



The Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities

Annual Activity Report – 2013/14

Background:

The Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities (Chi.L.D.) is a dynamic learning and therapeutic center founded by Jeremiah Lubasch, MD, in 1989, as a non-profit, with a vision to provide vital educational and social services for the local community in areas previously lacking. **This year we celebrate 25 years of service in the community.**

Located in the heart of the community, the Center serves over 3,000 families mostly in the lower socio-economic strata. Our aim is to provide unique caring environments for those with special needs and ensure improved quality of life. **Opening doors to opportunities, early assessment, and optimal treatment ensure success in future careers, family life, and social relationships instead of being doomed to a life of failure and frustration.**

Treatment has to be early enough to make a difference, when children approach developmental milestones, and intensive, in order to significantly impact their development. The dynamic nature of the Haifa Center allows for projects to be established as the needs in the community change.

"The earlier children with disabilities receive assistance and the sooner their families receive support towards their children's development, the farther they will go in life."

Prizes:

In April 2001 we were awarded the prestigious **William Trump Recognition Award for over a decade of "outstanding commitment to children with developmental disabilities"**.

In December 2008, our reading expert received a prize for "**Excellence in Education**" from the Israel Teachers' Union. This method, called "Musima" developed at the Haifa Center, uses musical notes as cues to help dyslexic pupils learn to read.

Major Ongoing Programs

LD Program for Learning Disabled Children:

The Center takes a holistic approach, looking at each child as "a world unto himself" and not only his specific learning disability. Each child is provided with an individually tailored program using a variety of methods: **intensive didactic treatment, paramedical treatments, and emotional therapies**. A visit to the Haifa Center is a unique experience. During the school year of 2013/14 ~300 children participated in the various programs offered at our center including:

- Didactic Remedial Treatments: treating dyslexia, dysgraphia, and math difficulties
- Snoezelen Room Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- **Emotional Therapies:** Art, Drama, and Music Therapy, CBT, DBT, Bibliotherapy, Snoezelen Room and Movement Therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, Gardening Therapy, Sand Tray Therapy



- **Learning Skills** taught in small groups enhance the ability of children to apply practical skills to learning.
- **Social skills:** In working with LD youngsters it came to our attention that children with learning disabilities do not develop social skills naturally. Recognizing the vital need for social skills, our staff runs workshops to teach social skills in a group setting. Each group is facilitated by a pair of expert therapists, coordinating the group together, an excellent example of the team work that characterizes our work.



- **Therapeutic Kitchen:** A multi-purpose kitchen enhances self-esteem by giving children positive experiences – children who experience failure in their studies, low grades, and frustration are thrilled to take home delicious cookies for their families which they made themselves! In addition math can be taught by looking at the quantities of ingredients and cutting a pita into quarters, while occupational therapists treat sensory problems when children knead dough and the list goes on and on.....



- **Dyadic Therapy:** This type of therapy is unique in that "pairs" receive therapy together, be they a child with one of his parents, or a child with one of his siblings. Children are seen in the larger context of the family and a variety of issues can be addressed. In addition parents come separately to meet with the therapist and are empowered by the **parental guidance** we provide.

Treatment Center in Snoezelen Room:

Treatment in our **Snoezelen Room** addresses problems such as anxiety and trauma. While in the past we treated war trauma, today there is a need to treat post partum depression, trauma following car accidents, children with selective mutism, and more. Therapists specializing in Movement Therapy use the Snoezelen Room as a medium to help those in distress. The room has a calming effect and has special equipment that enhances therapy. Our pet therapist also uses the Snoezelen Room, takes her cat inside, combining Snoezelen Room Therapy with Animal Assisted Therapy. Occupational therapists address problems based on sensory motor difficulties, using special effects, including touch, smell, and sound.



Early Childhood Center: 60 Children:

1. **Integrated Nursery for developmentally delayed** youngsters age 0 – 3 years who are integrated with their **typically developing (TD)** peers. Toddlers with developmental delays receive full paramedical attention – all under one roof, while benefiting from interaction with their TD peers. This set-up is mutually beneficial as TD kids learn to accept those who are different from them and in addition are exposed to an enriched environment. The nursery is under the auspices of The Ministry of Economics, and caters to the needs of working mothers. In addition, children from non-functioning families are referred by the Social Services. These children benefit from a positive and enriching environment.

