

**Reality TV, Negba-Style: Film Produced by Teen Club Serves as Trigger for Evening Parent-Teen Dialogue**



It is said that men may be from Mars, and women from Venus. But when the two share an adolescent child, they are in full agreement that their teen seems to be from another galaxy altogether. Bridging worlds was the subject of a recent Parent-Teen Dialogue at Negba's Teen Club. And the conversation helped remove boundaries and open channels for communication.

The evening began with a viewing of a short trigger film, ***A Day in the Life of a Teenager***, produced and edited by the teens. The parents and teens then discussed the nature of the complex relationship and explored how each side might behave differently to improve and enhance the bond. "I now understand that my teen really wants me -and needs me- to be there for her all the time, even if she doesn't show it," said one parent. "But my daughter should also try to speak more, and express what's on her mind. I can't read the signs."

The teens, for their part, stated that they want to talk, but felt that their parents don't want to listen. "I need to feel that I can tell my parents *anything*," said one teen. "But I don't feel that I can." This typical catch-22 situation is the root of much of adolescent-parent tension. And it is through dialogue and awareness that the situation is best resolved. Hence, the evening dialogue at the Teen Club.

The program ended with a shared culinary activity that both teens and parents had no problem completing together- the preparation of tri-color chocolate mousse. The tasty message was clear; there are positive (and delicious) results when good parts come together.



**Bar Mitzvah Program for Boys At-Risk Visits Jerusalem, Kotel**



Ten boys from Negba's Teen Club spent an emotional day in Jerusalem's Old City to mark their Bar Mitzvah. The Bar Mitzvah celebration, in cooperation with the Orot Israel organization, began at the Western Wall in the spirit of Jewish heritage, each boy clad in a new suit and donning the traditional Tallit and Tefillin, courtesy of the Jewish community of Montreal. The boys then enjoyed a tour of the Jewish Quarter and partook in a festive feast at a local reception hall.

"The whole program, from the activities in Beersheva to today's trip, was such a special experience," said Netanel, 13. "I learned a lot about our heritage, and I was really excited to visit the Kotel together with my parents."

It was a wonderful day, filled with meaning and joy that will remain forever in the memories of each teen. Negba wishes the young men much mazal and health as they grow from strength to strength.



## This month in **PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING: A Psychologist's Perspective**

*Interview with Dr. Gabriel Weill, a clinical and educational psychologist who serves as a volunteer consultant at Negba.*

One must understand the social background of Negba's families in order to understand the design of Negba's clubs:

Children living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods do attend formal educational frameworks in the morning hours. But in Israel, with school beginning early at 8:00 am and ending early around 1:00-2:00 pm, there are many hours each day that the children are alone. Their parents are either at work, and those that are home due to unemployment or other reasons are not equipped to provide their children an enriching after-school framework.



From here, the complications begin. Older children are subject to the temptations of the streets- smoking, fights, and other delinquent behavior. Other children spend hours at home watching TV or surfing the Internet, disconnected from reality in an equally as dangerous virtual world.

It is in this climate that Negba's clubs enter the picture and aim to fill a need: to provide a social and educational context that complements the morning school framework, one which provides positive engagement, stimulation and consistent learning in a safe and protective environment.

Many of these children lack good habits and possess a low frustration threshold, making it difficult for them to adjust to an environment containing limits. And the children are used to a confused parenting environment in which their parents don't know how to say "no." Many of their parents experienced childhood in a patriarchal environment in which a parent's word was sacred, and there was unquestioned reverence for parental authority.



Here in Israel the social context is so different that a lot of parents do not know how to exercise authority (particularly when physical punishment is no longer acceptable). They expect to be respected, but do not realize that they must invest efforts to gain admiration in the eyes of their children. Many parents are uncomfortable disciplining their kids, and an atmosphere of permissiveness exists since parents do not want to seem "old fashioned." As a result their children do whatever they want. Other parents are simply preoccupied with the daily struggle to make ends meet, leaving no time for their children, and when they do find some time they lack the skills to effectively engage them.

At Negba's clubs, the children learn to compose themselves. There are rules and regulations, and the kids must adapt. The rules are consistent and based on common sense. The children receive guidance from counselors, and learn how to communicate in a normative social environment. The counselors behave consistently and with a calm demeanor, creating a positive chemistry with each child, and over time positive behavior patterns are developed and internalized.

This is one of the many rehabilitative aspects of Negba's clubs.

*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.*

