

Hydrotherapy: Sensory and Physical Stimulation ... and Pure Joy

Hydrotherapy is an effective sensory and physical stimulation method that impacts even the most profoundly disabled students. The water presents a wonderful tactile experience, enabling a sense of spatial expression that our students cannot experience in any other form. Hydrotherapy helps with key issues such as balance, coordination, mobility, and the promotion of independence, pain relief and communication. The release a child feels when given a respite from his or her physical constraints and the happiness he experiences from his freedom of movement and growing self-confidence in the water is truly joyful.

The Hydrotherapy Center Complex includes an expanded pool and up-to-date equipment including: an electronic pool lift, three individual hydrotherapy cubicles, shallow treatment areas for small

children and individual changing rooms where each child can dress privately, all of which are designed for accessibility and to maintain the dignity of our students.

Physical exercise is essential for the health and well being of our students, and for many that can only be achieved through hydrotherapy. Many at Keren Or have lost strength and flexibility through their disabilities. After entering the pool, sometimes with the help of an overhead pulley, the children begin to relax in the warm water. With the support given by the water and the assistance of our trained staff they are able to move their limbs, and sometimes even experience spontaneous movement. Many take their first steps in the pool, enabling them to begin the process towards walking and this achievement radiates from their faces in pure joy.



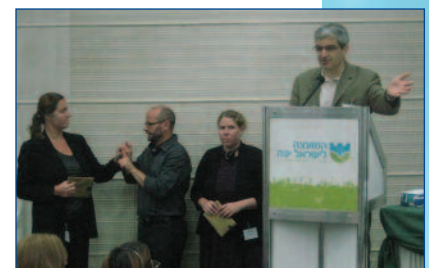
A class in progress in the Hydrotherapy Center

Building Connections, New Joint Collaboration with Perkins School

This past May, Keren Or partnered with Perkins School for the Blind to present "Building Connections," the first-of-its-kind conference held in Israel to offer in-depth learning opportunities to professionals working with children and young adults with impaired vision and other disabilities. Perkins School for the Blind, well known for its most famous alumni, Helen Keller and her instructor, Anne Sullivan, is a world-renowned center of excellence in education for those who are blind, deaf blind, and blind with multiple disabilities. Dr. Edward L. Stein-

berg, our Chairman of the Board and himself an optometrist, initiated the partnership with the President of Perkins, Mr. Steven Rothstein.

Professor Gordon Dutton of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow, a leading expert on CVI or Cerebral Visual Impairment held a special one day session for doctors and ophthalmologists, in addition to the keynote address. CVI, due to medical interventions and advances in many other spheres is increasingly prevalent and Professor Dutton sees it as his duty to spread the



Steven Rothstein, President of Perkins School for the Blind, interpreted for Jelica Nuccio, former Director of the Deaf-Blind Service Center of Seattle

Greetings from Jerusalem



Tamara Silberberg

Dear Friends,

We have had a truly exciting year in Jerusalem. In the last edition of "Insights" I spoke of a joint partnership with Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, MA. This effort came to fruition in May when we brought together educators and scholars from many parts of the world, all experts in childhood visual impairment and disability. After speaking with the staff, I know new directions for our students have been forged by the sharing of knowledge by these renowned experts.

Back at the school, the new Hydrotherapy Center has greatly expanded our ability to care for our special students. This form of therapy is the cornerstone of our work, as it offers so many new possibilities and experiences. Thanks to your support, we have been able to build one of the finest pools in the country. We have been invited by the Jerusalem Municipality to participate in their "Open House" weekend in the fall and we will offer tours of the facility. I mention this because what makes our center unique is the attention that has been given to every last detail, so that students can have the most accessible, respectful and pleasurable therapy experience possible — and all in a beautifully designed facility.

If you have a chance, come and visit when you are next in Israel. I will be delighted to host you and I believe you will experience Keren Or as a place of light, optimism and hope. You will see for yourselves how profoundly your support changes our students' lives.

With my best wishes for a year of health and happiness,

Tamara Silberberg

Executive Director
Keren Or, Israel



Therapy (and fun!) in the Hydrotherapy Center



Marilyn Lauer and Fanya Gottesfeld Heller



Sherry Grabie and Lisa Stern

Women's Division Update

The Keren Or Women's Division has once again, under the leadership of Marilyn Lauer, completed a successful year of exciting social and cultural fund raising events. A highlight was a five-day tour of Spain and Andalusia in November with 24 partic-

ipants. Arranged by Sherri Herring, the trip included tours of historic sites of Jewish and general interest and professional cooking demonstrations. Our masterful docent and good friend, Linda Sterling, led two museum tours at the Guggenheim and Jewish Museums. Members and friends were also treated to two Evenings at the Theater — "Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears" featuring Theodore Bickel and "Come Fly Away," a dance musical presenting the songs and voice of Frank Sinatra.

On May 11, the 6th Annual Gala Spring Luncheon was held at the Park Avenue Synagogue. Always an exciting and elegant

affair, chairpersons Nicole Appleman, Bina Blumenfrucht, Debra Parkoff and Linda Rothschild arranged and executed a perfect afternoon. Guest of Honor, beloved Women's Division board member Judy Levine spoke passionately about her visit to the



Marilyn Lauer, Judy Levine, Debra Parkoff, Linda Rothschild and Nicole Appleman

Keren Or Center in Jerusalem, aptly describing "a place of small miracles, a place of inspiration, not sadness; a place of hope, not despair." Keynote speaker, "super lawyer" Lisa Stern, delivered a fascinating address about her successful twelve-year legal battle to motivate Holocaust era insurance companies to pay over five billion dollars in restitu-

tion to hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors. Proceeds from Women's Division initiatives go toward special enrichment programs, including early intervention and the summer camp. Please call the Keren Or, Inc. offices at 212-279-4070 if you would like to hear what is planned for the coming year.



