

### 2018-2019 School Year off to Great Start with Return of Negba's Children After Summer Break



The 2018-2019 School Year is off to a great start with the return of Negba's children and youth following the Summer break. Negba's After-School Homes and Clubs in Beersheva and Jerusalem welcomed back its members, and are already bustling with activity. A new cadre of *Bnot Sherut Leumi*, National Service Volunteers, have joined the ranks of Negba's staff, which spent much of August preparing programs and activities for the coming year and conducting home visits to many of Negba's children.

"I'm really happy to be back," said Liel, 10. "I love my friends here, and the activities are so much fun. The Shnitzel is yummy, too!"

This year will be a particularly sweet one at Negba- not just because Rosh Hashanah arrives extra early- but due to the imminent move into the new Negba Center in Beersheva. Negba's Beersheva kids are excited about their soon-to-be new "home," a spacious and child-friendly building which will greatly enhance their Negba experience and advance their personal growth. "The building looks beautiful, and my club room will have lots of rooms and outdoor space," remarked Liel. "It's going to be lots of fun. I can't wait to move in already!"

Negba wishes all its children and youth a year of much success and happiness.

### Jerusalem "Bogrim" Program Completes Successful First Year

Negba's pilot "Bogrim" program launched in 2017 to prepare pre-teens for the demands of middle school.

The program commenced last Spring in the Kiryat Menachem neighborhood and is the first of its kind in Jerusalem. The move from elementary school to middle school brings with it physiological, social, academic and emotional changes. This transitional period is a perilous one; and unprepared pre-teens from underprivileged families will find themselves in a large and unfamiliar environment and at extremely high risk of dropping out of school.

"The Bogrim program definitely has prepared me for next year," said Mia S., 12. "The new school I'm going to is humongous, and I'm nervous about being in such a large place. I'm also anxious about all the hard work I will have to do in math and English. But I feel more ready now."

Mia and the other 22 participants, many of whom are children of old and new immigrants, come from the three primary schools in Kiryat Menachem. The program is held on the premises of the Guatemala School and operates 3 afternoons a week for approximately 4 hours each day. It includes a Learning Center for instruction in math, Hebrew and English, weekly private consultation time for each pre-teen with a social worker, and informal social and cultural activities.

But it wasn't easy back in April 2017 to convince some participants that the program was for their benefit. "At first it was a huge challenge to convince them to come," said Sharon Shalom, Coordinator of the Grade 7 track. "They didn't want to do anything connected to learning or that reminded them of school. But over time, they realized it was worth it for them and for their future. Over the year we've seen a complete change in attitude. They want to be here. If they miss an activity, they get very upset."



Set to begin its second year this coming September, the Bogrim program enjoys the support of the Jerusalem Municipality, which decided to partner with Negba again in the same neighborhood as a result of the established success of Negba's After-School Home for children ages 7-11 in Kiryat Menachem since 2011. But it's not just the positive sentiments of the Bogrim program's participants that demonstrate its effectiveness; the first year evaluation data indicate it as well. 94% of participants felt the program prepared them for middle school, and 95% improved in one academic subject with which they struggle. 86% of participants felt they possessed increased self-esteem as a result of the program.

Given the Bogrim program's achievement, in September 2018 a third group of 15 new grade 6 pre-teens will be added to the program. In total, the program will serve about 35 pre-teens from grades 6 through 8 in the coming school year. Additional pre-teens and parents have asked to join the program, which is currently limited due to lack of space. But the neighborhood's residents are now well informed about the academic benefits of the program and the social benefit for the participants.

"They really care that we learn, that we know the material," said Rotem K., 12. "They really care that we come. Thanks to the help we receive in the program I am getting lots of good grades in school. Negba is like my second home. Only too bad it's just for 3 days a week."

