

# Yad Sarah *News*

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**Making "bouquets" of dried fruit on wooden skewers in the Yad Sarah Day Rehabilitation Center in Jerusalem.**

**Tikva, who suffered a stroke, is learning to speak again, but nobody needs to teach her to smile!**



Yad Sarah is a unique, community-based non-profit organization whose 6,000 volunteers and small paid staff, in over 100 branches all over Israel, lend medical equipment and provide a wide range of professional quality homecare support services to residents in need of temporary or permanent assistance. Aid is also extended to disabled tourists and visitors to the country. [More at www.yadsarah.org](http://www.yadsarah.org)

## A Gift for Life

**"W**hen I tell the story of my life, I live on - for future generations too."

So said one of the hundreds of elderly and homebound people who are taking part in Yad Sarah's Life Stories project, in which a trained volunteer records, transcribes, prints and binds their memoirs.

Now, a significant gift to Yad Sarah from the German foundation EVZ (Remembrance, Responsibility and Future) is assuring the continuation and growth of this very meaningful project. The grant from the Berlin-based NGO will cover all the project's expenses for 200 stories over the next three years.

The service is meant for elderly people with difficulty in functioning, for homebound people unable physically or emotionally to take part in normal social life, and also for terminally ill patients and Holocaust survivors.

Some figures: With more than 250 volunteers all over Israel working on this project, more than 350

stories have already been completed (362 to be exact, at this writing) and hundreds more are in the works.

Skillfully and sensitively orchestrated by project director (and volunteer) Rivka Avihayil, the Life Stories Project is an important service that gives the elderly person self-respect and a feeling of worth. It carries wonderful benefits to the teller, the family, and the volunteer.



## A "Life Stories" Story

An unexpected bonus of the Life Stories project came to Yad Sarah's attention recently. A woman living in a moshav in southern Israel applied about four years ago for restitution payments that are being given by Germany to Jews from Tunisia. Her request was denied because she had no documents identifying her with her native town in Tunisia, nor were any such documents available from the Tunisian embassy in Germany. Recently, her lawyers had an idea. They asked her if she had any diaries, old autograph books or other memorabilia of her youth. Yes! Her children brought her the printed and bound Life Story she had written with the help of the Yad Sarah volunteer. Thanks to what was written there about her birthplace and childhood, the payments were granted. She now has a permanent monthly stipend.

## Ounce of Prevention

Advice on designing a home to be safe and accessible for people with disabilities is one of the specialties of Yad Sarah's Guidance and Exhibition Centers. But healthy people, too, can benefit greatly from some of their recommendations. Staff members of the Centers – occupational therapists – have started participating in exhibitions and fairs of the building industry and showing builders and architects how to plan and build for safety and comfort for both populations. Says Deborah Roitman, Director of Yad Sarah's five Guidance and Exhibition Centers: "Healthy people too, when building or buying a home, can benefit from the advice of occupational therapists to prevent accidents in the home and make daily life easier. Comfort and safety are just as important as beauty in design." Yad Sarah would rather prevent a fall than lend the crutches afterwards!



For reaching up to a high shelf or picking up items from the floor, a "reacher" adds a measure of safety in any home.

# First Decade of Millennium: 66% Growth in Lending

A surge in Yad Sarah's help to the public: the end-of-decade figures show a leap of 66 percent in the number of medical and rehabilitative items lent from the more than 100 branches countrywide. In 2009 alone the volunteers lent over 250,000 items, while saving the Israeli economy over \$400,000,000 in hospitalization costs – thanks to all the services that enable people to be cared for and recover at home.

*Wheelchairs are the most popular item that Yad Sarah lends, from an inventory of over 18,000 around the country. The chairs – like all the other equipment – are carefully checked, repaired, renovated, cleaned and returned to the lending stations between loans, by a devoted army of volunteers, like Eli Doron (pictured), who always loved fixing things and now, retired, indulges his hobby while helping thousands.*



## Driver Ed – for Special Drivers

Anchoring a wheelchair in a wheelchair-bearing van is only one of the skills Yad Sarah drivers learn, as members of Israel's largest fleet of such vans. There are about

2,500 additional tail-lift vans on the road in Israel being driven by drivers with no special training. Yad Sarah to the rescue, with a first-in-Israel driving course for drivers of wheelchair-carrying vehicles. The 25 participants in this first 60-hour course learned: correct usage of anchoring apparatus, rules for driving with disabled and wheelchair-bound passengers, lifting and lowering passengers on the hydraulic tail lift, handling emergencies, road safety, familiarity with different kinds of wheelchairs, the role of the escort in driving disabled children, first aid and more. Partners with Yad Sarah in the course were the ALYN Hospital for Disabled Children, the Israeli Road Safety Authority and Magen David Adom. Funding was by Joint-Israel and the Buxenbaum-Neta Foundation. A second course is planned soon. The 40 YadSaraVans, dispatched countrywide, make 125,000 trips a year.



