve noticed in many parents. They refer to my centre as ‘the Ethiopian’ day care, in a condescending manner. The truth is that these attitudes don’t affect the centre at all – in fact, we’re at full capacity! They are simply unfortunate and unnecessary. I’m sure that the situation will change; my day care centre is building its name and reputation every day.”

**I’m sure that after decades spent working in a WIZO institution, you have strong feelings about the organisation.**

“Of course. WIZO has been a huge, formative part of my life; it’s been there during milestones, tragedies, everything. Ayala, my former boss, is like a mother to me.”

**What would you say to a 16-year-old girl who showed up at the doorstep of your day care centre looking for work, as you did 23 years ago?**

“Well, that actually happened. I am currently training a student day care worker right now. She’ll be here at 2pm if you’d like to meet her!”

“On the ground level of operations, I believe that WIZO day care is simply the best possible place for Israel’s children. It’s especially important to mention, in light of the many recent news reports about other organisations and their standards, that WIZO gives children the opportunity to grow and develop with honour.”

“In addition, I’ve realized that one of the greatest distinctions of WIZO is the fact that across the board, the staff members of its centres are professional, warm, supportive people. It makes one feel ‘at home’ and part of a family, even more than a team.”

“On a larger scale, it was only after I became a director that I started seeing ‘above the table’s edge’ so to speak. I realized that I am part of a greater system which is doing amazing things.”

**That’s unbelievable. You’ve closed the circle of female empowerment at WIZO.**

“It’s probably a natural step in the work that’s being done here. WIZO went out of the way to care for me as a young worker and developing employee. WIZO committed to me. I benefitted tremendously from the care and support I found at a WIZO institution and I try to pass that on. I would like my employees to achieve greater things and feel like part of a family. I wake up happy and thankful to go to work every single day, even after 23 years.”

“I know that neither education nor any training can replace the true love of working with children and desire to care for them – which is something you find among the staff at WIZO centres.”
When Vlad Doron joined a WIZO youth village as a child, he had no idea that it would become the backdrop of his adult life as well

What WIZO Did For Me: Vlad Doron

While WIZO very often plays a major role in an individual’s life at a certain and particular moment, it can also represent the vortex around which a person’s life surreptitiously grows. That is indeed the case in the life of Vlad Doron (Dorshenko) a young man, who, from the age of 11, has found his life’s path intertwined with WIZO. For him, WIZO Hadassim Youth Village was the safe harbour and touchstone that at times was his only source of stability and support.

Vlad immigrated to Israel with his mother and grandparents from Ukraine in 1994, at the age of four. At the time, his biological father was already, unfortunately, not playing an active role in his life. In fact, it was only when he was 18-years-old that Vlad discovered his father had remarried and that he had a half-brother and half-sister.

Soon after settling in Ashdod, Vlad’s mother, a doctor, got a job in Israel working as a nurse in an old age home. She earned extra money by cleaning houses on the side. Young Vlad was struggling at school and at home alone most of the time. His mother’s boyfriend suggested that he might fare better at a youth village.

Hadassim – a lifeline for Vlad

Through a social worker who was assisting his elderly grandparents, Vlad heard about WIZO Hadassim and was soon accepted at the youth village – the beginning of what would prove to be a long relationship between the young man and the institution.

As a student at the boarding school, Vlad fitted in almost immediately; the children were very friendly and he took to the warm atmosphere. Not only was he busy with social life and extra-curricular activities – Vlad became so focused on his studies that he was shockingly able to ‘self-diagnose’ his own dyslexia. At age 12, in the 7th grade, Vlad began to realize that despite his complete understanding of concepts, the students around him were all able to finish written work much faster than him. He consulted with a teacher, underwent tests and was diagnosed with the learning disability. From that point on, he received extra help with reading and writing and was given special conditions to take the matriculation (bagrut) examinations.

Not only did Vlad overcome his learning difficulty, he did well enough to join a fast-track programme for bright students and even tutor other kids in mathematics.

The next stage

In the 8th grade, Vlad met a fellow student named Tamara who would go on to play a major role in his life. After completing high school at Hadassim, Vlad joined the IDF’s Givati Brigade as a combat soldier. During his leaves from the army he soon realized that his mother had become an alcoholic – having sold her apartment and frequently disappearing for days or weeks at a time. Suddenly stuck on his own (the army even considered him a ‘lone soldier’) and without a home to return to on weekend leave, Vlad approached a social worker for help in finding a solution. After being ‘adopted’ by a friend’s family for a short period, Vlad discovered that WIZO Hadassim had opened a ‘graduate house’ – a dormitory on campus for graduates of the school who needed alternative housing solutions. This providential timing made Vlad the first graduate to live in the home, in exchange for 10 weekly hours of community service to the students of Hadassim.

After the requisite three years, Vlad went on to become an officer and career soldier for three additional years, finally leaving the army in 2014, but not before actively fighting in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge.

Marrying Tamara

Last summer, in July 2015, Vlad married Tamara, his childhood sweetheart, the same girl whom he met at Hadassim in the 8th grade and had dated ever since. Today, they live together at Hadassim as Tamara has also returned - working as a counsellor for female boarding school students. Vlad is currently working, saving money and planning to begin university in October 2016. About the bumpy road of his youth that today, is nothing less than an eye-opening success story, Vlad says, “I wouldn’t have achieved what I have if I hadn’t come to study at Hadassim. Aside from a home, this place was also my source of values, morals and continuous support.”
A resident of the WIZO Parents' Home reveals the story of her life at the centre of 20th century Jewish history

Avi Obligenarz

On a Tightrope: Tirza Kshepitsky - Survivor

I can't forget for a moment that I am walking on a tightrope and fighting for my life," recalls Tirza Kshepitsky in her memoir On a Tightrope, which reveals the moving story of her life during the Second World War and birth of the State of Israel.

Kshepitsky, a Holocaust survivor, who is a resident of the WIZO Parents' Home in Tel Aviv, was born in 1921 in Lwow, Poland (now Ukraine). When the war broke out in 1939 she was 17 years old. Her mother was sent to a concentration camp; Tirza, her father and brother had to separate and live under assumed identities. Eventually, she managed to receive a document that verified her status as a non-Jewish, Polish citizen.

With her new yet precarious Christian identity, Tirza found a shared room to live in and a job with the Polish Post. "I think that what kept me alive all those years was my strong desire to survive." Kshepitsky adds, "At night I was afraid to fall asleep. One mistake on my part could reveal who I really was. I felt terrible loneliness since I didn't have anybody to confide in and to count on."

A new life

After the war, Tirza was determined to leave Poland forever. When the war ended, she was reunited with her father and brother in Germany. Kshepitsky joined "Aliyah Bet," the illegal immigration movement bringing Jews to Palestine. After waiting for four months, in July 1946 Kshepitsky and 754 illegal Jewish immigrants boarded the sailing vessel, "Yagour", headed to Haifa. Two weeks later, the ship was spotted by British authorities and was escorted to Haifa. Soon enough, the Jewish passengers found themselves behind the barbed wire fence of a refugee camp in Cyprus. "It was a horrible feeling. After finally being freed, they put us back in a camp." The refugees coped with the camp's harsh conditions for four months, until they were finally allowed into Palestine, one day before Chanukah of 1946.

In her memoirs Kshepitsky describes very vividly the alienating attitude of the Israeli society and even that of her own family towards Holocaust survivors. "They were ashamed of us and called us various derogatory nicknames. I quickly realized that those who had not been there would never understand what we went through; they weren't interested in hearing about our horrific experiences during the war. My mother's sister once asked me why I survived and my mother did not."

Wanting to be accepted as a part of Israeli society, at the age of 24 Tirza joined the army. After 18 months of service in the Israeli army's postal unit, Kshepitsky got married. Living between Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan, she spent over 30 years working for the postal service, while also managing to study law. During those years she devoted her free time to volunteering for WIZO. Her first exposure to WIZO had been in Poland. "Since my mother dedicated herself to WIZO, it felt natural for me to follow in her footsteps."

Since publishing her book, Kshepitsky, who for the last four years has lived in the WIZO Parents' Home in Tel Aviv, dedicates her spare time to bringing the next generation closer to the Holocaust.

The small, slender woman says she never gets tired of telling her personal story and answering the questions of high school students and soldiers, during meetings organised by the Ministry of Education and the IDF. "At first I was afraid I would bore them but I quickly realized that they listen very carefully and have plenty of good questions. It gives me great satisfaction to still feel that I am needed at my age. There is definitely more openness and understanding about the subject of the Holocaust among today's younger generation; I always stress to my audience that it can happen again and that we need to be prepared for any kind of threat."
WE = WIZO Empowers

Creating Change

WE Fight for Women’s Rights.

