**MATANEL FOUNDATION**

**YEAR-END EVALUATION REPORT**

**Program: Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot: Between the Generations**

**Year: 2018-2019**

**Evaluation Methods:**

This year, we implemented questionnaires at the beginning and end of all of our programs, including the Perach Zahav Matanel-Netu’im Ben HaDorot project. At the beginning of the year, each Netu’im group met to set goals for the year, and held verbal evaluation sessions mid year and at the end of the year to evaluate their success and provide feedback on the program’s progress.

We evaluate our work both during the year and at the end of it, enlisting the help of our steering committee, which meets twice a year. We regularly discuss and reflect upon the influence our programs have on the participants, as well as on the community at large. We check the efficiency and quality of the cooperation between the various partners, and the level of satisfaction of the participants. Each facilitator and regional director involved in the Netu’im program submits written reports every two months. The regional director and the group facilitator met once a month, and discussed supervision and the project’s progress. Once every quarter, the senior KIAH staff evaluates the program. The Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot project was one of our most successful and meaningful projects held this year.

**Overview of Our Qualitative and Quantitative Results:**

This year, 2018-2019, the Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot project recruited 24 students during the months of October-November 2018 in 10 communities in the socio-geographic periphery: Nahariya, Hatzor, Tiberias, Migdal Ha’Emek, Netanya, Kiryat Gat, Arad, Netivot, Kiryat Malachi, and Bat Yam. These students worked with 24 elderly very closely, and in addition, ran activities for 200 elderly and their families in local day centers and community centers.

Based on our questionnaires and in-depth verbal evaluations of student participants, they reported high satisfaction from their volunteering in the Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot project this past year. The students reported feeling a very strong connection to the elderly people with whom they volunteered, and felt that the experience greatly impacted their lives. In many cases, the students felt that they received more from the elderly than they could possibly have given them in return. The elderly also offered very positive feedback from their time with the students. This bond that was created between students and elderly allowed them to develop a deeper interaction and learn from each other, especially for those in their second year of the program.
In each city in Israel, there are elderly who suffer from loneliness, and who have no family or friends to visit them regularly. This realization hit the students hard. They imagined their own grandparents in this situation. They talked about how easy it is for them to stay connected to their friends and family through digital communication, but that the elderly are often technologically challenged, and have no way to communicate with the outside world. The students felt that it was perfectly natural for them to build a bridge between these elderly and the outside world, and yet, the students also found themselves waiting eagerly for every meeting with their adopted “grandparents.” Yet, the program also gave the elderly a reason to get up in the morning, make tea and prepare cookies in anticipation of the students’ visits.

The feedback that we received from the field was surprising. The majority of the students did not expect to feel such levels of satisfaction from the project, and saw their time in the project as extremely meaningful and relevant to their lives. The students noted that more than anything they felt that the elderly desperately needed someone to share their story, and provide a listening ear. They needed someone to help them with their daily chores, something that the students might see as trivial, but for the elderly each chore was challenging, such as finding things on the Internet, researching information on elderly benefits and rights, using phone applications, etc.

Another significant point that contributed to the success of the program was the weekly setting of the meetings. The fact that the students met the elderly on a set day and time at their homes created a mutual expectation for their meeting each week, and a way to further deepen the connection from meeting to meeting.

In addition, in most of the cities, new projects sprang out of the Perach Zahav program, such as the video project in Kiryat Gat documenting stories of the founders of the city. These wonderful “products” are gifts to share these stories with the next generation.

Here are some of the things we heard from our participants’ feedback:

“I measured my success by how close and open Phoebe was with me. At the beginning she was more reserved, and a little mistrusting. Then slowly, as we began to enjoy our time together, she began to open up and share her life with me.” – Paz Ohana, Nahariya

“During our activities I learned a lot from Simcha. We shared mutual advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle, and even discussed our spiritual beliefs. Besides our weekly meetings, we often speak on the phone. It seems to me that an elderly person’s loneliness demands our immediate attention, and I am very happy that I had this rare opportunity to participate in this project.” – Sagit Guetta, Netanya

“At one of my meetings with Chana, she said to me, ‘I really appreciate that you come visit me. It makes me very happy. Sometimes I lie in my room for hours in front of the TV to keep me company. When you come, I get up to sit with you and talk, and it makes me feel alive again.’ What Chana said is the proof of the importance and success of this project.” – Liat Aharon, Nahariya
“I enjoy my meetings with Aviv. I even boasted to my friends at the day center where I go sometimes that I have my own “personal trainer.” Before Aviv came, I was feeling very low because of my health problems. But now I am feeling much better.” – Shalom Cohen, partnered with Aviv Biton in Hatzor

“On each morning that I was supposed to visit Layla, she would call me to check to make sure I was coming, and asked what she could prepare for me to eat. Layla is alone most of the time. Our meetings made her get out of the house with me, to get dressed and put on make-up, and go out grocery shopping. We had a wonderful time together.” – Hadar Meshal, Bat Yam

“When I held my painting workshop, the elderly in the club got there a half hour early and no one missed it. I was excited for these meetings too.” – Tal Hirsch, Bat Yam

“I felt a lot younger at my meetings with Sapir. It is really amazing to see a young generation that cares and contributes to others, and it warms my heart to see that they do it out of happiness and caring, and not because they have to. This is the best medicine for a depressed soul.” - Haim Osher, partnered with Sapir Dor in Arad

“Suzanne broke her leg and couldn’t leave her home because there are a lot of stairs and she can’t get up and down. A bunch of us visited her, made her a meal, and cleaned her house. Afterward, she kept thanking us. We continued to visit her to make sure she was okay.” - Sarah Levi, Kiryat Malachi

It is truly heartwarming to see the connections that have been formed as a result of the students’ efforts in this program. The students mentioned that they felt that they gave a meaningful response to those who needed them. During their meetings with the elderly, the students learned how their feelings of loneliness and frustration slowly were replaced with a more optimistic and happy outlook. This greatly impacted the students, who expressed their deep appreciation for being able to participate in the project. Unfortunately, not everyone has the opportunity to grow old in comfort and with family all around them. Many of these elderly would have no one to talk to without these students’ visits. The students brought light and smiles, warmth and love to the elderly, and received all this back tenfold.

We were impressed with the commitment of the students in this project, who found every opportunity to volunteer above and beyond what was expected of them. On their own, they initiated meetings with groups of elderly to hear their stories, to celebrate the Jewish holidays with them, and to bring happiness, hugs, and a listening ear to over 200 elderly and their families throughout the country. Many of the students mentioned in their feedback that they preferred working in larger groups, that they felt that they had a greater impact on more participants. This is something to think about when planning next year’s program.

In the Netu’im learning sessions during the year, students often discuss issues of poverty, economic gaps, and the treatment of the elderly in Israel, which is why it is a natural choice to match Netu’im students with elderly in this project. The students feel a direct connection between their work with the elderly and learning about social
justice and *tikkun olam* (fixing the world). In addition to their helping the elderly with their daily tasks, and becoming more familiar with technology, one of the main goals of this project was to document the elderly’s stories to raise awareness and bear witness to the generation of the founders of this country. By setting down their stories, the students also contributed to preserving their memory for coming generations.

Irit Rosh Shitrit

Director, Memizrach Shemesh