

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Name of the Program: Beit Yisrael Kvutzat Reut - Perach Zahav Matanel - Community Resilience Program

Year of activity: Sept 2021 to Aug 2022

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Number of active participants in the program:

31 students from the Beit Yisrael student villages.

Estimated number of impacted participants:

Elderly: 30 seniors

Give the actual state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

The Covid-19 pandemic brought more awareness than ever before to the subject of elderly loneliness. It is now up to us to keep the momentum going and this issue's urgency does not fade. The program has ensured continuous contact between the elderly and their young volunteers by various means. There are community activities, weekly personal visits, holiday events, assistance buying groceries and medicines as needed, and a support hotline run with 60 volunteers, students and residents, taking turns to answer the phone. Through this hotline we have been able to send someone out in under 8 minutes to anything from a physical fall to an electric power outage. Volunteers receive weekly training, professional guidance and help to ensure they build meaningful connections.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

We have created something beautiful with Gilo's welfare department that serves as a vital lifeline and community paradigm. This year was extremely successful. We connected 30 pairs of Gilo's elderly residents with students, thus alleviating loneliness on the part of the elderly person and strengthening a multi-generation connection for the younger person.

At its core, this project bridges between the generation that feels invincible and the generation that feels invisible. Students gained an understanding that they are standing on the shoulders of another generation's efforts, learning to communicate and see the world through their companions' eyes. The elderly felt seen, appreciated, and cared for. It is this communicative experience and expanding community that benefits both generations and builds resilience. Loneliness is prevalent, even without a pandemic, and it is up to the entire community to remedy it.

Nina's Story: Nina is an elderly woman living out her days in the Gilo nursing home. After a life marred by tragedy in the Former Soviet Union, Nina came to Israel, but never succeeded in learning the language. Although Nina does not speak Hebrew well, the two young women visitors connected with her on a deep level, using language improvisation and hand gestures. Nina described just how meaningful the relationships she formed with her companions were: "They brought the joy back into my home!"

Yael's Story: Yael is a volunteer matched with an elderly couple, Yoel and Yaffa.

"You can't rush into friendship", Yael shares. "I started out by helping with small chores, which made a significant impact on them. which to me, looked like small and simple things, but I know it was a significant help to them. Each time I visited, our connection developed. Today, Yaffa and I are close friends. I'm grateful I got the opportunity to connect with someone like her!"

Amitai's Story: Amitai is a student who matched with Avraham. "Saying goodbye to Avraham was emotional, often in surprising ways. We started our last meeting going through aspects of his computer, the internet and YouTube. My future plans came up again and he gave me a blessing for success. With that blessing he said how glad he is that I was in his life, he will miss me and he sees me as his grandson. I plan on staying in touch with Avraham for as long as I can".

Each pair met weekly for the duration of the program, for a total of 32 meetings. Additionally, the program held events around the holidays, Tu Bishvat, Purim and Yom Ha'atzmaut. This is especially important as holidays are where people expect to get together with others, so it is important they are not forgotten either in the days running up to the holiday or on the day of. They are part of the community and they benefit from cultural and learning events, just like anyone else.

The students attended 22 training workshops led by Omer, a social worker, and the program coordinator. Omer included professional external figures in training sessions. For example, Tamar Berger, who has been very involved in the struggle for the rights of the elderly came to speak to the volunteers. Today she promotes multi-generational activities, i.e., the integration of children and youth with the elderly.

We are proud of the connections made within the program socially and also proud of the Elderly Residents' Hotline, which contributes so much to joint community resilience – together we live, and together we help each other. The helpline runs with 60 volunteers (students and residents) taking rotations to answer the phones. An elderly person calls when in need. Often it can be an IT issue or the need for some groceries or medication. Sometimes the elderly person has fallen. We have been called for all manner of small emergencies that needed either strong arms (heavy lifting), nimble hands (light bulb) or younger eyes and ears to figure something out.

Calls for need are referred to a whatsapp group to find the nearest person to help. This takes a matter of minutes. When all is well, the call center receives 3 calls a day. During Covid, it was far more hectic, as we undertook almost every errand, and then in 2021 arranged vaccination runs too. During peak emergency times, like this past cold and snowy Jerusalem winter we received 10s of calls for help which were answered with extra heaters, blankets and company. There were also calls asking for reserve computers as that is their portal to the world.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

Comparisons with the previous year: this year there were far fewer constraints, like closures and isolations, compared to the previous year – the last lockdown ended at the end of January 2021 and we ensured that students coming into contact with the elderly from Autumn 2021 until now were vaccinated and were Covid-free each time they visited. As a result of the change in atmosphere, volunteers were more willing, more involved, and more

connected to the idea of meeting the elderly as well as understanding the importance of continuity in this project.

Methodology: We asked students to fill in a questionnaire, asking them to reflect on the program and their experiences:

1. Rate from 1 to 10 how much you looked forward to the meetings
2. At what point did you bond with your elderly friend?
3. Rate from 1 to 10 how challenging your meetings were
4. Rate from 1 to 10 how supported you felt during the project
5. Rate from 1 to 10 the positive support your presence gave your elderly friend
6. Rate from 1 to 10 how much you felt your mentoring and support gave you during this project with your elderly friend

Results:

The volunteers and the elderly formed a strong bond, which helped the elderly to relieve loneliness. The volunteers also gained from someone with life experience and a different perspective. The elderly population gained greatly from the daily assistance from volunteers, whether being there as a friend or fitting a lightbulb (and other chores). The workshops and training sessions deeply impacted their work.

Future conclusions:

Even though the university academic year starts in October, It is recommended we find a way to start introducing volunteers to their elderly counterparts earlier.

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

We maintain contact with the Department of Social Services in Gilo. They assist us in locating elderly men and women who are interested in participating in the project. Telephone calls to the elderly about the project's continuation will take place as soon as possible and often, so the project's momentum continues.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (**as PDF documents**) Please join photos – as **JPG files** – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seem to you relevant – as **PDF document**. Please join a 5 minute movie which presents your institution and the particular project supported by the Matanel Foundation. The movie should be accessible to the philanthropic world and to other potential donors.