WE Create Leaders.

WE Volunteer.

WE Save Lives.

For further information and to make online contributions, visit our website:

www.wizo.org

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Naomi Frankenburg, Past National President of Canadian Hadassah-WIZO

Naomi Frankenburg, Past National President of Canadian Hadassah-WIZO

Involved with CHW for over 40 years, Naomi Frankenburg held a multitude of leadership positions within the organisation at local, regional and national levels, and in 1987 was elected national president.

Naomi leaves behind a memory that will be defined by her inspiring dedication to philanthropy, particularly with her work in CHW. She was deeply committed to the Jewish community in her home city of Vancouver, throughout Canada, and in Israel. When Naomi was elected CHW National President she became the first president from Vancouver, and also had the distinction of being the first president to be installed in Israel. She even learned Hebrew so she could better represent CHW in Israel.

Naomi was an incredible spokesperson for CHW during her time as national president. “My particular interest as president was in getting to know the members of our organisation. I found travelling to different centres, and meeting thousands of new people to be both exciting and rewarding.”

Naomi had so many accomplishments in her life, and we are proud that she was a dedicated member of CHW for such a significant portion of it. May her memory be a blessing.

Iride Ester Tradati Schwartz

Iride Ester Tradati Schwartz

A true woman of valour and one of the most important figures of Italian Zionism and mainstay of Adei WIZO, Iride Ester Tradati Schwartz has passed away. For well over half a century, Iride worked tirelessly for the benefit of Israel and the Jewish People.

For many years she was vice president of WIZO Italy and president of the Italian Zionist Federation. She was one of the initiators and supporters of the ECWF (European Council of WIZO Federations).

As honorary president of the well-known IGEA Clinic in Milan, Iride received many honours including the Cavaliere della Repubblica Italiana and Ambrogino d’argento from the city of Milan. She was also the recipient of the Rebecca Sieff Award and the ADEI WIZO Gold Pin.

She and her family have always been generous and sensitive benefactors of WIZO. In September 2014, in honour of her 100th birthday, a substantial donation was made to the WIZO Italy-sponsored day care centre in Maalot.

It is impossible to summarize the life of this exceptional woman in a few lines. She was a very humble and reserved person, never interested in honours for herself. She was always friendly and available for everyone.

As fate would have it, she lived her final years in a ‘special world’, far from cares and sorrows. We will always remember her as active, lively, thoughtful and attentive. She was buried in her beloved Jerusalem at Har Hazeitim.

We bow our heads, may her memory be blessed.
WOW HOW FAST 4 YEARS HAVE FLOWN!

Laurienne Baitz

Global challenges & trends have accelerated mercurially and with it has come escalated NEED.

We are family
AVIV as the Young Leadership Division of WIZO understands the importance of a collaborative culture to support & develop women and children in Israel and in communities abroad. We strive to lead the way in social partnership with an ethos of volunteerism partnered with professionalism & transparency.

We believe that WIZO as a leading Jewish women's movement and philanthropic organisation has a dual responsibility. First and foremost to its social programmes in Israel, and in addition to uphold a model of international Zionist partnership & support.

The term ‘membership’ may be as untrendy as the term ‘Zionism’; however global research has clearly indicated that WIZO’s sisterhood ethos embodies universal desires for community & belonging - especially given these anti-Semitic times. Technically speaking we are members of a Zionist organisation no matter what we say! WIZO’s future challenge is to modify our information system to be inclusive of all those who make up the WIZO family in different ways.

WOW factor!
In order to capture the interest of Young Jewish Leadership, it is key that WIZO Aviv is a relevant & vibrant brand that provides an exciting creative collaborative platform for young Jews looking to engage in meaningful and conscious supportive acts for Israel.

Our cyber-connected generation is deeply embedded in a world of information sharing and a collaborative style of leadership. Personal empowerment is lauded & we are passionate about social philanthropy. What we seek in return is payback in the form of personal sense of achievement, fulfilment & participation.

Girl power
I want to see federation presidents facilitating & supporting their Aviv innovations. I challenge our presidents to step up their investment, mentorship & upskilling of their Aviv successors. I hope to see every president proudly arrive at conferences with an Aviv future leader by her side.

WIZO needs to invest in its own cornerstone policies of women’s empowerment & leadership programmes for her very own Aviv ‘little sisters’. No organisation is better equipped to attract young leaders! With 95 years of expertise, specialist training & programmes, WIZO holds courses and workshops in community leadership and politics for those who exhibit leadership qualities and ambitions. WIZO is a market leader in providing ‘concrete tools, skills, ongoing training and mentoring’ for ANY woman seeking to advance her status & ambition.

Avivs express a wish to further strengthen their sister-like bonds (a win-win situation for WIZO) by partnering in regular social, volunteering, educational, spiritual, sport & exchange programmes among other innovations. Hands-on Aviv seminars in Israel need to focus on delegate participation to achieve incomparable experiential marketing successes. Encouraging international collaborative events promotes unity & builds relationships.

Virtual platform
Delegates who attended the World Aviv Seminar in Israel 2014 had the opportunity to workshop a solution to Creating a Worldwide Aviv Community. Having been asked the age old question - 'how do we appeal to the youth?' they designed a Virtual Platform as a cutting-edge vehicle to bridge the gap between website & social media. A Virtual Platform is a fully interactive site that enables Avivs around the world to communicate and collaborate on many different levels such as international events, online shopping, cyber bookclub, global recipes, personal support & encouragement, sharing simchas & heartaches. The ways for WIZO sisters to communicate are endless! This forges eternal bonds with WIZO & each other. All we need now is World WIZO's implementation! It is WIZO’s flexibility to embrace all solutions - especially contemporary Aviv solutions that will ensure our continued strength & longevity.

Family first
Our organisation is deeply invested in and dedicated to the future of Israel and its people. Simultaneously WIZO has never played a more important role in global Jewish communities. Jewish leaders nervously note dwindling involvement in Jewish life among our younger generations. In addition to these challenges the vicious global rise in anti-Semitism & ever increasing terror attacks in Israel and around the world, places further stress on Jewish communities. WIZO is a tangible connection to Israel, providing an example & role model for young Jews.

Shoot for the moon
These past 4 years I have done my utmost to unite & ignite Avivs from Santiago to Stockholm & everywhere in-between. I have seen the beauty of our family of WIZO sisters who have so much love to share with those who need us & each other.

I thank you all for your support & implore my beautiful sister Avivs to pledge your love, energy & sisterhood to 'shoot for the moon'! Care for our blessed & beloved WIZO family and ROCK the world!

It is my wish & hope that my successor will nourish the Aviv seeds and grow them to towering new heights.
Michele Lee Fine, Endowment Campaign Chair, WIZO New York

Michele is the president of ‘Cornerstone Wealth Advisory’, a boutique financial services company within a privately held, independent financial services firm established in 1933. She works with individuals and businesses in the areas of estate, financial and retirement planning. She is a nationally recognised, award-winning advisor who has been featured in such publications as The Wall Street Journal, Crain’s, Dow Jones, Financial Advisor, and Huffington Post.

Michele started her work with WIZO New York in 2001, each year furthering her involvement, contribution and support of the organisation. She has helped develop and establish long-term fundraising initiatives for WIZO by working with leadership to provide a vision, structure and programme that will enable WIZO donors to leave a lasting legacy for generations to come. Her efforts in philanthropic development have focused on providing meaningful support and financial strength to Israel and WIZO. Michele also serves on the boards and committees of various prominent Jewish causes.

Michele resides in Brookville, New York with her husband and their four children.

Dr Karmela Béliinki
Past President, WIZO Finland

Karmela was born in Helsinki, Finland, in 1947, and although her parents survived the Holocaust, the rest of their families perished. She grew up in a Jewish Zionist home, where Jewish thinking and traditions were valued. Her father was an ardent Yiddishist, and intellectual. Her mother was a wise, active and modern woman from whom Karmela inherited her interest in Jewish women’s organisations, particularly WIZO.

Karmela was educated in Finland and Britain and earned her PhD in History specializing in Women’s History and Media History, and in the History of Literature.

For over 50 years, she has enjoyed a successful journalism career encompassing all forms of media, and has also been active in academic research and held academic positions in many countries in Europe and the USA.

