

# Amcha Newsletter

National Israeli Center for Psychosocial Support of Survivors  
of the Holocaust and the Second Generation



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Issue: 4

4th of July - 2010

## 4th of July

Today, on the 4th of July, while Americans celebrate Independence Day, and while thousands of Israelis march in sympathy with the captured soldier Gilad Shalit, Holocaust survivors in Israel recollect their own liberation from captivity. For many of them, such



present events trigger memories of their own incarceration during World War 2, and they evoke a mixture of anxiety and relief. We at Amcha try our best to listen and understand. Over one thousand professional staff and volunteers continue to provide psycho-social support to more than ten thousand clients all over Israel. This newsletter will be devoted to the extraordinary contribution of our devoted volunteers through some recent examples. But first, the rationale behind these services will be described in some detail.

## Volunteers in Amcha

The importance of community volunteers was emphasized ever since the foundation of Amcha over 20 years ago. From the very beginning, Amcha took steps to invite volunteers who would provide services in addition to the professional staff. Volunteers were utilized to expand clients' opportunities for emotional and recreational experiences, to provide them with increased social interactions and to assist them, as appropriate, with the various tasks of life.

Amcha recognized that Holocaust survivors have a need for a wide range of experiences and positive relationships in order to enhance their quality of life.

Volunteers make the lives of the elderly richer by providing meaningful activities and resources that promote pro-social, educational, emotional, and spiritual growth, and they expand the existing value of family relationships beyond what any professional staff can achieve. As a result of this basic philosophy, most Amcha centers provide volunteer services administered by a qualified community relations



### In Brief

Join Our List

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#### **Amcha**

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coordinator. This coordinator, who is also a licensed social worker and often a trained gerontologist, functions under the direct supervision of the branch director.

AMCHA's volunteer services program seeks to involve the community through the following two primary initiatives:

- **House Visitation Programs:** Volunteers are carefully screened and selected from local communities, and matched with elderly homebound survivors who are recommended for the program by their caseworker or friends and family. Volunteers must make a twelve-month commitment to their assigned survivor, and agree to meet a minimum of one hour each week in establishing and building a trusting relationship that focuses on the goals and needs of the survivor. The community relations coordinator supervises volunteers, and they receive additional guidance and training from preparatory courses and ongoing supervision from treatment staff.
- **Social Programs:** Volunteers with special knowledge and earlier experience in social activities are recruited for the different social programs of the Amcha clubs. Teachers and rehabilitation facilitators may be running groups for the general well-being of the elderly. Such groups may include a reading or discussion group, Tai-Chi, artistic expressions including song, dance and theatre, or anything that the volunteer might want to offer and the elderly might be interested in. Sometimes there are individual tutoring assignments that focus on an educational goal identified by the teacher.

In addition to these basic initiatives, volunteers may be involved in unique programs developed by the local Amcha Center or facility. These volunteer roles include foster grandparents, recreation assistants, music/art teachers, guest speakers, computer instructors, and college students, to name a few.

### Intergenerational Program in Nes Ziona

On May 24, we celebrated the closure of another successful year of inter-generational work in Nes Ziona and Rishon Lezion. Under the leadership of Yael Pekin and with the active help of over twenty survivors, this program achieved enormous impact on hundreds of children in schools. The project was supported by the German foundation "Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft", [EVZ](#). For further information, and a short film explaining the project, please click [here](#).



## Dilemma presented in Drama

The drama group in Beer Sheva presented a unique play, on the dilemma of what to do when it becomes difficult for an elderly Holocaust survivor to live alone. Should she move to one of her daughters or to an old age home?

Or, perhaps stay at home with some extra help? At the end of the play, the audience is asked to suggest alternative endings.



## German Volunteers in Amcha

*Christoph*, a 20-year old student, came to Israel from Germany through the organization [Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste](#)

to volunteer in Amcha for a year. He was placed in the northern town of Nahariya, where he regularly meets with two elderly Holocaust survivors and teach

them some computer skills. One of them is *Frederike*, a survivor from Poland. She tells him about her childhood and also about the war. Ever since she was liberated from the concentration camp, she cannot sleep without sleeping pills. Christoph talks about his own life and about present-day Germany. An article (in Hebrew) about their encounter may be found [here](#).



## Survivors on a boat cruise in Ashdod

Over 60 survivors from the town of Sderot, which is still bombarded by Quassam rockets from the nearby town of Gaza, went on a one day tour to the town of Ashdod, where they embarked on a boat cruise. Amcha's Sderot program, partly funded by the [Claims](#)

[Conference](#), is growing steadily, under the leadership of *Milli Naveh*, MSW, and her staff of mostly Russian speaking counselors. They have lately started a

[Meals on Wheels](#) program that delivers meals to the homebound survivors, who are often unable to purchase or prepare their own meals. This is an important addition to the home visitation program which has been gradually



developed in this town.

## Amcha in the Periphery

### **NATIONAL FUND OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA**

On June 15, we visited 'Gan-Ner' in Gilboa, to learn about the important work that Amcha is providing for elderly Holocaust survivors in more than 30 smaller towns and settlements all over Israel. Dalia Sivan, MSW, Zipi Teichner, Anat Turner, and Deganit Adan presented the implementation of this program in the north of Israel. This program provides individual and group support for hundreds of survivors who would otherwise be without help because they live very far from Amcha's centers.

Amcha's work in the periphery is supported by the [Austrian Nationalfond](#) since many years, and the longterm moral support of *Hannah M. Lessing*, its secretary general, is very appreciated. Earlier, a delegation from the Nationalfond visited Amcha in Tel Aviv, to get a first-hand look of our work.

## Sandisk Supports Amcha in Beer Sheva

### **SanDisk**

Leon Kratsovnik writes: I asked Amcha for a volunteer who would come to my home and teach me how to use the computer. I was sent a volunteer from Sandisk, who was a very good teacher. He taught me in a very short time the basics of how to use the computer. As a result, this summer I prepared a presentation with the title "My Israel" which I published on the internet. This presentation was much appreciated by other members of the Amcha social club and created further interest in what to do with the computer. I would like to thank Amcha and [Sandisk](#) for their help in making this important program possible."

## Lapid-project sends student volunteers to Amcha



The 'Lapid-project' is 'taking off'. This is a student project of the [Open University](#); in which it was decided to provide assistance to Holocaust survivors in Israel within Amcha. Behind this project is the important principle of the younger generation taking responsibility for the well-being of the elderly, who founded the country, and provided the basis for the future existence of the State of Israel. A large number of students will be visiting homebound Holocaust survivors on a regular

basis.

### In Brief

- **Shoshana Yaakobi**, MSW, the Holocaust Resource Program Coordinator from **Baycrest** in Toronto, Ontario, Canada visited Amcha for a study trip, and met with key personnel of Amcha in various branches.
- A fact-finding mission visited the southern town of **Ashdod** on June 31, to investigate the feasibility of opening up a new Amcha center in this town. We learned that there are over 15,000 survivors living in Ashdod, mostly from the FSU, and not recognized by the authorities for compensation payments. As a continuation of our efforts to broaden the basis of services for the needy elderly in this part of Israel, we decided to hire additional free-lance therapists in Ashdod, who would work from the newly developed Ashkelon center.
- Together with representatives of the Busher Fund, we visited prof. **Haim Dasberg**, the president of Amcha, to update him of recent developments and plans for the future. He sends his best greetings to all clients, volunteers and staff of Amcha!