2. **Special-ed Kindergartens:** This year we ran three kindergartens for children with special needs age 4 - 6 or 7. All children are assessed as eligible for special education and referred by the Allocations Committee of the Education Department at the Municipality. Some children are “graduates” of our nursery program. Each child has an individualized work plan, which is updated periodically according to his progress. The main goal is to mainstream children in the regular school system, and some children spend one or two days a week in regular kindergartens as preparation for mainstreaming, while receiving all their treatments at the Haifa Center kindergarten. A team of highly professional staff caters to the needs of the children. In addition to a regular kindergarten schedule the program provides paramedical treatments: speech and occupational therapy, psychologist (sent from the Municipality) and a pet therapist. Children also have a gardening project – growing their own plants, vegetables and flowers – a fun activity that enhances personal development. **We are proud to report that the opening of the third special ed kindergarten this year in September, in a newly renovated and equipped building, was a great success and generated much interest amongst parents and professionals alike. In the school year of 2013/14 we had 36 children in our kindergartens. The success rate of this program: 77% of the children graduating will be mainstreamed**

in regular frameworks next year. In addition the registration for 2014/15 has jumped to 50 children – creating a need for a 4th kindergarten (in the planning stages at present). Another development in our kindergartens is a plan to lengthen the school day and provide a nurturing framework for children in the afternoon hours. This will enable children to spend longer hours with professional staff and help parents who work long hours.



“The one common denominator for all of the young children is that early intervention does work, and it seems to improve the prognosis.” Temple Grandin

"Maon Shachar" for Special Needs Children:

Initiated in 2007 in conjunction with **Elwyn Israel**, this is an intensive day care program for severely handicapped children ages 6 months – 3 years from orthodox families. The need arose within the community to establish this framework and as usual, Dr. Lubasch seeing the suffering of families, rose to the challenge. Previously no suitable framework existed for these children in Haifa, causing some families to move to other cities, and others to care for children at home. Situated on the premises of Elwyn Israel, children are provided with all necessary paramedical treatments to ensure maximum development. The coordinator of the program is a member of the Haifa Center staff.

Bridging Educational and Social Gaps for Ethiopian Immigrant Pupils:

Over the past 6 years we have been providing services to schools in Haifa with Ethiopian Immigrant pupils. This year, ~70 Ethiopian pupils at three Haifa schools received didactic and emotional therapies, including professional assessments. Schools participating in the program: Barkai, Ironi Vav, and Netiv Eliezer Carmel.

Teachers and emotional therapists work with the groups and individual pupils providing intensive didactic help and emotional treatments. The emphasis is on literacy and emerging literacy, comprehension, homework assignments, and learning strategies. An effort is made to increase knowledge in basic subjects such as math, English, computers. Emotional therapies emphasize social skills, address distress caused by family problems, difficulties in dealing

with a new environment, coping with failure in the classroom situation, and whatever other emotional problems that surface in therapy.

Treating Children and Mothers at Haifa Shelter for Battered Women:

Children arrive at shelters with their mothers, traumatized by having to leave all that is familiar to them. Often mothers are overwhelmed by personal problems, poverty, and uncertainty for what the future will bring and are not emotionally available to help children with school work or attend to their needs. Teachers, too, view them as temporary students. Problems manifest themselves in a variety of ways, including: violence, bedwetting, hoarding, lack of concentration, and more. Our staff has risen to the challenge to help these children by providing them with didactic and emotional therapies. Before treatment begins, each child is professionally assessed. This is an integral part of the project, because their stay at shelters is short, and when going to their next station in life, an assessment enables new carers to continue working with the children. With the changeover of children during the year, the shelters asked for additional hours and assessments.

Partnering with **Rotary Carmel** – we provided mothers with emotional therapy treatment to empower them in their difficult situation. The treatment included parental guidance and dyadic treatments (mother-child).

Treatment Center for Women and Adolescent Girls from Local Orthodox Community:

This center addresses the problems of Orthodox women and adolescent girls suffering from a range of problems and mental health issues. Issues include, taking a culturally sensitive approach: trauma resulting from abuse, post partum depression, anxiety, distress, personality disorders, issues relating to fertility, eating disorders, and more. Staff works in conjunction with local community workers, Rabbinical leadership, and Social Services who all refer clients to The Haifa Center and work to reduce the stigma of receiving treatment.