Since her early years as a feminist, she has served in several leadership positions: President of WIZO Finland, Executive Member of the ICJW (International Council of Jewish Women), President of the Finnish Federation of University Women and she participated in the UN Women’s Conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing as a journalist or a member of the Finnish delegation.

After retiring from her other activities except international work, Karmela is still an active writer and international lecturer on Jewish history and in particular Jewish women’s history.

Ines Pacciarz de Jawetz – Past President
WIZO Uruguay

Ines began her involvement with WIZO Uruguay in 1980. Following a 10-year term as Chairperson of the Atid Chapter, she served as the Honorary Secretary of WIZO Uruguay before becoming president, a position she held from 2000 to 2003. A notary by profession, specializing in aviation law, Ines was the co-author of the Articles of Association of the Latin-American Jewish Congress. A widow, Ines is the mother of three daughters, two of whom live in Israel.

Ines has a degree in Social Policy specializing in the integration of children with special needs into the public school system. Ines also represented Uruguay at the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the UN headquarters in New York in 2006.

Ines initiated a joint project between WIZO Uruguay and the NGO El Abrojo, an organisation whose mission is to introduce innovative ideas and actions, training and educational programmes to different target populations. WIZO Uruguay approached a local bicycle manufacturer who agreed to donate second-hand bicycles to El Abrojo. Local youth were enlisted to refurbish and repair the bicycles, which were then loaned to students who could not afford the cost of public transportation, providing them with a safe and inexpensive alternative. The project proved to be very successful.

WIZO women utilise their professional skills and success for WIZO’s benefit
“People with passion can change the world.” - Steve Jobs

Since she was very young, Simone Abadee’s family had a strong commitment to WIZO. When she decided to come to Israel for a prolonged stay it seemed only natural to volunteer with the organisation. Simone, a retired primary-school special-education teacher and her friend Sue Weiner, both hailing from Sydney, have been volunteering three times a week for the past four months at a WIZO women’s shelter, engaging and interacting with the children and parents there.

WIZO is making a real difference in the lives of these beautiful women and children by providing them with a loving, safe and stable environment as they make the transition to a healthier lifestyle.

It has been especially wonderful for Simone and Sue to see the young children living at the shelter grow and mature within the short few months that they have been volunteering there. The children range from 12 months to 13 years of age and the volunteers engage in a variety of activities with them. With the preschool children, they try to provide a fun learning environment and help prepare them for school. With the older children, they play board games, card games to help them with counting, read stories and generally try to have fun together, which helps bolster their self-esteem. Communicating in Hebrew can be challenging but the young children have warmed to the two volunteers and greet them with much enthusiasm and excitement when they arrive at the shelter.

With the current security situation in Jerusalem Simone and Sue have at times felt a bit wary taking the Jerusalem light rail and walking back from the facility, however the reward they feel from being able to contribute to these families in need is well worth it. They heartily recommend that any individual who comes to Israel for an extended period, loves working with children, and has a basic command of Hebrew should volunteer with WIZO.

Never too young to make an impact

Melanie Lencovski, 20 years old, hails from Miami, Florida. She recently volunteered at a WIZO day care centre in Kfar Saba for one month. From playing with the kids, to feeding them, and putting them to sleep, she never envisaged that she would enjoy it as much as she did. Her patience grew tremendously once she started volunteering at the centre. Since Melanie was 13, she has been helping to raise funds for WIZO day care centres but never in her wildest dreams did she think she would be volunteering in one of these day care centres herself. Melanie cannot wait to come and live in Israel and be involved with WIZO on a permanent basis.

WIZO is making a real difference in the lives of these beautiful women and children by providing them with a loving, safe and stable environment as they make the transition to a healthier lifestyle.

(l to r) Melanie Lenovski, Janine Gelley, Mati Acar, the director of the day care centre where Melanie volunteered
Australian Jewish youth participate in a practical fun learning experience that strengthens their Jewish identity

The largest Israel Study Tours (IST) cohort ever, 138 students from Moriah and Masada College in Sydney spent a magical morning interacting with toddlers at six WIZO day care centres in Jerusalem. Despite the difficulties of the language barrier, the youngsters still managed to connect with the children as their contagious smiles and laughter filled the classroom. A warm winter’s day was the perfect opportunity for playing outdoors and having fun. For the young Australians visiting a WIZO kindergarten was a revelation; they learned there are many families in Israel that live below the poverty line and in difficult circumstances. They witnessed first-hand the impact WIZO has on these children and their families, helping them to turn their lives around. Although the visit was short, it turned out to be a moving experience, one that will stay with them forever.
WIZO Israel Conference

Hundreds of WIZO activists and volunteers from all over the country gathered at Kfar Maccabiah for two days of discussions and presentations dealing with the promotion of gender equality in Israel and the strengthening of underprivileged and at-risk communities.

“WIZO is a thread woven throughout modern Jewish history and the State of Israel. This evening shows not only the capabilities and initiatives of woman power, but also the spirit of volunteerism.” These words were part of the keynote speech by Israel’s Minister of Welfare, Haim Katz, at the opening night of the congress.

Earlier in the day, the chaverot had listened to welcoming speeches by past and present WIZO leaders: Honorary Life Presidents 96-year-old Raya Jaglom and Helena Glaser, current President of World WIZO Tova Ben Dov and current Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive Professor Rivka Lazovsky.

Raya Jaglom (centre) surrounded by WIZO Israel delegates. Gila Oshrat stands behind Raya

WIZO Israel Report

Gila Oshrat, Chairperson of WIZO Israel, presented her report summarizing the work and accomplishments of WIZO Israel during the last four years. WIZO Israel runs numerous programmes connected to violence in the family, empowering women and teenage girls, single parent groups, programmes for the elderly, women’s leadership programmes, and much more. Gila described the new face of WIZO Israel: In the past four years 6000 women have become new members; new activists include women from senior IDF positions, heads of schools and legislators.

Brigadier General Racheli Tevet-Wiesel, the IDF Chief of Staff’s Advisor on Women’s Issues, one of the keynote speakers, discussed the empowerment of female soldiers throughout all branches of the Israel Defence Forces. Aged 52 and the mother of three children, she left the army after her national service to study law. After some years she decided that it was not enough ‘to be a lawyer’ and returned to the army. She stated how impressed she is with the work of WIZO especially the network of volunteers all over the country.

Following a long day of discussions and the official approvals of work plans for each department, delegates gathered for an exciting evening gala event.

The evening’s highlights were the screening of several touching films portraying the activities of WIZO Israel as well as performances by Israeli musicians. A lifetime achievement award was given to the director of the WIZO Pardess Katz Branch, Racheli Mangoli, in appreciation of her work to improve the lives of local children, including many children of Ethiopian immigrant families. Racheli is so dedicated to her work, that she has taken the trouble to learn Amharic so as to make it easier to communicate with some of the people who visit the centre. She described her centre as ‘low in budget’ but high in projects. Racheli has proven just what can be achieved with a minimum budget and high initiative. “A bit of chutzpah doesn’t hurt,” she exclaimed.

Perhaps the most touching moment of the conference was the awarding of a special certificate of appreciation to the parents of Shira Banki, z”l, a 16-year-old volunteer at a WIZO battered women’s shelter in Jerusalem, who was murdered at the Jerusalem Pride Parade this past July.

WIZO members and volunteers came away from the conference moved, excited and filled with energy for four more years of effort on behalf of Israeli society.
WIZO Combats Violence Against Women

This year, as every year, WIZO Israel organised a variety of events to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Several partnerships were created to ensure extensive media exposure.

For the past few years, WIZO has reached out to abusive men, setting up a special hotline for them to call if they feel they are about to abuse their partners.

This year’s motto was ‘Breaking the Silence’ and all the events were aimed at bringing awareness to the public, encouraging them not to be silent if they suspect a family member or friend is being subjected to abuse.

PM Visits WIZO Shelter

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited one of WIZO’s shelters and met with some of the residents. He was visibly moved by their heartrending stories and urged them ‘not to give up on life; ‘You deserve an honourable life, a good life, a life in which you can stand tall, make a living and raise your children with safety.’

Newspaper Campaign

WIZO teamed up with one of Israel’s leading daily newspapers, which ran several articles leading up to the day of violence. A few days before, they ran an open hotline in conjunction with WIZO – which was absolutely ‘flooded with calls’ from many sectors of the population – and resulted in a huge double-page spread in the newspaper.

Celebrity Video

Various celebrities volunteered their participation in a video message where they presented common excuses given by people when asked why they didn’t try to stop domestic violence when they knew it was happening. The beeping of a heart monitor machine is heard in the background, until it sounds a “flatline,” symbolizing the death of another victim of abuse. The message was calling on the public not to ignore violence against women.