## Tempest in a Teabox?



Beautifully hand decorated in Yad Sarah's senior workshops, Yad Sarah's tea boxes apparently serve also as a magnet for new friends. Recently, an American man who received such a tea box as a gift learned about Yad Sarah for the first time from the text enclosed in the box. Impressed, he mailed a modest donation. He must have been equally impressed with the thank-you letter he received – because a year later he followed up with a large donation. The boxes are on sale at the Yad Sarah gift shop in Jerusalem, via the internet site [www.yadsarah.org](http://www.yadsarah.org) and at selected gift stores.

# Help is on the Way!

**N**atalie, a young National Service volunteer staffing Yad Sarah's emergency call center, will not forget that night for a long time. The red light flashed HELP and the alarm beeped loudly. On the computer screen appeared the name, address and phone number of a subscriber in Netanya and information about his health, family, neighbors. "Moshe, this is Natalie from Yad Sarah. Do you need help?" A woman's hysterical cries were heard from the speaker: "Moshe, Moshe, Help!" "Moshe, do you need help?" and again the screams "Moshe! Moshe! Help!!" Natalie called for an ambulance at once, and kept trying to calm down the caller and learn what had happened.

She had done the right thing. The paramedics entered the flat and found Moshe unconscious in his wife's arms. It turned out that when she found him lying unconscious she became hysterical, screaming his name. Luckily, she remembered to press the call button on Moshe's Yad Sarah wrist bracelet – and saved his life.

The Emergency Alarm Service serves 18,800 subscribers countrywide, all connected to the Jerusalem control room with 90 volunteers on shifts around the clock. In 2009 it received 107,000 calls, with 29,000 of them being true emergencies. The others included calls from lonely people who needed to talk – and the volunteers are trained to talk to them kindly and patiently.



## Natalie's Angle

How does Natalie cope with the pressure of her work? "When a call for help comes in I feel a tremendous responsibility. Yes, it's pressure, but good pressure – it pushes me to act quickly and efficiently, just as we were trained. We get great feedback from the people we help. For me, after a year and a half in the Emergency Alarm Center, my outlook on old people has changed completely. I understand how fragile they are, how vulnerable, and how we young people must take care of them. When I see an old person get on a bus and look for a seat, I see it now from a different angle, from a more experienced place."

## The Legal Angle - or Angel

Yad Sarah's arm that provides legal aid for the elderly, Yad Riva, was helping a family in Haifa to appoint a guardian for an elderly member suffering from dementia. During the process, the man bought a ticket to the United States and said he was leaving within two days, not understanding what he was doing nor the implications of just going abroad. He then came to the airport without his medications, including insulin. Yad Riva arranged for

the rapid appointment of a guardian and a court order preventing overseas travel without one of his daughters. Should he leave Israel, the daughter will arrange sheltered housing for him in America. All this was done with the help of Yad Riva's volunteer lawyers and social workers, gratis. Yad Riva handles about 5,000 cases a year from 16 locations in Yad Sarah branches all over Israel.

Guided tours of Yad Sarah House in Jerusalem  
by arrangement Tel. 02-644-4687

# YAD SARAH'S SPECIAL CHILDREN

**"M**iracles happen every week," said a volunteer at Yad Sarah's Play Center for Children with Special Needs and their Families. "I would pay to work here."

At the Play Center in Jerusalem, called Beit Helena, a child with special needs can develop in a playful and imaginative environment.

There are art supplies, puzzles and swings. There are activities for fine motor skills and large motor skills. In the kitchen, children can pretend to shop, cook and more. On the stage, they can perform with siblings, enabling everyone to enjoy the experience together. In the library, they can choose a book to share with a parent or a Yad Sarah volunteer. And to continue the progress at home, families borrow books, games, CDs and computer programs all carefully selected to enhance

and develop cognitive and creative skills by means of play with educational, perception, fine motor, language and sensory games. Over 11,000 items were lent in 2009.

In the five spacious play areas, the parents and siblings can play with the special child under supervision, guidance and support – allowing the child to attain goals in an encouraging environment.