Jelica Nuccio

Building Connections

Continued from Page 1

word on this frequently misdiagnosed condition. He believes the symptoms of many children could be better managed if more professionals understood this complex form of blindness, which is why he has reached out to numerous ophthalmologists, health professionals and educators so children can receive appropriate assessment, support and teaching services.

Other speakers included Marianne Riggio and Barbara Miles, senior Perkins staff members and authors of the award-winning book *Remarkable Conversations*, Dr. Tanni Anthony, a leader in the field of visual assessments and multiple disability, and Jelica Nuccio, the first deaf blind person to be the Director of the Deaf-Blind Service Center of Seattle. The audience of special education and kindergarten teachers, speech and occupational therapists, social workers and psychologists, doctors and ophthalmologists spent two days in seminars learning new strategies to work with this unique population. Many seminars emphasized the practical aspects of dealing with the blind and multi-disabled, such as assessment and communication by touch, communication boards, assistive devices and a host of other methods.

Feedback from the more than 300 participants, was extremely positive. This was the first time they had an opportunity to learn applicable, practical material that dealt specifically with the impact of vision loss on all the other disabilities their students have — effectively blending the knowledge and expertise of a variety of professions. Together with Perkins we are now making plans at Keren Or to move to the next stage, offering in-service training and mentoring programs.

Profile: Lana Mandel

Only a year ago, Lana Mandel began working at the Keren Or Center in Jerusalem as a support teacher with a special focus on finding ways to improve the visual and tactile interaction of disabled and visually impaired children in the classroom. A graduate of Stern College, Yeshiva University, she received her MA in Special Education as a Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired from Hunter College in June 2007 and then shortly afterwards made aliyah to Israel. She lives in Modiin with her husband and three children.



Lana Mandel

Could you give an example of what you helped achieve in the past year at Keren Or? One example would be the installation of Braille signage in yellow and black outside the door of every room in the building. It is now much easier to navigate your way around the Center. Also, I worked with the classroom teachers in making the classrooms more functional for visually impaired students. Visual “clutter” can be confusing as are certain designs and colors.

Why would that matter if a child cannot see? Actually, the children at Keren Or display a complete range of visual impairment, from those who cannot see at all to those who have a high degree of functional vision. Even so, visual impairment is highly individualized. Relying on a traditional eye exam does not give us enough information. Some children, for instance those suffering from CVI or from traumatic brain injuries, have an easier time seeing objects in motion and prefer colors such as red and yellow. Some can see bright lights only. It is very complicated to determine what the child actually sees because of other severe disabilities. Their ability to communicate verbally is limited. Part of our job is to do a “Functional Vision Assessment” where we determine not what a child sees but rather how they use their vision.

What would be a typical day in the classroom? The teachers need to meet both the emotional needs of each child in their class - the average class is only six children – and contend with their physical needs and at the same time have a meaningful learning experience. For instance, I can remember last Rosh Hashanah where one of the teachers made honey cake with her students. She attempted to engage all the senses of taste and touch in showing how the honey was sticky, letting the children feel all the ingredients, giving each child a spoon to hold, letting them feel what the batter was like, the shape of the pan, and the heat from the oven. When the buzzer rang, the children knew that the cake was ready and the class shared a real sense of achievement.

How do you determine success or even measure progress with a child? I don’t know if that is even the right term. Success comes with small things. For instance, part of my job is to design special toys or tactile boards. These are highly individualized according to the needs of each child and the class. So, if a child who was previously disinterested and closed up in his or her own world reaches out with a smile for a toy or for an object on a tactile board that is a big success.

Can you sum up in just few words what you try to achieve every day you are at Keren Or? The day for each child is such a challenge – moving from a large wheel chair to another device, eating a meal, trying to communicate. Very simply, and I think all the teachers here would share this simple sentiment, “We want to reach out to the children and we want to bring joy into their lives.”



Jerusalem Center for Blind
Children with Multiple Disabilities

Board of Directors

Edward L. Steinberg, M.Sc., O.D., Chairman
Jay Goldsmith, President
Steven Rothschild, Vice-President
Eliot Lauer, Secretary
Jack Gross, Treasurer

Rabbi Benjamin Blech
Steven Grill
Ben Lopata
Jeffrey Parker
Simeon Schreiber
Jacques Semmelman
Howard Usher
Lee Weinbach
Ester Wolf

Women's Division

Marilyn Lauer, Chair
Nicole Appleman
Debra Parkoff
Presidium
Sherri Herring
Judy Levine
Linda Rothschild
Rose Schreiber
Vice Presidents
Tamara Silberberg
Director, Keren Or Center Jerusalem
Sarah Kochav
Executive Director, Keren Or, Inc.
New York



In This Issue

- Hydrotherapy: Sensory and Physical Stimulation ... and Pure Joy
- Building Connections, New Joint Collaboration with Perkins School
- Profile: Lana Mandel

To Make a Donation, visit www.keren-or.org

350 Seventh Avenue, Suite 701, New York, NY 10001 (212) 279 4070 fax (212) 279 4043 www.keren-or.org
Jerusalem Center for Blind Children with Multiple Disabilities



NON PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #41
LAKEWOOD, NJ