Football Match

Two leading Israeli football clubs, Hapoel Haifa and Maccabi Tel Aviv, answered WIZO’s request to take part in its efforts to raise awareness of violence against women. The match played by the opposing teams was dedicated to ending violence against women, with the participation of the teams and management. Before the game, players walked onto the field with the Chairperson of WIZO Israel, Gila Oshrat: "We call on men and women as one to refrain from aiding and abetting this violence by keeping quiet and instead, to help by approaching the appropriate authorities. The intervention of the surrounding environment can save lives."

As part of the game-day project, the players held up banners bearing the tagline “No More Silence About Violence Against Women,” and an announcement was made on the stadium’s loudspeaker system about the project and calling on spectators to participate.

Song

A song entitled ‘Invisible’, written by Ranit Elovitch, a victim of violent spousal abuse and a former resident with her two daughters, of one of WIZO’s shelters, expresses the emotions of a woman dealing with abuse and the silence she encounters in her surroundings. The music was composed and performed by artists who volunteered their talents for the project.

Ceremony at WIZO House Tel Aviv

Hundreds of WIZO chaverot from all over the country gathered at WIZO House in Tel Aviv for a memorial ceremony for the women who have been murdered this year, and conference. Moving speeches were given by MKs Tzipi Livni and Meirav Michaeli, who spoke about their work in the field.
WIZO’s Olive Tree Art Exhibition

WIZO’s highly popular art project, called ‘Women and Their Olive Trees,’ began with 40 women from the Afula area – Jewish, Christian, Arab, Druze and Circassian, coming together to paint at the Gruss WIZO Community Centre in Afula, under the management of curator Sheila Devori Kasdi and Dudu Muatty, the centre’s former director. The paintings they created became the backbone of an art exhibition that, on the initiative by the European Council of WIZO Federations has since been shown across Europe with its message of co-existence, cross-cultural women’s empowerment, hope and dialogue between ‘real people’ in Israel, behind the headlines. In all the European cities, the exhibition attracted much media attention and publicity.

Here are the exhibition’s most recent stops:

**Antwerp:** Three hundred and eighty five visitors: guests of honour included the governor of the Antwerp Province, Cathy Berx. The exhibit was so successful that the team which organised it was subsequently asked to represent the Province of Antwerp at the ‘King’s Feast’ celebrations, attended by the Belgian royal family.

**Brussels:** The exhibit was celebrated at the home of Zipi and David Walzer, the Israeli Ambassador to the European Union and NATO.

**The Hague:** A reception in honour of the guests from Afula was held at the Israeli Embassy in The Hague, hosted by Ambassador Haim Divon and his staff. The exhibition’s official opening ceremony at city hall was attended by 130 invitees, including Mayor of The Hague, Mr Jozias van Aartsen. The exhibition was housed in the Town Hall atrium for three weeks.

**Rome:** The exhibition was on display at the Sala Margana, a 17th century mansion filled with beautiful antiques, in the heart of Rome’s old city. Italy’s main television channel aired a report on the exhibition.

**Milan:** The exhibition hung in the VIP room of the Israel Pavilion at the Milan Universal Exposition.

**Other locations** were Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The exhibition continues its ‘European tour’ in 2016.
Argentina

Day at the Races
From Royal Ascot to Kentucky, horse racing has always been a leisure activity combining elegance and adrenaline. WIZO Argentina's second annual charity Grand Prix horse race was successful again this year. After betting on the first, second and third-place winning horses running in the day's designated OSFA-WIZO race, guests were able to enjoy a specially organised art exhibition, raffle, live art-making performance by Marcelo Colone as well as dinner accompanied by live entertainment: six musicians from the Retiro Orchestra.

Embassy Visit
WIZO Argentina chaverot were honoured, as they are once a year, with an invitation to the residence of the Israeli Ambassador to Argentina, Mrs Dorit Shavit.

Australia

Melbourne

Pop Up Shop
WIZO Victoria brightened the local retail scene when it opened a delightful pop-up shop selling goods donated by WIZO members and the community at large. The shop, staffed by WIZO volunteers, managed to raise money, awareness and community interactivity at the same time.

Perth

The ‘Melbourne Cup’ in Perth
Glamorous hats, great food and 'the race that stopped a nation' combined to make the WIZO Melbourne Cup lunch a huge success. Attendees passed the time playing games like bridge and mahjong and by holding a humorous hat parade, in which hats of all sizes shapes and colours were presented and judged. All the funds raised by the event will be devoted to refurbishing WIZO Australia's day care centre in Tel Aviv.

Celebrating WIZO's 95th
On a hot Australian summer afternoon, over 100 WIZO supporters came together to celebrate World WIZO's 95th birthday. Friends and family gathered among posters and nostalgic WIZO photographs that decorated the event's venue. Vivienne Levin opened the proceedings, speaking about the legacy and work of Rebecca Sieff, which led to the establishment of day care centres and schools across
Israel. The afternoon concluded with messages from World WIZO President Tova Ben-Dov, acknowledging the efforts of WIZO Western Australia, and directors of WIZO Australia’s projects.

Perth ladies enjoying WIZO’s 95th birthday event

Sydney

Major Function

Over 750 people attended WIZO New South Wales’ major function event in Sydney. Guest speakers Hillel Neuer, Executive Director of UN Watch, and Bassem Eid, Founder of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group captivated the audience with their first-hand accounts of their behind-the-scenes work at the UN. Special guest speaker Greg Sheridan wrapped up the night with some light-hearted humour.

WIZO NSW’s Youngest Group

In July 2015 WIZO Sydney inaugurated its youngest group yet, WIZO Sisters. WIZO NSW President Gloria Newhouse praised Co-Presidents Saya Oshlack and Ruby Hurwitz on their initiative. These two young activists plan to encourage other 12-13 year-old girls to join the group, and participate in projects like the ‘Swear Jar Fundraiser,’ whereby the girls distribute ‘swear jars’ to participants to take home and add a contribution each time that someone in the family uses a bad word. One of the region’s largest Jewish day schools has committed to run a special fundraiser with proceeds going to the WIZO Sisters!

Austria

Remembering Mag.a Barbara Prammer

Chaverot of WIZO Austria came together to remember Mag.a Barbara Prammer, a former member of the Austrian parliament, a generally outstanding politician, and friend of WIZO who fought for women’s rights. Her death last year was a tragedy for all who knew her. One of her favourite pastimes was attending the opera, and when organising the memorial event, WIZO collaborated with the current director of the Wiener Staatsoper, Ms Dominique Meyer. Soloists Hila Fahima, Chen Reiss and Boaz Daniel from Israel and Zoryana Kushpler from the Ukraine, accompanied on the piano by Gabor Bartinai, made the event unforgettable. The evening was hosted by the Austrian Federal Bank OENB under the patronage of Doris Bures, President of the Austrian Parliament and honoured by the presence of Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, Minister of Women’s Affairs and Education and Oskar Deutsch, President of the local Jewish community.

Chen Reiss, Gabor Bartinai, Zoryana Kushpler, Hila Fahimi and Boaz Daniel at the fundraiser in honour of Mag.a Prammer
Belgium

Antwerp

Sponsor A Child Lunch

In September, WIZO Antwerp held its annual Sponsor A Child lunch, at which a bountiful buffet (prepared by WIZO chaverot) and enthusiastically decorated tables pampered over 100 guests. The event also included a small fair, selling jewellery, scarves and other baubles.

Brazil

WIZO Brazil Conference

More than 100 WIZO chaverot from all corners of Brazil came together for the 22nd WIZO Brazil Conference, held in Rio de Janeiro. One of the highlights was the attendance of Chairperson of the World WIZO Executive Professor Rivka Lazovsky, who travelled all the way from Israel to participate. The conference was also the setting for the passing of the presidency of WIZO Brazil to Silene Balassiano and the vice presidency to Lucia Balassiano and Nelly Starec. Outgoing President Helena Kelner received the ‘Rebecca Sieff Award’, World WIZO’s highest award, from Professor Lazovsky during a touching ceremony. Rivka also gave a vibrant presentation of current World WIZO projects, with simultaneous Portuguese translations, which motivated local chaverot to continue their great work. Also in attendance were the President of the Jewish Federation of Rio de Janeiro, Paulo Maltz and Rio de Janeiro official, Teresa Bergher.

