

**Michal** - By the age of 10, Michal had already experienced significant trauma through the loss of her mother. And just months following her mother's unexpected passing, it became increasingly clear that her father was not able to run the grieving family alone. By the age of 16, Michal was living on the streets, jumping between different programs and services offered by the local welfare department.

"I couldn't find any source of comfort- or love- and felt like if I died, no one would even know," she explained. "And then I started working in the glass workshop at Susan's House."

Michal was not very proud of the first few pieces she created in the workshop. And when she noticed her counselor at Susans House place a few of her glass plates in the glass oven, Michal asked her to throw them away, because "they were too ugly". Thankfully, her counselor disagreed and told Michal that she was going to display the finished product in the store.

"I couldn't even fathom that someone would spend money to buy something I had created," Michal remarked. "And then it suddenly happened, one afternoon, when I noticed an American woman discovering my plate, and bringing the plate to the front of the store to purchase it."

Michal approached the American woman with excitement, and some trepidation, to tell her that she was the artist.

"Seriously?", the woman responded, "These are gorgeous! Now I will always remember your face whenever I use these plates in my home!"

It was precisely at that moment that- with tears in her eyes- Michal began to feel like she was worthy- like she was no longer a nobody.

After her release from the army, Michal enrolled at the David Yellin College of Education, where she recently graduated with a MA in Education. Michal aims to begin working with children with special needs.

When asked about the impact Susan's House had on her, Michal simply explained, "Susan's House completely changed the trajectory of my life!"

**Benjamin** arrived at Susans's House at 17, as a skinny teen with bright eyes and a captivating smile. His mother was murdered when he was 5 years old, and his family never shared the full story of the murder. As a young child, Benjamin frequently moved from different residential institutions and had an impressive ability to take advantage of the system by testing the boundaries. Still, he never felt secure and safe in any framework. He developed a strong sense of dark humor- and cynicism- as a survival strategy. And while always charismatic and funny- he was unable to share his inner world with anyone. After a few months of working in the ceramic studio, we discovered that Benjamin was abusing drugs daily while at Susan's House- something which crosses a red line. Avital, our Director, explained to Benjamin the seriousness of the issue and the expectation that he begins to take control over the trajectory of his life.

The direct conversation shook Benjamin, and over the next 2 months, he would show up intermittently to work, as if to tell us that- on one hand- he didn't need the support of Susan's House but- on the other hand- that he was ill-prepared to face life alone.

And immediately after receiving word from the army that he was to be drafted in the coming year, Benjamin knew he needed to make some drastic changes in his life. It was at this point that he began to show up at Susan's House more consistently, and started reaching out for help and guidance. He began to express himself, sharing his insecurities and fears with our staff. And above all, he began to trust us. As Benjamin's enlistment date approached, the staff and participants threw Benjamin an emotional farewell party, where he was recognized and celebrated for his dedication and personal development. There were many hugs, tears, and blessings for success as he entered the new chapter in his life.

Benjamin has already been serving in the army for the past month, and he is acclimating well to the disciplined atmosphere in the army. We remain in close contact with him, and we pray for his continued success in the army and beyond.

**Hayifa**, a beautiful and shy girl from an Arab village just outside of Jerusalem, suffered unimaginable violence at the hands of her brothers who suspected her of disrespecting their family's name. As an intelligent and astute girl, she dared to stand up for herself and suffered physical abuse as a result. Fearing for her safety, her mother turned to Susan's House, through the local Municipal welfare department, and we quickly welcomed her into our Home.

Many of the Jewish participants at Susan's House were unsure how to receive Hayifa. On the one hand, she was obviously different, being from an Arab background, but on the other hand, she listened to the same music and laughed at the same jokes.

At first, some of the Jewish participants were suspicious of her, and asked her questions about religion and politics, in an attempt to discern if she was really the "enemy". She shared with her fellow participants about the difficulty of being an Arab girl in the Jewish State, and of being born into a conservative village in Western society. And slowly, she began to win over the hearts and minds of everyone at Susan's House.

Her artistic skills were quickly noticed and celebrated, and she became a top glass worker in the Home. While getting situated at Susan's House, Hayifa also found refuge in a residential community for girls just like her, and through the guidance of her counselor at Susan's House, she opened a bank account and began to learn how to live a more independent life.

Her mother keeps in touch with Hayifa, and visits her at both Susan's House and at the residential community where she lives. Only time will tell what is in store for Hayifa, but in the meantime, she remains optimistic, confident, and with a smile- enjoying her time at Susan's House.