Challenges and Solutions:

- Work at the Haifa Center is based on the Erikson's theory of developmental psychology. Children develop in stages by achieving milestones at appropriate ages. From the age that children start attending school they need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority. Children who don't succeed at school in their formative years will inevitably develop emotional problems as a result of feelings of failure, frustration, lack of self confidence, negative self image. LD problems go hand in hand with emotional problems. It is not sufficient to treat learning difficulties; emotional problems must be addressed as well.

In addition, the measure of a child's overall success and well being is how his family views him with the problem. Does his family accept him? When the family accepts him with his problems – treatment has started. His emotional status is sometimes more important than his developmental achievements. Some families live in denial, pretending that there is no problem. When there is no problem, there will be no treatment. One of our goals is to promote awareness in this area.

- Neglect of children within families: It has come to our attention that in many families children are neglected (physically and emotionally). In our kindergartens we have 10 children whose families are in the care of the social services. However many more need help. Some families do not approach the authorities for help because they are afraid of the stigma attached or afraid that their children will be moved to foster homes. Some families want no interference in their private affairs. Today there is a trend to place children in **day foster care**. The child goes after school to a foster family, but sleeps at home. In this way families remain intact, while providing for the needs of children from non-functioning families. In the past we addressed problems within families by sending therapists to work within homes.
- We witness cases of post partum depression that goes unattended, causing much suffering to entire families.
- Lack of awareness in the community of the services we offer – families who could benefit from our services, but don't do so due to lack of awareness.
- Dealing with stigma: in our work with children and adults we see cases of stigma and how they affect the future of children. In one case a child was labeled by his family as "the problem child" and parental guidance was called for to deal with the problem. In some cases parents don't bring a child for treatment because they are afraid of the stigma attached to going for treatment. One of our goals has been to promote awareness on this issue in the community.
- Today ADD/ADHD is often diagnosed with a Moxo test. According to our staff this test is not comprehensive enough without a full neurological assessment. At the Haifa Center much emphasis is placed on addressing emotional problems. A child with an emotional problem will have difficulty concentrating, but not as a result of attention deficit. The treatment in such a case has to be therapeutic – addressing emotional distress and not standard methods of dealing with ADD/ADHD. We work hand in hand with pediatric neurologists at Rambam Hospital.
- At Risk Youth: Children who do not attain **literacy** are at risk for dropping out of the school system, and ultimately becoming dependant on social services and on the entire society. Promoting literacy amongst learning disabled children enables them to become independent and productive adults, giving to society, instead of taking from society.

Events at the Haifa Center – 2013/14

- **Evening of experiential workshops for parents:** An evening for parents of children in the **LD Program** took place in November 2013 to help them understand how we operate. Interactive workshops gave parents “the feel” of therapy at our center. A mother who sent all 5 of her children to The Haifa Center read a moving letter expressing her gratitude to the staff.
- Evening for mothers of children in the **Integrated Nursery** took place in November 2013 together with Smadar Bar'on, Supervisor from the Ministry of Economics presenting this year's topic: “**The Year of the Book**”. This year the central topic in our nursery was using books, stories, puppets, and improvisations to enrich the inner world of the child.



- Our **Therapeutic Kitchen** is well used throughout the year, and especially before festivals, with the aroma of latkes before Chanuka, and the baking of homentashen before Purim, fills the entire building and are taken home to be shares with the families of our children.
- **Purim Happening 2014:** Children receiving treatment at The Haifa Center prepared for Purim by participating in a fair the week preceding the festival. Each and every child was given a chance to bake homentashen, prepare a box for the goodies he baked, and decorate a mask. Working in groups, with the emphasis on social interaction, children were able to practice skills learned throughout the year. The fun atmosphere contributed to the success of the activities.
- With the approach of **Pesach**, children in our special ed kindergartens learned all about the upcoming festival. Each child prepared his own personal Haggadah. In one kindergarten a unique interactive Haggadah was designed by the staff and made by the children. An exciting day was spent baking matzot, while a moving Seder prepared children for the real event. All children knew the story of the Haggadah, the songs, and understood the importance of the upcoming festival. The cooperation between staff members made so much possible.

- **Lag Ba'omer** was celebrated with the traditional bonfire. Musical activities around a simulated bonfire were a great success.



- **Open House** evening together with Oranit Zaguri from the Ministry of Education took place in the **Special ed Kindergartens** for parents in the community interested in enrolling their children and for those already registered for next year.