Pedro Ernesto Award Ceremony

Helena Kelner, the outgoing president of WIZO Brazil, was honoured with the Pedro Ernesto Medal in October, in honour of her community service on behalf of WIZO. The medal is an award of the Rio de Janeiro municipality; Mrs Kelner was nominated for the honour by Rio assemblywoman Teresa Bergher. A large number of WIZO chaverot attended the touching ceremony at Rio’s city hall.

Brasilia

New Beginnings

At the WIZO Brasilia meeting in November, the local chaverot formed a new LAPID group, consisting of 14 women.
Parana

Parana Bazaar

In November, WIZO Parana held its well-known bazaar event, which welcomed an overwhelming number of guests and featured, aside from its usual offerings, a group of young WIZO activists, known as ‘Mirim,’ who sold crowd-pleasing candy, chocolates and treats.

Rio Grande do Sul

Porto Alegre

WIZO Rio Grande do Sul welcomed Professor Rivka Lazovsky to Porto Alegre during her recent mission to Brazil in November. Several events organised around her visit allowed local chaverot to meet the WIZO leader and hear her speak. A welcome visitor to the events in Porto Alegre was President of WIZO Uruguay Sara Laks Trachtenberg, who travelled 13 hours by bus from Montevideo to meet with Rivka!

Sao Paulo

WIZO’s 95th in Sao Paulo

To mark World WIZO’s 95th anniversary, WIZO Sao Paulo held a fabulous event at its headquarters, attended by Prof Rivka Lazovsky, during her mission to Brazil. Addressing the audience, Prof Lazovsky spoke about the global aspect of WIZO and the important role of diaspora Jewry. The event’s highlights included music performed by the Coral Sharsheret Orchestra.

Dr Dekel in Sao Paulo

World WIZO Education Division Chairperson, Dr Carmela Dekel, visited Brazil in August. During her stay, she participated in the weekly meetings of WIZO Sao Paulo, and met with chaverot of the ‘Hanna Senesh,’ ‘Lehaim’ and ‘Silvia Hodara’ groups. She also gave a wonderful lecture at a meeting of the local AVIV group at the residence of Etejane Hepner Coin, during which she shared some of her deep knowledge of secondary and academic educational systems in Israel, and displayed, in detail, the relevant work done by World WIZO in Israel.

Canada

2015 I Love Israel Soiree

Canadian Hadassah-WIZO (CHW) hosted ‘I Love Israel,’ a Gala Soirée at the Eaton Chelsea Hotel in downtown Toronto. The evening offered mouth-watering food, lively entertainment, and incredible company. Keynote speakers included businessman, Natan Barak, who spoke about the Iron Dome missile defence system, and former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, who recalled his efforts to promote friendship and cooperation between Israel and Canada throughout his career. The evening was capped
off with the musical talents of local Toronto rhythm and blues band, ‘Community Soul Project’, which played lively renditions of Motown classics. The special event made supporting Israel a delight for all of the guests and organisers.

Top row: National Gala Chair, Elayna Latsky, Former National President, Marla Dan and Aubrey Dan. Bottom row: CHW National President, Claudia Goldman, The Honourable John Baird, and CHW National Executive Director, Alina Ianson

2015 Summer Appeal

CHW’s highly successful 2015 Summer Appeal benefitted the French Na’aleh Programme at the CHW Hadassim Youth Village. The programme brings children, who are victims of anti-Semitism in France, to a welcoming home at CHW Hadassim. The funds raised will be used to upgrade resources at the youth village, including one of the dormitories. CHW was extremely grateful to receive a matching gift from its generous donors, Len and Faigel Shapiro.

The Limpiatón

WIZO Chile was proud to take part in the ‘Limpiatón,’ a massive urban clean-up project, initiated by the Metropolitan Regional Governor, Claudio Orrego. WIZO participated alongside other organisations, including the second and third Conchalí Fire Companies, members of Infantry Regiment No. 1, secondary school students as well as government officials, Paul Badenier the Minister of the Environment and many more. The initiative was so successful that it is being replicated in other districts of the Metropolitan Region.

Regional Governor Claudio Orrego sporting a WIZO hat during the big clean-up

Colombia

2015 Annual Bazaar

In August, WIZO Colombia’s annual bazaar hosted thousands of people, young and old, with its wide array of activities: shopping for clothes, perfumes, Judaica and more, food and drinks at Café Kapulsky, and massive play areas and performances for children.

Children having a great time at WIZO Colombia’s bazaar

Chile

The Shabbat Project

More than 2,000 Jewish mothers, daughters and grandmothers came together to share an unforgettable day of baking challah for Shabbat, in honour of the annual Shabbat project. WIZO Chile’s President, Agnes Mannheim, set the tone for the event by recalling the words of Jewish poet and thinker Ahad Ha’am, about Shabbat caring for the Jewish people. The event was imbued with a deep feeling of Jewish unity and love for Israel.

Across the generations – at the WIZO Chile challah bake-in
**Denmark**

**2015 Annual Bazaar**

This year, WIZO Denmark’s annual bazaar took place at the Carollineskolen Jewish School in Copenhagen. Despite the cold temperatures and snow, many people courageously came to support the bazaar, shop and try their luck at the raffles. Shulamit Binah, wife of the Israeli Ambassador to Denmark, opened the bazaar by stressing the importance of the work of WIZO in Israel, as well as the vital role WIZO plays as an NGO around the world.

The crowd was entertained by a diverse group of musicians, from Jewish-themed hip hop to the songs of Sarit Hadad, performed by the ‘Jew-Crew’, a group of talented local youngsters. Everyone enjoyed the wide array of Jewish food, both European and Middle-Eastern. All in all, WIZO family, friends and guests had fun supporting the work that the movement does in Israel.

**ECWF Weekend in Paris**

The European Council of WIZO Federations (ECWF) annual general meeting was held in Paris this year and kicked off with a traditional Shabbat dinner; 26 WIZO chaverot from across Europe (and some of their husbands) were hosted at the table of a local family and were able to taste some French cuisine and *à la française* hospitality. Next, the group was given a guided tour of the Nissim de Camondo Museum – the villa of a wealthy Sephardic Jewish merchant’s family that settled in Paris. The home, built in 1912, is filled with works of art from the 18th century. Later on, there was a culinary workshop and taste-in at the Purgatoire 54 cooking school. The trip also included a fascinating seminar at the Shoah Memorial discussing the subject of the rise of extremism and anti-Semitism in Europe. WIZO federation leaders and chaverot later brainstormed ideas on how to collaborate and improve their work throughout Europe. After the conference, guests were taken on a guided tour of the memorial. All in all, it was a moving and especially meaningful trip.

**Finland**

**2015 Annual Bazaar**

Every year since 1956, WIZO Helsinki has held its annual bazaar, which in the last years has raised money for the Shaviv Day Care Centre in Herzlia. Despite the size of the small local Jewish community (1,200 people) everyone pitches in and makes this event a success. Several months before the event itself, which was held at the facilities of the Swedish School of Economics Hanken, in the centre of Helsinki, volunteers start gathering items to be sold, including gifts, jewellery and fashion accessories. Some of the best-selling items are Jewish and Israeli foods and snacks. The event offers fun stuff for kids as well, including a face-painting artist and games of chance. The heart of the event is the restaurant, which is usually full of people all day long, with people dining to the sound of Yiddish and Hebrew music being played in the background.

**France**

**20th National Meeting of Solidarity**

What better way to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this important event than with a female representative of the State of Israel? Aliza Bin-Nun, the newly appointed Ambassador of Israel to France, honoured WIZO chaverot with her presence at the Salons Hoche in Paris for the annual WIZO France Solidarity Luncheon. Mrs Bin Nun paid tribute to the tireless work of WIZO. WIZO France President Joelle Lezmi reflected on the difficulties of advocating in the name...
of Zionism in the current political/social reality and the need for Diaspora Jews to self-organise as a ‘peaceful army’ fighting against anti-Semitic propaganda and attacks. Mrs Bin Nun also discussed the current ‘Intifada of the Knives’ taking place in Israel and what WIZO members can do to alleviate the negative press and propaganda that Israel suffers from around the world.

Among the honoured guests at the event were Mrs Jeanne d’Hauteserre, Mayor of the 8th Arrondissement of Paris and Mr Claude Goasguen, Deputy Mayor of the 16th Arrondissement. All proceeds from the event will go to WIZO France’s new day care centre in Sderot.

