Mitzpe Ramon, the most peripheral town in Israel, is populated by a heterogeneous and varied population. This project is one that brings populations and people together, connecting between generations, cultures, and families. We want to thank the Matanel Foundation for making this possible.

This past year, has been a great continuation and rise to the opening of the project in the prior year. Thanks to the Perach Zahav Matanel project and the students work, the project has proven to be highly effective. The students visit their elderly friend every week, and converse with them on the phone. The connections that have formed have influenced their lives in many ways.

Although the lockdowns in the midst of the year, did not allow their physical meetings, their preliminary connection formed as a base to the assistance and support they needed even more during the rough times ahead. There is no doubt that the elderly population, is one of the populations who has suffered mostly from the Covid-19 outbreak.

The elderly knew they had whom to turn to, for anything they needed. The students did their best in keeping in touch by phone calls, and offering their assistance. Most of them reported that their elderly did not have the patience or the will to learn new media like zoom, or ordering groceries online, to ease their difficulties during the lockdown.

**Relieving Loneliness**

A few students told about their connection not only with the elderly but also with his family and children. Through this connection, they were able to raise the families awareness to different things needed. Some helped intervene between the elderly and his children to renew or mend their connection, this was very meaningful to the elderly. Another student related how before Hanukkah he helped his elderly make a schedule, so that every night one of his children came to light candles with him.

One of the students, Bracha, regularly visits an elderly woman, Sulika, who is not very mobile. Bracha visits Sulika weekly together with her two-year-old son (since he is two months old), the elderly woman sees the child as if he was her own grandchild. Sulika gradually opened up to her, telling her life story repeatedly. The student recalled that she now realizes how much good it does when she sits beside her and listens. This is an opportunity for her elderly to complain about her pains, show off her family and share her story. Bracha feels that sulika happily awaited these visits and always greeted her with refreshments she made. During the holidays the families celebrated together, while the past holidays they were not able to visit due to Covid-19. Bracha organized for someone to come blow the Shofar for Sulika on Rosh
Hashana, and another to build her a Sukkah for Sukkot, since the lockdown did not allow her to leave the house or be hosted by others.

**Hygiene and Health**

One of the students, Maayan, described how part of her volunteer work with her elderly women, she arranged for her and accompanied her to a katart operation she needed in her eyes, as well as receiving dental treatment and dentures. Recognizing the struggle of her elderly to deal with all the health issues and bureaucracy, she took it upon herself. Thanks to Maayan, this elderly visited a geriatric doctor who assessed her condition as one eligible to receive government help to move to a nursing home where she could receive all the care needed.

Another student heard a lot from her elderly how much pain she has in her back due to unsuccessful surgery, and with the help of the scholarship from The Matanel foundation, she was able to pay for someone to treat her at home and ease her pain once a week.

**Spiritual and Mental Health**

Uriel, wrote about her special connection with Sulika, an elderly woman from Morocco, who she accompanies now for her second year. They like to sing together, and cook special Moroccan food. Uriel sometimes accompanied Sulika to her old age club to play music for the elders and dance with them. Uriel described how through her connection to Sulika, she herself became more connected and aware of her families Moroccan past and culture.

Eitan visits with his elderly friend Shlomo regularly. They enjoy learning together, and practicing memory exercises. They worked together to nurture Shlomo’s garden and stroll together on Shlomo’s golfcart. On one of his visits, Shlomo recalled he had not put on his Tefilin in years and asked Eitan to help him locate them in the house. It was very moving for him to reencounter them and with Eitan’s help to put them on again.

We are fortunate enough that a student couple visits an elderly couple regularly. The husband suffers from Parkinson’s disease and often faints for 20 minutes, he used to put on Teffilin and go to shul every day. Since the disease, he feels very down and stays in bed. His wife, used to be very active, but since her husband’s disease, she will not leave him- even when the students come to relieve her. Moreover, she has almost lost her sight entirely. The students described their success in drawing the elderly man out of bed, encouraging him to put on Teffilin, walk around for a bit and even go to shul- which meant a lot to him. The students bring their 2 children along on their visits, which makes the elderly couple very happy. They enjoy giving them advice on raising children, from their experience. Both the students and elderly feel like family, the students call the elderly couple “Grandma and Grandpa in Mitzpe”.
**Perach Zahav Matanel (2019-2020) - Evaluation Report**

**Summary**
- 13 academic students
- 1 Coordinator – Avital Zeltzer
- 13 local elderly matched to the volunteer students
- 2 Elderly residents assisted financially and did not wish to be assisted by volunteer

**Achievements**

*Perach Zahav Matanel* has succeeded in:

- Relieving loneliness and encouraging activeness.
- Improving health and living conditions.
- Reaching out to elderly that were not cooperating with the welfare services.

**Attendance**

The attendance was lower than last year, due to the difficulties the Corona Virus created, and the ongoing lockdowns. For this reason, we extended the program for an extra period, allowing our volunteers to continue their meaningful work and deepen their connection with their elderly.

We directed our volunteers to take part in many town projects for the benefit of the seniors. Like packing and delivering weekly food packages, giving out loving kits before the holidays and just making sure they have everything they need.

**Difficulties**
Besides for the usual difficulties that the volunteers encounter while attempting to reach out to the elderly, like constant cancelations on their side, this year visits to the elderly’s have reached extra difficulty.

During the three months of lockdown, no visits were possible. All the volunteer students reported how hard it was for them to refrain from visiting their elderly during outbreak of Corona and the lockdown, but they knew it was for the sake of their elderly’s health, and tried to be as meaningful as they can in other ways, keeping their distance.

**Future Development**

As a continuation of the success we feel from this project, and due to the rise in loneliness in the senior community following the Corona outbreak, we expanded the project. With cooperation of volunteers and youth groups, a special initiative began, matching every senior in town an adopting family. Making sure no one is left alone.