- **End of year activities included:**

LD Program:

1. Parents were invited to a one-on-one meeting with their children's therapists to sum up the year and receive feedback, tips, and make plans for the next year.
2. **Anat Geiger**, Art Therapist, uses the end of the year to invite parents, siblings, and even grandparents to a session with each child. The last meeting of the year is dedicated to the child who exhibits the art work done over the period of the last year. The therapeutic work is summed up and to a certain extent shared with family members, who get a glimpse into the process and achievements. Setting up an exhibition for each child is no easy task, but for Anat, nothing is too much trouble, if it benefits the children. This approach is both unique and innovative and makes the therapy meaningful for children and families alike.



Early Childhood Center:

Integrated Nursery: An end of year party, together with the mothers of children, took place at the nursery. The program included musical activities, balloon art, and inflatable fun outdoor equipment.

Special ed Kindergartens: In **Melilot** and **Shibolim** kindergartens children and their mothers participated in activities that included: song, dance and movement accompanied by music; and activities with animals (stroking, feeding, holding). In the **Alumot** group, with the older children, the day was divided into two parts: first the children went on a trip to an adventure park with their mothers. On their return, they participated in musical activities and bid farewell to those who are graduating next year to regular Grade 1 classes.



- **Summer Program in Special ed Kindergartens:** Daily fun activities, trips, visits to museums and the zoo make this program an unforgettable experience for all our children.

Special Features

- The annual **Purim Campaign** was once again a great success thanks to the many donations of Mishlochei Manot by our friends and supporters. Close to 200 sweet packages were distributed to Ethiopian pupils in 3 Haifa schools – Barkai, Netiv Eliezer, and Ironi Vav; in an Absorption Center in Neve She'anana; and in a shelter for battered women. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers – Zehava Litovsky and Elsa Mervin for distributing the packages and making Purim a special day for needy children.
- Students from University of Maryland visit: Dr. Melissa Landa, of the University of Maryland, U.S.A. visited The Haifa Center with a group of students who are researching integration and absorption patterns of Ethiopian

immigrants in Israel. Mr. Danny Steiner, Principal of Netiv Eliezer School, where our therapists work with Ethiopian pupils, came to speak to the students on their topic of interest and provided significant facts and figures. The students were very impressed by our center and enjoyed a relaxing interlude in the Snoezelen Room.

- Students specializing in emotional therapies from **Haifa University** do their practical work at The Haifa Center and receive ongoing supervision provided by our expert staff. We have become a major center providing services to the Haifa University. In addition, next year 4th year nursing students will be doing research at our Center under the tutelage of Prof. Cheryl Zlotnick.
- **Convention for Kindergarten Teachers** from the local community took place on 26 February 2014 to heighten awareness on referrals and early assessment. Early intervention can only take place if children are referred in time to the correct framework. Close to 40 kindergarten teachers from Haifa and the environs gathered in our new special ed kindergarten for a professional, informative, and exiting evening. Ester Korkus, Ministry of Education Inspector brought an official message from the authorities. This was followed by a talk by two Municipal representatives – Yael Nediv Savyon, Allocations Committee Director and Tamar Chaskalovitz, Allocations Committee Coordinator on “Everything you wanted to know about the Allocations Committee” which generated questions and much discussion. Chaya Handelsman, with her personal story explained to teachers how to break the news to parents that their child needs a special ed framework. Gail Suskin, Movement Therapist closed the evening with an experiential workshop. The evening was a great success and will be followed by outreach meetings within smaller communities.