2015 Shabbat Project

Of the more than one million people who celebrated shabbat on November 23rd 2015, WIZO members, friends and family in France were among them! Haim Korsia, Chief Rabbi of France, eagerly supported the project which reached France’s large cities, small communities and even the kitchen of the Elysee Palace! Challah-baking workshops were organised and attended by hundreds of women, and 30 cities stretching from northern to southern France held communal Shabbat candle-lighting ceremonies. In Paris, a massive havdalah concert was attended by more than 2,000 people.

Raffle

Chaverot of WIZO France gathered at the house of Lauriane Boucris to participate in the fun raffle put together by Sonia Cohen Scali. After a delicious buffet and a musical performance, Joelle Lezmi, President of WIZO France, announced the winners of the prizes, which included a Renault automobile, gift certificates, jewellery and a one-night-stay at the luxurious Grand Hôtel Intercontinental in Paris. The raffle was organised in order to finance the Herzog Day Care Centre in Sderot.

WIZO Bazaar Revival

After five years without any WIZO activities in Hamburg, four young Jewish women came together to revive the WIZO Hamburg branch, which was actually the first ever German branch, founded in 1947. After moving to Hamburg and clearing out her own closets, Katharina Stricharz got the idea to re-establish the local WIZO Bazaar. Perhaps the highlight of the 2015 ‘revival’ was a raffle with a flight to Israel as the first prize. Also on offer at the bazaar were a great range of Israeli products for sale. A food market offered Israeli and Persian delicacies. Live music energized the atmosphere and kids passed the time with face-painting and other activities. Simone Graumann, President of WIZO Germany and Riwa Sandberg from the German Executive came from Frankfurt to support Hamburg’s Young WIZO.
Frankfurt

Fashion Night

This past May, Mercedes Benz in Frankfurt hosted a night of fashion on behalf of WIZO Frankfurt. A fashion show included 30 WIZO ladies and gentlemen who volunteered to walk the runway in clothing and accessories provided by generous sponsors. The highly entertaining and elegant evening was a social and financial success.

Mitzvah Day Project

The 9th grade students of Frankfurt’s Lichtigfeld School had the idea to raise money by selling cakes and produce every Tuesday throughout the school year, and chose WIZO as one of the charities to which to donate the proceeds. Nicole Faktor visited the school to present several WIZO projects to the hard-working students, who listened intently as she spoke about the Neve Yaakov Day Care Centre and the bar and bat mitzvah project in Afula. The kids were already familiar with the WIZO Afula Community Centre, as they had previously visited the Olive Trees Exhibition in Frankfurt and met with some of the artists. The students hope to visit both of the WIZO projects in Israel in June of 2016.

Cologne

Gala Ball

WIZO Cologne hosted its annual Sponsor A Child gala in the beautiful ‘Wolkenburg’ event hall. Guests ate, drank and danced to the music of the fantastic ‘Klas’ Band. The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the performance of Noah Levi, winner of this year’s Voice Kids contest in Germany as well as the traditional raffle. Guests stayed until 2am, when the organisers had to kindly and reluctantly ask them to finally go home.

Stuttgart

Gala Night

This past October, the newly elected team of WIZO Stuttgart hosted its very first Sponsor A Child charity gala at the lovely Maritim Hotel. Thanks to the motivation and enthusiasm of the organisers and the support of the main sponsors: the Israeliite Religious Community of Württemberg, the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem and Hotel Maritim, the event was tremendously successful. The evening’s entertainment included a couple’s dance tournament, children from the local Jewish kindergarten’s dancing class, classical vocalist Enni Gorbonosova and the ‘Klas’ Band from Berlin.
Hannover

WIZO Autumn Market

In mid-November Ruth Borenstein and her dedicated team invited community members and the general public to enjoy Israeli and Jewish delicacies as well as to shop for Hanukkah gifts, rare books and more at the autumn market. They were joined by newly elected President Simone Graumann and board members Nicole Faktor and Jenny Sommer, who were duly impressed by the community centre that served as the event’s venue - which was bought by the Liberal congregation of Hannover and renovated only a few years ago.

Munich

Gala Night

One day after the shocking terror attacks that hit Paris, WIZO Munich held its annual Sponsor A Child gala. Over 200 people attended and paid respect to the victims of terror during the opening remarks of Sarah Schmerz. Later, WIZO Germany President Simone Graumann stressed the need for a second bomb shelter to be built at the Neve Yaakov Day Care Centre. Israeli singer ‘Shirel’ entertained the crowd alongside the Style Music Band. The evening raised enough money for more than 230 scholarships for the children of Neve Yaakov.

Holland

Food and Art Fair

The WIZO Food & Art Fair, a fundraising and social event which included kosher caterers presenting their dishes, lectures, art workshops, art sales, a lottery and a preview of the exhibition Women and their Olive Trees, was held at the Hilton Hotel. There was a warm reception for Daniel Benn, director of the WIZO Afula Community Centre, Sheila Dvor, creator of the exhibition and project leader, and some of the artists who came from Israel on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition in Holland.

Hong Kong

Israel Visit

Delegates from the Jewish Women’s Association of Hong Kong visited their day care centre in Yad Eliyahu in Tel Aviv, and were impressed as they observed the babies enjoying the new modern and spacious play area, which had undergone renovations due to their generous fundraising efforts.

Hungary

‘Camp Sisters’ Suzie and Edith

The chaverot of WIZO Hungary would like to pay respect to two of their veteran members, Suzie Sandorfi and Edith Belanszky, who were also best friends. The two ladies, who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp together, returned to Hungary after the war, and re-built their respective lives - even living in the same apartment building. They were always together and worked to help establish the WIZO Hungary Federation. Edith passed away in the summer of 2015, and Suzie continued to attend WIZO events on her own, until she recently suffered a debilitating stroke. WIZO Hungary members visit and comfort Suzie and honours these two WIZO chaverot with their amazing life stories.
Italy

Rome

Luncheon

WIZO Rome held an elegant fundraising luncheon at the residence of the Israeli Ambassador to Italy and his wife, Mrs Orly Gilon, who hosted the event. The guest speaker was the Chairperson of World WIZO Fundraising Division, Esther Mor, on the last leg of her European mission. The chaverot who attended both events enjoyed delicious food and the interesting subjects discussed by Esther.

2015 Literary Prize

The award ceremony of the distinguished literary prize, named after Mrs Adelina Della Pergola z”l, took place in Rome's impressive Capitoline Museum. The aim of the ADEI-WIZO Literary Prize, established 15 years ago, has been to raise awareness of contemporary Jewish reality through literature. The jury evaluated more than 500 titles: Maybe Esther by Katja Petrowskaja won the 2015 prize for adults and Il braccialetto by Lia Levi received the 2015 prize for youth. The dual award occurred in conjunction with ADEI-WIZO’s annual festival ‘Images and Words’ – an event aimed to let the wider public learn more about WIZO work through exhibitions, shows and cultural meetings.

This year, students from 20 Italian schools were involved in reading the suggested texts and then selecting the winner. The ceremony was attended by 250 students from high schools covering a wide area. The whole affair was a great honour for the winners, the Jewish Community and ADEI-WIZO.

Milan

Gala Night

Eight hundred guests attended WIZO Milan’s gala concert featuring Israeli singer Idan Raichel, at the Largo Gustav Mahler Auditorium. This is the largest WIZO fundraising event in Milan, and has been taking place regularly for many years. Susanna Sciaky, President of ADEI-WIZO Milan, together with a vibrant new committee outdid themselves this year - the event was outstanding. It was Idan Raichel's second performance at ‘Adeissima’ and he brought the house down with his compelling brand of ethnic fusion music.
Mexico

Race for Education

In June, as part of WIZO Mexico’s Sponsor A Child campaign, the federation held a marathon including 800 runners, which was very successful in raising funds, as well as great fun.

Runners in the WIZO Race for Education

Farewell to WIZO House

This past July, members and staff of WIZO Mexico said goodbye to WIZO House which served them for 29 years, just before it started undergoing a total renovation. WIZO Mexico will be very busy, however, during their displacement, ‘selling’ the rooms of their newly renovated headquarters, in order to help fund the work.

WIZO Mexico chaverot bid a bittersweet farewell to WIZO House

Tehilim Chain

Around the time of the Jewish high holidays, WIZO Mexico initiated what turned out to be a very successful campaign called, ‘One Day, One Tehilim, All United for the Nation of Israel!’ Twenty-five federations signed up, 4,500 people subscribed and 70,000 children from several yeshivot in Israel united their voices at the same time reading the holy book of Tehilim. An event celebrating the project was attended by 400 women who read three of the most powerful Psalms together at a local synagogue.