The coordinators of the Center believe educational, social and emotional skills can all be nurtured through play, a means of giving pleasure to the whole family while advancing the development of the child. "The Center's uniqueness is its greatest appeal," says Play Center director Jeannie Gadish. "Yad Sarah is probably the only option like this for children and their families in Israel."

The parents enjoy additional resources. They have access to lectures on child development and ways to cope with difficulties, and books on parenting, education, play and treatment are all available in the professional library. Yad Sarah is best known for lending medical equipment

such as wheelchairs, crutches and oxygen machines, but for the volunteers at the Play Center, lending a toy to a special-needs child or a book to his parents is just as important as lending a piece of medical equipment to a sick person.

The involvement of siblings is also heavily encouraged; not only does it assist development and help the sibling feel included, but it's an important opportunity for the child with special needs, who is likely accustomed to one-on-one therapy with an adult, to have another kid in the mix. An added bonus is the boost in the special child's "status" in the family – thanks to this child, the siblings get to play in this beautiful center!

The Play Center receives close to 4,000 visits a year, dealing with babies and children aged 0-12 who are referred because of learning disabilities, sensory-motor problems, delayed development, speech and communication problems, and mild to moderate retardation. And yes, miracles happen every week.

*"We run from doctor to doctor. Only here do I get to just play with my baby."*

*"The staff know when to help - and when not to."*

*"We couldn't believe that these riches were for our own child."*



## Reaching out to Elderly Holocaust Survivors

The world recently marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day, honoring all the men and women who lived through those catastrophic times and bravely rebuilt their lives. Many of them were the only surviving members of what were once large families; many were just young children at the time.

A large proportion made their way to Israel. Most are now over age 76. Yad Sarah, with its focus on senior services, assists them in many ways – from transportation and home visits to lending equipment. In Jerusalem alone up to 200 such individuals receive services, with many hundreds more throughout the country.

Some survivors are using electric hospital beds as the base for what is known as a Housepital and includes

a whole array of equipment: from high-tech oxygen concentrators, electronic feeding regulators and various monitors to electric hoists and wheelchairs. All services are free or of nominal cost. This is a critical factor because the overwhelming majority receive little or no support.

Many survivors suffer health problems; many are homebound and lonely. Volunteers in Yad Sarah's Home Services department make regular home visits to help dispel loneliness, create new areas of interest and activity and at the same time allowing caregivers time off and a chance to get out of the house.

Some survivors are not just at the receiving end of Yad Sarah services. Many of them are Yad Sarah volunteers themselves and contribute to the well-being of others.

## The Rehab Angle – or, Parallel Lines Meet

David and Yacov were children together in Poland before World War Two, classmates in Lodz. Both families fled

Poland by train to Italy where they eventually boarded a ship bound for Israel, arriving in 1948. There their paths parted. Each family went to a different city and they maintained no contact afterwards. David became a fisherman, Yacov worked for the Israel Aircraft Industry. A few years ago David fell from a fishing boat into the sea when he suffered a stroke. He ended up in the Yad Sarah Day Rehabilitation Center in Ra'anana, where he comes every day, trying to recover his health



and rebuild his life. One day recently he looked up from his breakfast and saw a familiar face coming in. Yacov.

The head of black hair was now bald on top with a gray pony tail behind. Yacov could not speak. He, too, had suffered a stroke. David verified the ID: did you go to the school at 16 Kroszkgau Street in Lodz? Yacov nods. Did you sit next to a girl named Hannah Z.? Yacov nods. But Yacov cannot speak. David is overcome with emotion, as 61 years melt away and memories flood him. He hopes Yacov will regain his power of speech and perhaps come with him one day to visit Poland.

## The Heart of Medical Education

In this age of HMOs, malpractice suits and the computerization of medical services, the traditional doctor-patient relationship has been somewhat eroded. Now, Yad Sarah volunteers have been brought into the picture as instructors to medical students, to help cultivate the human side of the physician's job. As small group facilitators, they are helping students with their communication skills and enhancing their insight into the patient's perspective. The 18 selected volunteers took part in a training course offered at Yad Sarah House jointly with the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School.

They learned principles of interpersonal relations in general, and doctor-patient communication in particular; principles of feedback to students; and techniques of role playing. They apply their new skills in workshops with the medical students. All this is part of the Medical School's program "Medicine and Humanities."