- **Evenings for school principals:** Working together with school staff is integral to our approach with children. All local school principals met with Haifa Center staff who treat “their” pupils. Problems were discussed and brainstormed for solutions. Practical decisions such as referrals to neurologists, parental guidance, and emotional therapies were just some of the conclusions. Haifa Center case managers are responsible that decisions will be seen through to their conclusion.
- **Special ed Kindergarten staff** had a full program of lectures and workshops during the school year of 2013/14 on a variety of topics to continually improve and update their methods and to learn to understand the inner world of the developmentally delayed child. Lectures included: Movement and Snoezelen Therapy workshop; “It starts with a story” - presented by a bibliotherapist; “What is sensory processing?” - presented by an occupational therapist; “Not only games” – presented by an occupational therapist.
- In the **Integrated Nursery**, Smadar Ba’on, Supervisor – Ministry of Economics taught staff how to use books, stories, drama, and improvisations in the daily work with toddlers. Staff meetings with Smadar took place in the evenings on a regular basis to ensure the success of this year’s topic: “The Year of the Book” .
- **Orientation for the new school** year 2013/14 included a lecture by Sheila Goldman on the topic of Moxo tests– a computerized assessment of ADD/ADHD, including hands on experience with this technique. This was followed by a lecture by Doron Magen on the topic of how to impart "unpleasant" information to parents about their children.
- **A series of lectures for staff in LD Program** in the school year of 2013/14: Topics covered included - “What a therapist feels when sitting opposite a parent, and what a parent expects from a therapist”; “Working with parents of developmentally delayed children”; “Biofeedback for ADD/ADHD children as part of a comprehensive treatment plan”
- The hours of psychologist - Mrs. Valerie Samek at our LD Center were increased to treat extreme cases (for example a child of 2 who pulls out his hair and eats it), observing children in kindergartens, and assessments. What is special about Valery is the way she accepts our children. She doesn’t blame parents in any way and therefore they build a relationship of trust with her easily, paving the way to success in her work.

New Initiative

Funded by health services, we plan to run groups to prepare children age 5 – 6 for Grade 1. To this end a member of our administration visited all the schools near our Center and met with school principals and counselors to map the needs in this area. The groups will be run by

an occupational therapist and special emphasis will be placed on preparation for literacy, graphomotor skills, and organizational skills. Our goal is to provide pupils with the necessary skills to enable them to cope easily with the change over from a kindergarten framework to a classroom situation.

Cooperative Ventures

- **Even Gavirol High School** for pupils with special needs: pupils with mild retardation volunteered in our nursery to prepare them for real life work
- **Civil Service:** boys at our center, who lack a father figure, receive a mentor through the Civil Service. Men doing their Civil Service can approach our organization, and receive a placement through us.

Work Meetings and Collaborations with other Organizations:

- **Bayit Cham** – work meeting with Director – Aryeh Munk
- **Ezer Mitzion** – work meeting with Director – Chananya Tcholak
- **Nitza** - ongoing meetings and collaborations to help women suffering from post partum depression. Nitza will be operating from our premises, and our therapists will be working with women who need therapy in this area.
- **Pe'imot: Bnei Zion Hospital and Haifa University** – treating abuse victims and sending them to Haifa Center for treatment
- **BNI** – members of the administration joined a networking meeting with BNI Haifa
- **Rotary Carmel** representatives visited our center and offered to continue supporting our project for women in a shelter for battered women
- Municipal officials met our staff in an effort to include our Center in their project:
360 The National Program for Children and Youth At Risk.

Important Visitors:

- Dr. Moshe Kramer and groups from Germany
- Ms. Raz Parker, from Haifa Municipality, visited in May, 2014 to plan the setting up of self-help groups for adults at The Haifa Center.
- Dr. Rachel Lutzati, Head of Klalit Health Services, Northern Area visited in May, 2014.
- Leah Marom and Anat Konus from Klalit Health Services visited in May 2014 to continue the ongoing cooperation they have with The Haifa Center.
- Prof. Mira Karnieli, Head of the Education Department, Oranim Academic College – Tivon. She is doing anthropological research at the Haifa Center.

- Maccabi Health Service Representatives: Yael Dvir – Occupational Therapy Coordinator and Tali Yarmias visited, launching a new initiative – Preparing for Grade 1 for 5 and 6 year old children in small groups – to strengthen graphic-motor skills and improve social interaction – helping pave the way for a smooth changeover from a kindergarten framework to a classroom situation.
- Haifa Municipality Representatives: Dalia Zfania, Head of Matya; Chani Friedman – Early Childhood Education; and Tereza Taylor – Psychologist, visited our new kindergartens and started planning for the next school year.
- Dr. Melissa Landa, University of Maryland lecturer and a group of students studying the topic of Ethiopian immigrant pupils.
- Mr. Danny Steiner, Netiv Eliezer Carmel School Principal spoke to a group of American students from the University of Maryland on the topic of Ethiopian immigrants.
- Prof. Cheryl Zlotnick, Associate Professor in the Department of Nursing, Haifa University.
- Ester Korkus, Inspector – Ministry of Education and Oranit Zaguri, Supervisor visited the Haifa Center. Yael Nediv Savyon – Allocations Committee Director and Tamar Chaskalovitz – Allocations Committee Coordinator.
- Smadar Bar'on – Supervisor, Ministry of Economics
- Doron Magen, Clinical Social Worker