Panama

WIZO Star

In May, more than 1000 people filled the Albert Einstein Institute auditorium in Panama City, for the third annual WIZO Star talent contest. Out of 10 children who participated, three winners were chosen and given lovely prizes.

WIZO Panama ‘Stars of the Future’

WIZO Bingo

More than 450 people attended this year’s WIZO Bingo contest in CCHB. A good time was had by all – especially the winners!

All those hopeful winners at WIZO Panama’s bingo night!

Valle de Anton Youth Seminar

Twenty nine high school students in the 11th and 12th grades participated in a three-day seminar organised by WIZO Panama at El Valle de Anton on the subject of gemilut chasadim – the commitment to serve others. Lectures and workshops dealing with female leadership, fundraising and many other subjects were useful to all the young people.
who attended. Patricia Bentolila, a renowned Panamanian psychologist took part in the impressive initiative.

Support Israel
WIZO Panama in collaboration with FIDF and Bnai Brith, hosted the ‘Support Israel’ event that was held at the Beit Max ve Sarah Synagogue in October. Guests, all dressed in blue and white, were photographed in front of a picture on the ‘stand of solidarity’ and signed their names to an ‘Israeli Lives Matter’ petition that was sent to the United Nations. All the photos from the event were uploaded to social media with the hashtag #supportisrael.

Panamanian youngsters supporting Israel and WIZO

and the Jewish people. Tamar Lazarus, outgoing President of WIZO South Africa, delivered a report emphasizing the importance of WIZO as an international organisation and as an integral part of the fabric of Israeli society. Lara Rosmarin moderated an excellent panel discussion on ‘Women Agents of Change.’ And a second panel discussion, moderated by Laurienne Baitz had participants discussing their personal attachments to Israel and Zionism. Positive reports on financial matters, membership and WIZO South Africa projects in Israel left delegates proud and enthusiastic to continue their good work. The conference closed with a hearty welcome to incoming President Monyeen Castle from Cape Town.

Sponsor Shelley Friedman of the George Elkin Trust, Dr Einat Wilf, Tamar Lazarus

Cape Town

Evening with the Mayekiso Family
Luba Mayekiso the national director of ICEJ-South Africa (International Christian Embassy Jerusalem), and his wife Ncedi, a WIZO member, are unique advocates of biblical values and support for the State of Israel. Luba is a well-known speaker across South Africa, addressing both church and government leaders who are often surprised by the solid biblical basis of his message in support of Israel. The Mayekisos’ daughter Casandra is also a WIZO member and an officer for the South African Union of Jewish Students at the University of Cape Town. At a special evening in their honour, Luba, Ncedi and Casandra shared with the audience the journey that led them to identify with Judaism, the Jewish community and Israel.

Luba Mayekiso, Tessa Scher, Ncedi and Casandra Mayekiso

South Africa

South Africa Triennial Conference
In November, WIZO South Africa’s 35th Triennial Conference was held in Cape Town attended by delegates from Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth as well as Jewish and Christian supporters of WIZO and Israel. Dr Einat Wilf, keynote speaker at the official opening, shared reflections on issues that impact Israel, the region

High School students in Panama learn about gemilut chasadim

Sponsor Shelley Friedman of the George Elkin Trust, Dr Einat Wilf, Tamar Lazarus

Panamanian youngsters supporting Israel and WIZO
Gilah Personality Brunch
A delicious brunch became an inspiring and informative morning when Olga Meshoe, the COO of DEISI (Defend Embrace Invest Support Israel), a fast-growing South African Christian Zionist organisation, kept the audience at the Gilah personality brunch enthralled with her stimulating address.

Tamar Lazarus, Louise Swart, Libby Norton, Vivienne Myburgh, guest speaker Olga Meshoe, Ncedi Mayekiso, Siobhan Swart and Cassandra Mayekiso at the brunch hosted by the Gilah branch

Cape Town Rebecca Sieff Awards
WIZO Cape Town’s Rebecca Sieff Awards were held in November at the Marais Road Synagogue. Marc Falconer, Headmaster of Herzlia High School added great value to the event with his wonderful lecture. Awards were handed out to WIZO members for their exemplary service to WIZO for 40, 60 and 65 years. The 65-year service award went to Lilian Sarembock who, after all those years, still attends weekly meetings!

Netta Lipchin, Chanine Joffe, Shooshy Buchinsky, Keile Gross, Lilian Sarembock, Ashna Diamond, Martine Israel

Oaklands Relaunch
WIZO Johannesburg is proud to announce the relaunching of the Oaklands Branch Ladies’ Day. The event, at the elegant home of Mushe and Issie Kirsch, was held in honour of Naomi Goldberg, an energetic and active veteran member of Oaklands who passed away four years ago. Madelaine Fane, a member of the original Oaklands Branch, spoke about WIZO’s vital work and the contribution made by Naomi Goldberg to the organisation. Guest speakers included Glynnis Breytenbach, former Senior Prosecutor of the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa and current Shadow Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development in the 5th Parliament of RSA. Ms Breytenbach described her recent trip to Israel with other ministers and the positive effects it had. After the speeches, a delicious lunch was enjoyed by everyone.

Mushe Kirsch, Glynnis Breytenbach, Madelaine Fane

Literary Evening
Sharlene Scott Levine, author of *Stranger in the Guest House*, met with WIZO chaverot to discuss her book to a sold-out audience of 70 women. It was an engrossing evening accompanied by a delicious selection of foods.

Cindy Polakow and Sharlene Scott Levine

Durban

Yom Tov Market
In August, WIZO Durban held its Yom Tov Market at the local Jewish Centre, where WIZO chaverot tastefully assembled a range of beautiful gift presentations and trays filled with home-made meringues, biscuits, fudge, date-balls and an assortment of chocolates - not forgetting the ever popular kichel mountain! Shoppers were treated to a fabulous selection of holiday goods supplied by various sister organisations and some exciting new vendors: homeware, books, toys, jewellery, pickles...you name it! After a busy morning of shopping, cappuccinos, cheesecake, apple-pie and bagels were the order of the day. This event wouldn’t have been possible without the ladies who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, local affiliate organisations, WIZO’s Christian friends, and of course Thandeka, who has perfected the illusive art of kichel-making.

Netta Lipchin, Chanine Joffe, Shooshy Buchinsky, Keile Gross, Lilian Sarembock, Ashna Diamond, Martine Israel
Johannesburg Rebecca Sieff Awards

WIZO Johannesburg’s Rebecca Sieff Awards ceremony paid tribute to heroines: women noted for their courage, daring action and special achievements. Tamar Lazarus, President of WIZO South Africa, spoke about Rebecca Sieff herself, the woman who founded WIZO 95 years ago. Other speakers were Rebbetzin Candy Lipshitz, Tali Nates and Julienne Sackstein.

The evening continued with a salute to the WIZO Johannesburg members who have given so many years of unbroken service and dedication to the organisation: Janine Rabbie (25 years), Joceline Basserabie (25 years), Yvonne Jawitz (40 years) and Shulamit Kagan, who has volunteered for WIZO for an amazing 60 years! The Elise Gift Shop also celebrated its 50th birthday.

Arthur Marsden Evening

Leanne Braudo warmly welcomed people into her home to hear the story of the amazing adventures of Arthur Marsden. An attorney and advocate by profession, Arthur’s passion is adventure, and in particular, climbing mountains. Using pictures and video clips, Arthur enthralled his audience with stories of his escapades climbing the highest mountains in the world and journeying to the North and South Poles. There were many questions from the audience and much discussion as they enjoyed a delicious tea.

Spain

Madrid

WIZO Madrid organised a very successful tea at the beautiful Hotel Ritz that was attended by over 100 ladies and gentlemen, among them the heads of various Jewish organisations, prestigious journalists, aristocrats and well-known personalities. The new Israeli Ambassador to Spain, Mr Daniel Kutner and his wife Shirley were the guests of honour. The Ambassador made opening remarks and introduced the guest speaker, Luis Maria Cazorla Prieto, a renowned historian, academician and businessman who presented a very interesting lecture on the history of the three religions cohabiting in Morocco. The event was a huge success for WIZO Madrid.

