

Caty and Mona Dreyfuss Negba Center Inaugurated in Moving Ceremony



Scores of Negba children, youth, friends and supporters recently attended an inspiring Chanukah evening event to inaugurate the new Negba Center in Beersheva. Beersheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich, Knesset Members Merav Ben Ari and Elie Elalouf, Negba Board Chair Dr. Ilan Cohen and other dignitaries participated in the festive milestone which honored Negba donor Mona Dreyfuss and the memory of her sister, Caty, after whom the center is dedicated.

“My wish is that this center will serve as a gateway to the world, a world of goodness, knowledge and culture,” said Mona. “I hope that it will provide these children and youth with tools to cope with life’s challenges and hardships, and accompany them in the realization of their dreams.”

No stranger to life’s challenges, Mona was born in central France during World War II. She and her parents survived the war, after which her sister Caty was born, with Down Syndrome. Mona loved her sister immensely, and spent her lifetime caring for her. When one personal tragedy struck Mona after another, Caty was her source of strength and confidence.

Mayor Ruvik Danilovich expressed a similar vision for the Negba Center in impacting the lives of the Beersheva community. “This place is a beacon for hope,” he remarked, “since it gives hope to each child. It says to them that you are capable. You can change the world.”

It was Negba’s Founders Claude Meyer, Claude Kadouch and Jean Bisseliches who sought to change a small corner of the world in Beersheva by launching Negba in 2006. Yet the thought of constructing a dedicated Negba Center was unfathomable. “The idea to establish our own building seemed crazy,” recalled Negba CEO Hanna Geissmann. “But two visionaries, Co-Founder Claude Meyer and Esther Amar, the former Director of Beersheva’s Department of Welfare and Social Affairs, lit up the way, believing anything is possible.”

Elyakim Lupo appropriately likened his grandfather Claude Meyer’s modest, yet methodical, approach to the accepted method of kindling the Chanukah lamp. “Just like we add an additional candle each night, Claude tried to improve the world one small step at a time, each day.”

Knesset Member Elie Elalouf, who serves as head of the Knesset’s Labor, Welfare and Health Committee and is also a long-time resident of Beersheva, believes that by empowering youth on Israel’s periphery, the entire country benefits. “I’m fortunate that I got to know Negba,” he said in his remarks. “The future of Beersheva is these children. Their success will be a success for all of Israeli society.” And his wife, Gisele, plays a vital role making that happen, volunteering at Negba and leading a number of music and culture initiatives.

The ceremony included a special Chanukah activity for 170 Negba youth, and attendees toured the center and dialogued with the youth. Guests also enjoyed musical interludes by the Jerusalem Orchestra East and West and by the Negba Teen Band, as well as video clips about Negba and its wonderful children.

“The children are the most significant meaningful things here,” commented Knesset Member Merav Ben Ari. “We saw them perform here on stage, and we met them earlier. These wonderful children should enjoy their new center. I’m glad to help Negba in any way, but it seems to me that Beersheva’s children are in excellent hands.”

Negba is grateful to its volunteers, friends and supporters who partner with it to serve Beersheva’s children and youth:

Negba’s Board of Directors led by Chair Dr. Ilan Cohen and Vice Chair Yael Elon; Negba’s France Friends; Les Cigognes organization; Beit Moriah; Beersheva Municipality- Mayor Ruvik Danilovich, Deputy Mayor Dr. Heftsi Zohar, and Department of Welfare and Social Affairs Director Etti Cohen; Former Knesset Member/Formal Deputy Mayor of Beersheva Avi Wortzman; Shlomi Nome, CEO of Beersheva’s “Kivunim” Municipal Company for Recreation Culture; and most importantly, Negba is grateful to its children, youth and their families.