Special thanks to:

- Mr. Shimon Festenberg of Keren Nefesh Kol Chai for the ongoing support and scholarships to needy pupils.
- Zwi Stein and his community for ongoing donations
- Portnoy Family for organizing a Charity Concert
- Assil Mahamid and Shaked Shachar for the musical performance at our charity concert
- Jim and Myrna Bennet for opening your home and your hearts to host a charity concert
- Haifa Municipality for renovating the playground in our LD Center
- Haifa Municipality for the support in establishing our third special ed kindergarten
- All participants in our Purim Campaign – the proceeds of our annual Purim Campaign - March '14 went towards our project for Ethiopian Immigrant pupils. Sweet packages were distributed to Ethiopian children at the Absorption Center, in 3 Haifa Schools and to children in a shelter for battered women.

- Zehava Litovsky and Elza Mervin for making Purim a special day for children in the absorption center.
- The Elgazi and Almani families for donating mishloah manot for Purim.
- Rotary for partnering with us in our project for Shelters for Battered Women.
- Prof. Cheryl Zlotnick for help with research and statistics
- Oranit Zaguri for ongoing expert supervision

Thanks to our ongoing volunteers:

- Dr. Jeremiah Lubasch, for 25 years of volunteer work in the community and at the Haifa Center.
- Eli Hartman for volunteering as a strategic advisor.
- Stuart and Hadassa Palmer for your ongoing help in all areas.
- Zahava Litovsky for leading all trips for both pupils and staff.
- Laya Zryl for translating and writing services.
- Elza Mervin for being the dedicated House Mother at the Center and taking care of all the pets, plants and whatever else is needed.

Condolences to members of our staff:

- Pnina Berkowitz on the passing of her father
- Elsa Mervin on the passing of her mother
- Luda Verozochev on the passing of her father
- Mira Zeltzer on the passing of her father
- Mendi Fischer on the passing of his grandmother

Stories:

1. **Sara* is a qualified accountant. Over 20 years ago she came to The Haifa Center for didactic reinforcement in the area of math. She was a very weak pupil and our remedial teacher helped her as much as was possible at the time. When Sara finished her treatment at our center, her teacher parted with her wishing her luck in the future and saying: "Sara will go far". Sara graduated Cum Laude in accountancy and not only that – she was top of her class and in one particularly difficult exam when the entire class failed, she was the only student to pass.**
2. **Gail* is in one of our kindergartens. Her mother is mentally ill and does not function. The father desperately wants to keep the family together and acts as both mother and father, including running the home and earning a living. Social workers saw his difficulties and arranged for Gail to be in day foster care. This means that she sleeps at home but spends her after school hours at a foster family – one of our staff members. There she receives a nutritious lunch, plays with the children in the family, eats supper and takes a shower – going home to meet her own siblings just before bedtime. Gail has**

not been able to care for her teeth properly and will soon be undergoing full dental treatment under general anesthetic because she won't even open her mouth at the dentist, while ALL her teeth are black from decay. Her kindergarten teacher Mirit has been instrumental in organizing this treatment and has collected the funds to pay for it.

