

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: "Perach Zahav – Bnei Bayit"

Year: 2025-2026

Name of the Program: "Perach Zahav – Bnei Bayit"

Year of activity: 2025-2026

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Number of active participants in the program: 150 senior citizens accompanied by Mechina students, in 12 Mechinot nationwide.

Mechina	Place of volunteering	Number of seniors
Beeri	Yishuvei Gderot and accompaniment of Holocaust survivors	20
Beit Yisrael	Jerusalem	22
Keshet Yehuda	Moshav Keshet	29
Meitzar	Kibbutz Meitzar and Neot Golan	10
Amichai	Beersheba	13
Bnei-David	Maale Efraim	5
Tavor	Kiryat Shmona and Nof HaGalil	10
Tzahali	Kvutzat Yavne	8
Meitarim-Lachish	Gevim, Dorot and Beit-Govrin	10
Hanegev	Kibbutz Tseelim	11
Yedidya	Beit Shemesh	6
Migdalar	Kfar Saba	6
Total		150

Estimated number of impacted participants: The program directly impacted more than 300 participants (150 seniors and their student volunteers). Wider circles of influence include the seniors' family members, the communities in which the visits take place, and fellow Mechina students influenced through their peers' shared experiences.

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

"Perach Zahav – Bnei Bayit" has completed its third year of activity with 150 senior citizens accompanied by Mechina students in 12 Mechinot across Israel – from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Beersheba and the Negev in the south. Throughout a year that continued to be marked by security tensions and emotional strain, students maintained regular weekly visits to seniors living in their own homes, offering companionship, conversation, help with technology, and assistance with repairs, gardening and everyday tasks. The referral of seniors and the accompaniment of the volunteers were carried out in coordination with municipal social workers and local coordinators in each Mechina. Many of the relationships deepened well beyond the scheduled meetings, and the program has become a meaningful part of the participating Mechinot's educational identity.

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

In its third year the program grew to 150 ongoing relationships – a 5% increase compared to 143 in the previous year, precisely meeting the target of at least 150 seniors set in last year's report – with students volunteering weekly. The growth combined veteran Mechinot that deepened their activity with new Mechinot and groups that joined this year. Beyond the weekly visits, the year included special initiatives: in Maale Efraim, students helped clear a dangerous thorn overgrowth near power lines ahead of a winter storm and replanted trees from a senior's garden; in other Mechinot students combined the visits with technology assistance, home repairs and shared community events. The relationships formed were, once again, the heart of the program:

A student from Keshet Yehuda: "When they first spoke to us about connecting with the senior people of the Moshav, I honestly did not understand what was wanted of me or what would come of it. Today I can say it was an extraordinary and very interesting experience – like the bond between a grandfather and grandson. I would come to them, we would sit, talk and laugh, and also eat excellent cakes..."

A student from Mechinat Amichai: "During the year I volunteered with a Holocaust survivor, and over time a special and meaningful bond formed between us that became far more than volunteering. We would meet regularly, cook together, play Rummikub, sing songs, tend the garden, go on trips to the park or shopping, and mostly sit and talk for hours. In time I also came to know her family and felt just like another granddaughter, part of the family. Our connection continues today, and we still talk and stay in touch regularly."

A student from Meitarim-Lachish: "Volunteering together with Nelly, who is already 100 years old and a Holocaust survivor, was moving and a privilege for me. I heard her story over the year, and it made me connect far more to this country and to the service I am beginning at the end of the year. It was meaningful to come and be with Nelly throughout the year, to hear her story and to help her with the things she needed. We would come every week, and I really looked forward to this meeting."

A student from Beit Yisrael: "As part of the project I met every week, consistently, with a lonely senior who had immigrated from Ukraine. It was powerful and meaningful for me to walk a few minutes from my Mechina apartment and to act within the very place where I live. Meeting the difficulty of a lonely senior who simply needs someone to sit with her, listen to her and make room for her needs was not a simple experience, but a filling one that expands the heart. Together we built a deep bond that grows out of good neighborliness between us."

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

Evaluation was based on the Mechinot's structured year end reports, named lists of volunteers and seniors, feedback from local coordinators and social workers, and written and video testimonials from students. Compared to 97 pairs in the first year and 143 in the second, this year reached 150 seniors – continued growth that meets the target of at least 150 set in last year's report – while the quality of the relationships continued to deepen: students reported ongoing contact beyond the scheduled visits, seniors were integrated into Mechina lessons and community events, and in several Mechinot the connection continued even after the students completed their year. The program also accompanied painful moments: several seniors passed away during the year, and the students' continued presence alongside spouses and families proved the depth of the bonds that had been created. The program's ability to maintain weekly continuity under an ongoing security situation, through close coordination with welfare professionals, remains one of its central strengths.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

Building on three years of steady growth, we aim to broaden and deepen the program's impact. Alongside expanding to additional Mechinot and communities, a central focus in the coming year will be the quality of the intergenerational encounter: training student volunteers in emotional presence, in intergenerational communication, and in identifying the evolving needs of the seniors they accompany. We also intend to encourage Mechinot to initiate community wide events with the seniors around the Jewish holidays and to develop documentation and creative initiatives that strengthen the visibility and integration of seniors in local community life. Throughout, we will continue our close coordination with municipal welfare services in matching students and seniors, sustaining a wide and resilient network of consistent, meaningful relationships.