

NA'AMAT Now!



A publication of NA'AMAT USA

Winter 2019

Israel trip highlights NA'AMAT's impact

By Sharon Sutker McGowan

From visiting the Women's Health & Empowerment Center in Sderot, near the Gaza border, to touring the Kanot boarding school with its dairy farm and equestrian program, attendees of NA'AMAT USA's recent convention in Israel saw firsthand how NA'AMAT dramatically changes lives for the better, while also learning about the harsh realities the organization confronts every day.

For many of the 80 participants, a highlight of NA'AMAT USA's 43rd national convention, was the visit to Kanot, one of two youth villages operated by NA'AMAT. Following a performance that included a trio of talented young women singers backed by a band, as well as an Israeli dance troupe, enthusiastic delegates joined the students on the stage — dancing, singing and clapping along.

The high spirits had been building throughout the evening tour of the facilities, as the teens shared their stories. One young man, a senior from a troubled family background, talked about his goal of becoming a fighter pilot in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Asked what Kanot meant to him, he said simply, "It has changed my life."

A visit to the Golda Meir Day Care Center in Tel Aviv, which opened in September 2018, highlighted the importance of high-quality day care to working parents. The facility, which boasts an expansive outdoor play area and large classrooms, serves 87 children from four months to three years old. The center's equipment, funded by NA'AM-



Convention attendees gather at a lookout point above Gaza.

AT USA, rivals that of private day care centers, which cost parents 60-70 percent more than the government-subsidized NA'AMAT centers.

According to Liora Lenger, NA'AMAT's regional chairperson for Tel Aviv-Yafo, a serious challenge facing the centers is the very low pay caregivers earn. She explained that NA'AMAT is working with other day care providers to pressure the government to raise the pay for these critical workers.

Day care is only one of the services that NA'AMAT provides in Tel Aviv, which has the most communal activities anywhere in the country, Lenger added. NA'AMAT runs three community centers and a legal bureau, which focuses on gender justice, in the city.

At the Women's Health & Empowerment Center in Sderot, Mayor Alon Davidi

told the group that the community is "95 percent paradise." He stated that it has the best education system in the south of Israel, 6,000 units of new housing, and outstanding facilities such as the empowerment center and NA'AMAT's multipurpose day care center for at-risk children, which serves 90 children from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Because of these advantages, "Sderot will never be a ghost town," Davidi said.

The other 5 percent is a "nightmare,"
—Continued on next page

Inside

Convention photos.....	3,4
Seminarists gather	5
Message from the President	5
NA'AMAT Reports	6

Israel trip

Continued from previous page

because of the rockets that continue to rain down on Sderot, launched by Hamas terrorists in Gaza. (One week after the NA'AMAT USA group visited Sderot, more than 220 rockets and missiles were launched into the south of Israel, causing severe damage and civilian injuries). Sderot residents have 15 seconds to get



Sderot Mayor Alon Davidi explains his city's situation.

to a safe room once the signal goes off. Davidi, who has seven children, said that they suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). He emphasized that he "doesn't hate the people of Gaza" and remains hopeful that someday the money Hamas now spends on rockets will be used to build factories and hospitals.

According to Yehudit Uliel, NA'AMAT's Sderot chairperson and the deputy mayor of the city, 80 percent of the children suffer from trauma. A psychologist and social worker are available at the women's center several times a week. Programming also includes lectures on health, empowerment and other issues, a club for businesswomen, and health-related activities such as yoga classes, according to Uliel.

Trauma also was front and center at the delegation's visit to the Glickman Center for the Prevention of Violence in

Tel Aviv, established in 1993. The center has two components: a shelter that houses up to 12 women and their children at a time, and the "open center," which offers individual and group psychotherapy for women and men. Last year, almost 600 people sought help from the center.

The shelter is now one of 14 in Israel, and is operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare, according to Yael Levine, the shelter's director. The government provides 60 percent of its budget; the remainder is from NA'AMAT. Women who come to the shelter are at high-risk; often they have suffered physical violence and been subjected to emotional abuse. "We work hard to build a violence-free future," Levine said, whether that means leaving the abuser or returning to the home. She pointed out that domestic violence affects every segment of Israeli society: "Jews, Arabs, immigrants, religious, secular, young and old."