3. A family with 12 children, while on summer vacation last year, was on a bus in Jerusalem when it was attacked by terrorists. One son was badly hurt; the entire family was evacuated by ambulance to Hadassah Hospital. The confusion, terror, and lack of coping skills created a situation where all members of the family needed trauma treatment. On their return to the north, the parents approached Rambam Hospital who referred the family to the Haifa Center. Due to the large number of children in need of treatment we adopted a unique approach. The parents received parental guidance through an organization called Amcha. The adolescent son who was the main victim received one-on-one therapy. A group of 5 siblings came to the Haifa Center and received treatment in our Snoezelen Room by two therapists – one a movement therapist and the second an art therapist, combining two types of therapy. The therapy was short term and focused and achieved amazing results, in a very resourceful way. Following the success of this treatment, another family will be receiving group therapy in our Snoezelen Room. The parents are divorced and the father has custody of the 7 children. When he came for an intake session, the therapist asked him which child needs therapy. He answered: "All of them. Choose from the list". It was decided to offer him group therapy for 5 children seeing as all children are dealing with the same problem, trying to cope together. With professional intervention, these children can serve as a source of strength for each other. This mode of therapy will be presented to the staff at Rambam Hospital and is suitable in certain cases.
4. Danny* is 3 years old and comes to our nursery by order of the court. He is watched carefully by social workers. His parents – both previously divorced, do not always live together. His father is 67 years old. His mother is 35 years old and suffers from post partum depression. She recently gave birth to a second child who was given to the grandmother for foster care. Danny can come to school with a cigarette burn on his hand or alternatively with a big bag of chocolates bought on the way to school at a supermarket ("because that is what he likes or what he asked for" - quote). His mother sometimes sits in the nursery for hours watching him, yet at home she is neglectful. The staff tries to give Danny as much attention as is possible and in addition tries to teach him rules and boundaries. Although Danny will be graduating to a regular kindergarten next year, and therefore leaving us, his story unfortunately does not have a happy end.
5. Yossi* is 6 and has been receiving treatment at the Haifa Center for the past two years. At the beginning, he was very closed, didn't express himself, every little noise bothered him, he had no social skills, any small task was so overwhelming for him that it had to be broken down into step by step stages. The occupational therapist was supposed to help him with graphomotor skills and perception. She suspected that he had severe attention deficit. In addition she suggested he have emotional therapy as he seemed to be in distress, sometimes he would burst into tears for no apparent reason.

Every year we celebrate Chanuka at the Haifa Center by making potato latkes. The children work in groups and are able to practice skills they learned in their one on one treatment. Groups of 4 children meet in the therapeutic kitchen and work together, dividing up the tasks, until the end result – hot, flavory potato latkes to be taken home. The group enables social interaction and starts off with each child introducing himself to the others.

Last year when Yossi's chance came to work with a group in the kitchen making latkes, he almost went hysterical. He refused to look at or talk to the children in his group. He sat at a side table, with his back to the group, working alone, and the smallest noise distracted him.

This year Chanuka time arrived and his occupational therapist couldn't believe her eyes: is this the same child? He went happily into the kitchen, sat down at the main table and was the first to introduce himself. During the entire activity he acted like a leader. The staff watched him work, while interacting with his peers and tears stood in their eyes.

Although he still attends our Center, we will soon be saying Shalom to Yossi because next year he starts grade 1 (delayed by one year). He can write his name and all the letters of the aleph-beth. His assessment for attention deficit shows that he is definitely not ADD.

Unfortunately, at home he is stigmatized as "the problem child". His parents haven't realized what a long way he has come and to what extent he has changed. From now on, his parents will receive parental guidance at our Center, and we hope to help them realize that Yossi has grown up, has learned to believe in his abilities, has made friends, and has faith in others. He has also overcome his sensory-motor difficulties

Yossi we are proud of you and feel privileged to have been able to help you discover yourself and the world around you!

*names have been changed

Our donors:

P.E.F., Weinberg Foundation, Jewish Child's Day, Glencore Foundation, Rochlin Foundation, Keren Yemin, Ballas, Emouna Foundation, Keren Haifa, Rotary, Tikun Olam, Haifa Chevra Kaddisha, Keren Nefesh Kol Chai, Paul and May Arieli Foundation

Our supporters:

Haifa Municipality, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Economics, National Insurance, Inheritance Funds, Ma'ayan Hachinuch Hatorani, IEC

In conjunction with:

Haifa University, Health Services, Elwyn Israel, Rambam Medical Campus, Bnei Zion Hospital, El'i, Women for Women – The Haifa Shelter for Battered Women, Haifa Women's Crisis Shelter, Achiya, Nitza, The Crisis Center for Religious Women – Jerusalem, Ate"m – Nefesh Israel, Barkai –Moriah Elementary School, Ulpanat Amit – Ironi Vav Intermediate and High School, Netiv Eliezer – Carmel Elementary School

Board Members

Jeremiah Lubasch, MD, Founding Director: Born in Argentina, Dr. Lubasch studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires. In 1977 he came on Aliyah and today lives in Haifa with his wife and 6 children. Dr. Lubasch served in the navy and was promoted to rank of "rav seren". In 1989 he established the Haifa Center for Children with Learning Disabilities and remains the Founding Director on a voluntary basis, in between running his medical practice.



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