

***Purim Festivities at Negba***

The month of Adar is always a joyful time at Negba, filled with events related to the Purim holiday. To kick off the festivities this year, Negba's homes were decorated as different countries, creating a cosmopolitan atmosphere to the environment. Two Purim carnivals were held, packed with games, rides and activities for Negba's children. And, it wouldn't truly be Purim without some silliness; in good Israeli Purim tradition, the teens of Negba's Teen Club issued their Purim Takanon (charter) by which virtually everything is turned



upside down (ונהפוך הוא) - the teens rule, and the staff become the subjects who must adhere to a list of senseless edicts, ala King Ahashverosh from the Biblical story of Queen Esther.

Other highlights included the Teen Club visit to Soroka Hospital to bring some holiday cheer and care packages to the sick, and the annual Negba Purim Feast, which includes a parodic retelling of the Esther story with a Negba twist. Lots of fun was had by all Negba's children.

***Parents at Negba: Partners in Negba's Care for their Children***

Negba views parents as integral partners in Negba's care for their children. In addition to periodic conversations and home visits, Negba offers joint programs for parents and children to strengthen the family unit and provide techniques for positive parenting. Some activities simply serve as an opportunity to have fun in the company of loved ones - a rarity today, and even more so for underprivileged families.



"It was lots of fun doing a project together with my parents," said Liel, 10, who attends the Beersheva Schili House. Recent activities there included two art projects (a clock, and a picture frame with a family photo) to display at home, the screening of a film showing parents what their kids accomplish each day at Negba, and a children versus parents trivia game.

At the Jaqueline and Jacques Levy-Willard Beersheva House, kids and families baked Hamantaschen and prepared gift packages for Purim, and also designed a home mirror and played the fun learning game Kahoot. "I enjoyed preparing the Mishloach Manot with my mom and dad, and doing something together, just the three of us," said Shira, 11.



The Picard House in Jerusalem also celebrated Purim with a jamming parents and children joint drum activity. And as part of "My Family" month, each home was visited to become more acquainted with each family and then later in the month parents and children played an interactive "Family Dominos" game to see how much truly they knew about each other.

## This month in PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING: A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

*Interview with Gisèle Elalouf, attorney, who serves as a volunteer at Negba.*

When I left my position as director of the legal department at the National Insurance Institute two years ago, by chance I had the opportunity to visit Negba in Beersheva, which at the time was responsible for caring for some 150 children. Seeing these children engaged in various activities I immediately understood the



potential of Negba's program, and I was impressed with its capability to provide a new opportunity for these children who are already viewed as a heavy emotional and social burden.

From my point of view, there was one question to be asked; how can we provide these children, who are brimming with joy of life, an opportunity to attain excellence? How can they be motivated to strive even higher? There was a need to assist them, and their parents, to improve their slightly damaged self-esteem.

Along with Hanna Geissmann, Negba's Executive Director, we decided to invest in music education. This year, with the help of the Beersheva Municipality, 50 children aged 6 to 8 years now participate in Negba's pilot Music Appreciation Project for Children At-Risk, in cooperation with the Israel Sinfonietta of Beersheva. Following pre-concert workshops led by the orchestra's musicians, the children then attend classical music concerts designed for young audiences. Their parents are invited to the final concert in June. This project is a wonderful success, and I invite you to see the enthusiasm of these little ones who are exposed for the first time to great music.

Let me share with you one story of success which greatly moves me. S., 11, developed a strong desire to study music as a result of the project. We helped her select an instrument, the harp, and today she is enrolled at a music conservatory, thanks to a scholarship of the Beersheva Municipality. She also sings in the conservatory's choir.



Other Negba children have since been awarded music scholarships to play instruments and sing. How contagious is the drive for excellence!

We are still at the initial implementation phases of this initiative, and we seek additional funding to enable more children to enjoy music education. Our goal is to offer this opportunity to the largest possible number of children, and to expand our scope to other areas such as science, sports and writing.

The development of creativity, self-discipline, self-expression, maximizing the potential of the children, parental pride - these are the goals we hope to achieve by exposing Negba's children to music, encouraging them to be the best they can be.

**The Professionally Speaking column periodically invites a specialist to share a point of view on Negba's activities and provide insight into the lives of Negba's children.**