General Assembly

In June, the annual Assembly of Delegates of the Swiss WIZO Federation took place in Bern. The Israeli Ambassador to Switzerland, Mr Yigal Caspi, the President of the Jewish Community in Bern, Mr Ralph Friedlander and about 40 women attended the meeting which marked the end of Anne Argi’s term as president of the federation. Ruth Dreyfuss, a former member of the Swiss Federal Council was elected as chairperson for the meeting. Together with EstherMor, Chairperson of the World WIZO Fundraising Division, she expressed her great admiration and appreciation for Anne Argi’s work throughout the years. Following all the speeches Eva Wyler, former vice-president of WIZO Switzerland, was unanimously elected as the new president.
United Kingdom

2016 Calendar

WIZO UK is very proud of its Sheva chapter for having launched the Sheva London 2016 WIZO Calendar. The calendar marks a first for WIZO in London following the success of WIZO calendars for many years in the north of England. The new calendar offers daily management tips, sprinkled with an array of delicious recipes. To celebrate the project, WIZO teamed up over breakfast with top London nutritionist, Laura Southern, to discuss the benefits of reducing sugar in your diet. “The WIZO calendar has been a household favourite across the north of England for over 30 years, and we felt it was about time that we brought it down South,” said Katie Fearn, Sheva WIZO Committee Chair. Money raised through the calendar will go to support The Rebecca Sieff Centre in Jerusalem - one of Israel’s largest pre-school centres, caring for over 300 babies and children from the ages of six months to five years.

Louise Brick, Nicola Marks, Lizzie Segal, Katie Fearn, Anne Astaire, Vikki Lee and Natalie Gold with their new WIZO London Calendars

Sponsor A Child Lunch

In September, WIZO London held its 21st annual Sponsor A Child lunch, held at the home of Nicole Ronson Allalouf and generously sponsored by The Ronson Foundation. The lunch was attended by 60 women, who were addressed by the dynamic Betty Crystal. The prestigious event was organised by Pamela Crystal and Sarah Glyn, who made sure to announce that a plaque has been hung in the brand new Myrna and Isaac Kaye Day Care Centre in Tel Aviv, recognizing all 20 past hostesses of the UK Sponsor A Child lunches.

Uruguay

Official Visit

Chaverot of WIZO Uruguay welcomed the Consul of Spain, Mr Manuel Fairen Sans, at one of the organisation’s events. Mr Sans gave a talk about his uncle, a Spanish diplomat known as ‘the Angel of Budapest,’ who saved the lives of many Jews during WWII.

Edda Brenner ,WIZO Secretary, the Consul Mr Manuel Fairen Sans, Sara Laks Trachtenberg, WIZO Uruguay President and Nelly Jahcowsky, WIZO Uruguay Treasurer

YWIZO Art Exhibition

More than 200 young professionals attended the Young WIZO ‘Desire Art Exhibition’ at the Camden Image Gallery featuring the work of artist Charlotte Posner and Israeli sculptor Itzik Ribak. Thanks to the wonderful art, guests and sponsor organisations, the event raised thousands of pounds, which were donated in support of at-risk youth in Israel. The event proved, yet again that Young WIZO has fine-tuned the art of engaging with a younger generation of WIZO supporters. Lauren Weinberg, Young WIZO Events Coordinator said, “We have been delighted with the response to these new initiatives. More particularly the engagement and appeal with WIZO’s work with disadvantaged children and families in Israel. We now have a really strong foundation of committed fundraisers for the charity. Josh Cummins and Rachel Posner, both entrepreneurs, are the new dynamic co-chairs of Young WIZO with a focused vision to take WIZO forward.”

Young WIZO supporters at the art exhibition
Turkish Delight

In August, WIZO Uruguay welcomed Rivka Birhan, a Jewish young lady from Istanbul, who now works at the Uruguayan Consulate in Istanbul. Rivka came to give a talk about Jewish life in Istanbul, which was very interesting and enjoyed by all.

Exercise Day

WIZO Florida’s new chapter for youth, ‘Kadima’ kicked off the year with an incredibly successful fitness event. Over 45 high school girls met on a Sunday morning for a hearty exercise class and WIZO information session. Over $1,000 was raised and WIZO Florida could not be prouder of this new, vibrant group of girls.

Israel Independence Day

In celebration of Yom Ha’atzmaut, WIZO Uruguay hosted the Ambassador of Israel in Uruguay, Mrs Nina Ben-Ami, at a festive gathering at WIZO House.

United States

Florida

Opening Campaign

WIZO Florida kicked off the fundraising year with its opening campaign event, at which they were lucky to have former Israeli Ambassador Danny Ayalon speak to the audience – more than 200 people from all over South Florida. The funds raised were put toward providing security for WIZO centres in Israel, in light of this year’s especially difficult security situation. The event was a huge success.
Paint Night
WIZO Boca Chai held a membership drive at an impressive painting studio. This relatively new group started within the past year and already boasts over 100 members, young to middle aged women from all backgrounds. The painting event was the group’s most popular and successful gathering so far.

Los Angeles
Book Club Event
At a meeting of the WIZO LA Book Club, dedicated to raising funds for WIZO rocket-proof shelters, which took place at the home of the Shomof family in Beverly Hills, the renowned poet and author Marjorie Agosin was invited by Co-Chairs Irene Sirebrenik and Analya Sater to talk about her work. Marjorie discussed two of her books which describe the experience of her grandparents’ emigration from Europe to Chile. The guests participated in a dialogue with the author, with some of them sharing their own experiences, adding a touching personal side to the successful event.

The Big Challah Bake
WIZO Los Angeles members took part in the Shabbat Project by organizing a ‘Big Challah Bake’ event at Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills. One hundred and fifty women, mothers, grandmothers and granddaughters, most of them new to WIZO, came together to bake challah. HaRabbanit Nava Ben Moshe guided the group in how to properly bake a challah and attributed deep Jewish symbolism to each ingredient. The event was a perfect chance to introduce WIZO to everyone in attendance. Sigal Danisky played the accordion and all the ladies sang and danced. When the day came to an end, all the participants took home the rolls and challot that they had prepared, to bake for Shabbat.

New York
Long Island Sponsor A Child
The Long Island Chapter of WIZO New York was reinvigorated by the success of its biennial Sponsor A Child event hosted by Miriam and Sami Hajibay. Victoria Sakhai, WIZO New York Chairwoman, opened the evening with a brief overview of WIZO’s vast work over the last 95 years in Israel. Keynote Speaker, Brooke Goldstein, Director of the Lawfare Project, spoke about the de-legitimization of the State of Israel in the media and the use of children in warfare, both issues relating to WIZO’s work.

Young Leadership Fall Basketball Tournament
After the very-successful inaugural event, WIZO Young Leadership held its second bi-annual basketball tournament. The tournament made for an exceptionally fun Sunday; it included a raffle, barbeque and other family-friendly activities. Newly appointed Young Leadership Chair Stephan Sakhai, along with his longstanding co-chair Arielle Himoff, and the tournament chairs Jonathan Aghravi, Alex Hajibay, and Jack Sitt worked with inspiring passion to surpass their fundraising goal. With the generous support of the Meyerhoff Foundation, the proceeds from the basketball tournament will facilitate major renovations at the Meyerhoff Day Care Centre in Rehovot.

New Jersey
Bridal Fashion Show
The reinvigorated WIZO New Jersey chapter kicked off their fundraising season with a bridal fashion show held at Temple Emanu-El of Closter - benefitting the WIZO shelter for battered women in Jerusalem. WIZO USA Co-President Jana Falic was welcomed by WIZO New Jersey’s leadership Galina Shenfeld, Mery Nathan and Yael Shamay. The event drew more than 150 women who enjoyed a beautiful fashion show, boutique, raffles and cocktails in support of a wonderful cause.
25,000 Children and Babies in Good Hands
- 183 Day Care Centres
- 100 After-school programmes for children of working mothers
- 45 Afternoon Therapeutic and learning centres for children at risk
- 23 Emergency Centres for babies and Children at Risk

100 Programmes for 13,500 Teens
- 2 Vocational Schools for youth who have dropped out of school
- 5 Youth Villages including dormitories for students from dysfunctional families
- 34 Youth Centres
- 19 Empowerment Groups for teenage girls at risk
- 21 Warm Homes and afternoon centres for teenage girls at risk
- 3 Rehabilitation Centres for teenage girls
- 500 Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies for underprivileged children

12,665 Women Enjoy a Wide Range of Services and Programmes
- 30 Legal Advice Bureaus
- 2 Shelters for Battered Women
- 22 Centres and over 70 support groups for single-parent families
- 80 groups for Employment Enrichment
- 3 Centres for the Treatment and Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence
- 12 Leadership training courses for high-level political and managerial positions
- 70 Women’s Empowerment Groups

Community Programmes
- 55 branches across the country
- 30 foreign language groups for immigrants
- 50 second hand clothing stores for the needy
- 1 Retirement Home
- 1 Family Life Enrichment Centre