

## Afikim Summer English Camps 2025

This summer, the Afikim Family Enrichment Association once again partnered with the Yeshiva University Counterpoint program and Kol HaNearim to bring vibrant English language summer camps to children and teens across Israel. With the generous support of the Nitzan Matanel Foundation, hundreds of young participants enjoyed a summer of learning, friendship, and fun despite the backdrop of ongoing challenges.

The camps were held in Kiryat Malachi, Sderot, and Jerusalem, with nearly 50 American volunteer counselors bringing energy, warmth, and the invaluable gift of fluent English. This summer presented an extraordinary challenge: just days before the counselors were scheduled to begin training and fly to Israel, the 12-day war with Iran erupted and all flights were abruptly canceled. At first, every volunteer was informed that their trip would not take place, and Afikim scrambled to find alternatives. Miraculously, as soon as flights resumed, about half of the volunteers were able to rebook and arrive in Israel. Against all odds, the camps went forward — a true summer of resilience, resourcefulness, and miracles.

Unfortunately, due to the delayed start of the program, volunteers were only able to receive a shortened training this year. While the reduced preparation was evident at times in the hour-to-hour programming, it did not diminish the overall spirit of camaraderie, fun, and engagement. Together with Afikim's professional staff, the volunteers successfully created an environment where children were able to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Each location had its own unique character:

- Kiryat Malachi: In a community deeply affected by the war, twenty YU students brought hope and normalcy. For security reasons the volunteers commuted daily from Jerusalem, yet the camp was still a highlight of the summer, filled with projects, games, and immersive English learning on the Amit school campus.
- Sderot (Ibim Absorption Village): Here the camps reached a new level of joy and meaning. The children of Ibim — all recent immigrants from the past three to four years — have endured displacement, constant sirens, and the lingering trauma of October 7. Having American teens live on their campus, devote full attention to them, and combine fun with English learning was a transformative experience. The Ibim staff were so enthusiastic that they requested the program return next summer, and Afikim is now exploring the possibility of a year-round English volunteer initiative.
- Jerusalem/Talpiot: Powered by both Yeshiva University students and Kol HaNearim volunteers, the Talpiot camp offered unforgettable experiences for children and teens alike. Daily English programming was enriched by fun activities, including a trip to an amusement park, an American-style community carnival, and even a spirited game of laser tag. In addition, 200 Kol HaNearim volunteers came together to produce a large-scale carnival for the entire Talpiot community, creating an atmosphere of celebration and unity.

The impact of these programs is profound. Campers returned to school more confident, with measurable improvement in English and greater enthusiasm for learning. Beyond academics, the camps foster identity-building, resilience, and empowerment, offering children a joyful break from the pressures of wartime life. The connections formed between Israeli youth and their American peers continue beyond the summer, as many volunteers return during their gap year to visit the children they met at camp. The camps also lay the foundation for Afikim's year-long English language initiatives with Oratya and Kedma students in Israel.

We are especially grateful to the Nitzan Matanel Foundation, whose support was proudly acknowledged on camp t-shirts, flyers, and the Afikim website. This visible recognition ensured that campers, families, and volunteers alike understood the Foundation's vital role in making the summer camps possible.

Finally, the Ministries of Education and Welfare once again recognized the Afikim/Counterpoint English camps as a continuation of the school year. This official accreditation underscores the high educational value of the program and the strong outcomes it achieves.

We thank the Foundation for its steadfast partnership in creating these transformative summer experiences. The smiles, laughter, and confidence gained by our campers this year are a testament to the enduring strength of your support and the power of investing in Israel's future generation.

*(Supporting materials attached: participant and counselor lists, financial report, testimonials, photos, and flyer.)*

- photos and video
- list of participants and counselors
- financial report of summer program see below
- camp budget
- flyer advertising community happening
- testimonies of children and staff