Find out about Yad Sarah's  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs  
on [www.yadsarah.org](http://www.yadsarah.org)

## It's an Honor

Yad Sarah's former Executive Director **Judith Intract** has received a citation of honor from the Israel Gerontological Society for her "unique and notable work and contribution for the benefit of the elderly and special-needs populations." Ms. Intract served Yad Sarah for 20 years, until 2008.

## Award to Volunteer

**F**or her selfless work in humanitarian assistance, Yad Sarah's Mevasseret Yerushalayim Branch Manager Chops Levy was recently named Person of the Year by the local branch of Lions Clubs International. Mrs. Levy, who came to Israel from South Africa (where she had her nickname since childhood), modestly attributes her success to her excellent staff of hardworking volunteers.

This is one of the most active branches in the country – its 70 volunteers include 35 who make hundreds of loans per month and an equal number who make home visits to housebound people.

**The branch recently celebrated its tenth anniversary by enlarging and renovating its premises in the Harel Shopping Mall thanks to a gift commemorating Rena and Robert Lewin.**



## Bank Takes Interest

Cleaning, weeding, planting, painting, repairing – a team of local Bank Leumi employees undertook to give a facelift to the Yad Sarah branch in Ohr Yehuda (near Tel Aviv). Volunteers and the public are enjoying the results. The project was spearheaded by Benny Sagi and his colleagues in the bank's Logistics Department. Sagi himself, it turns out, volunteers in the Yad Sarah branch in Rishon Letzion.



## Recent Visitors

**D**uring State visits to Jerusalem, Yad Sarah is often host to the spouse of the official visitor and in this connection recently had the privilege of giving full tours of Yad Sarah House to: the First Lady of **Croatia** Mrs. Milka Mesic, the First Lady of **Macedonia** Mrs. Maja Ivanova and the First Lady of **Georgia** (the former Soviet Republic) Mrs. Sandra Elizabeth Roelofs.

Among the **groups and delegations** that toured Yad Sarah House in recent months were: a delegation of physicians and health officials from **Kenya**; a group of senior bankers from Italy's largest bank - Intesa Sanpaolo with branches in major European cities – who were in Israel to study innovative solutions to social problems; a delegation of the **Florida-Israel Business Forum**; a group of teachers from **Rochester, NY**, part of Partnership 2000; a group of **Yeshiva University (NY)** pre-medical students in a medical ethics course; and a group from the **United Kingdom's** Jewish Care.

## Shaking it for Yad Sarah

"We're lucky that we can move and shake, but there are people who can't. At least we can do our part to help them," said Canadian belly dancer Francine Farhannah, who gave a belly dancing class in Toronto with all proceeds going to Yad Sarah for the purchase of medical equipment for loan. Women and girls of all ages, sizes and shapes enjoyed the jingling bells and Middle Eastern music at the event organized by Yad Sarah's Canadian Friends. Farhannah, an interior designer who gives belly dance lessons in her home studio, gave a solo performance to round out the lesson.





## Gone Fishin'

A relaxing backdrop for people coming to the Day Rehabilitation Center at Yad Sarah's Ra'anana branch is a large aquarium, donated by businessman Shmuel Shalem. The people coming to rehab pass the aquarium on their way in and out, take a break to visit the fish every little while, and, Hannah, who has been coming to the rehab center three times a week for the past seven years, has undertaken to feed the fish and see to the care of the aquarium. "We feel that the aquarium is part of our rehabilitation," she smiles. And it is!

## Spreading the Word

A small team of public relations volunteers has undertaken to bring the message of Yad Sarah to members of the medical professions. Focusing on doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses and others, the team has been attending staff meetings at hospital and health fund clinics, and transmitting a wealth of spoken and printed information about the lesser-known services that Yad Sarah's volunteers provide. They also set up informational booths alongside those of the pharmaceutical companies at major medical conferences, in space donated thanks to the intervention of friends of Yad Sarah. The team members, based in the Ra'anana branch, are themselves senior professionals in their own fields who enjoy the respect and attention of the public they are addressing.



## The Final Kindness

Yad Sarah has entered into a joint venture with Tishkofet, an organization specializing in support for seriously and terminally ill patients and their caregivers. The two will share expertise via lectures, courses and training. Yad Sarah will learn from Tishkofet's lectures on support, and Tishkofet will learn from Yad Sarah's expertise on volunteers: support, help and training. Yad Sarah is offering a course to train volunteers in recording the life stories of seriously or terminally ill people. In this way, Yad Sarah is broadening the base of people in the Life Stories Program, and giving people near the end of their lives – including Holocaust survivors – the opportunity to record their stories and give more meaning to their lives (see p.2).



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