In addition to visiting NA'AMAT facilities, convention-goers had the opportunity to hear from speakers that included Isaac (Bougie) Herzog, Hagit Pe'er, the president of NA'AMAT Israel, Chellie Goldwater Wilensky, outgoing NA'AMAT USA president, and Janet Gurvitch, the new president.

Herzog, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, said at the opening event that he has "huge respect" for NA'AMAT, recalling that his father (Chaim Herzog, the sixth president of Israel), his uncle (Abba Eban, the legendary Israeli diplomat) and his mother (Aura Ambache, founder of the Council for a Beautiful Israel) would talk about the importance of NA'AMAT's work when he was growing up.

Herzog said that the Jewish Agency's top priorities include encouraging Aliyah, fighting anti-Semitism and promoting "ahavat Yisrael (togetherness among the Jewish people). "We risk our future if we don't unite," Herzog said. He noted that the Jewish Agency brings tens of thousands of Jewish youths to Israel in a wide variety of programs.

Pe'er also welcomed the U.S. delegation, noting that NA'AMAT is the largest women's movement in Israel and operates in eight countries. "We form a strong and influential movement that



Isaac Herzog, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, discusses his "huge respect" for NA'AMAT.

symbolizes the bond between Jews in Israel and Jews in the diaspora. You are true partners and we rely on your help and support," she told the audience.

As the convention drew to a close, Wilensky recalled that her late mother, Nettie Goldwater, was an active member of Rishonah, the first English-speaking club in Chicago. "This is how I grew up; steeped in Zionism, love of Israel and devotion to Pioneer Women, now NA'AMAT USA," she said in her farewell message. Wilensky spoke about the difficulty persuading young women today that "what we do is really worthwhile," even though Israel is now a thriving, successful country. She added, "Though it is hard to get this message out, we are still working diligently to grow NA'AMAT USA so we can continue our important work."

In her first official remarks as president, Gurvitch pointed out that she is a "member of five generations who are proud to call themselves Zionists." Three generations of her family attended the event.

"I believe that as members of NA'AMAT, our actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more," Gurvitch said. "That is what NA'AMAT has always been about and that will be our greatest legacy to the generations to come."

Convention photos



(Above) Platinum members attend a reception before the new national board is installed. (At right) Kabbalat shabbat at the Maon Golda Day Care Center in Tel Aviv.



First Vice President Debbie Kohn and President Jan Gurvitch attend a cooking class.



Longtime NA'AMAT members and friends Rita Sherman of Florida and Judy Telman of Israel.



Past President Chellie Goldwater Wilensky and her daughter, Dvora.



(From left) Chellie Goldwater Wilensky, Jan Gurvitch, International Director Shirli Shavit, International President Hagit Pe'er and Executive Director Deanna Migdal.



(From left) Susan Miller, Ioy Mermelstein, Linda Abrams and Rica Berg.

Convention photos



(Above) Zoya Yakubova, Khisibo Yakubova, Olga Yusufova and Zoya Nisimov at the Kotel. (At right) National President Jan Gurvitch at the ancient synagogue in Katzrin. (Far right) A visit to a spice market in the Machaneh Yehuda.



(From left) Past President Chellie Goldwater Wilensky, NA'AMAT Representative to the WZO Executive Masha Lubelsky and Installing Officer Joycxe Schildkraut.



Convention Chair Selma Roffman greets keynote speaker Yitzhak Herzog at the opening dinner.



(From left) California delegates Susan Neubauer, Gail Simpson, Libi Rothstein, Esther Friedberg, Joyce Edelson, Stacy Rubin, Susan Isaacs, Sandra Reuben, Nazila Fereydouny and Lea Templar



After the new board was installed, members celebrated by dancing to the music of klezmer performers Yerushalmim.

For more photos and information, visit "News and Events" at <https://naamat.org>

Message from the President



By **Jan Gurvitch**
President

As I write this article for our newsletter, I am still filled with the excitement of our 2019 National Convention in Israel. It was wonderful to come together with members from across the country as we joined hands in celebration with our sisters in Israel.

We saw our daycare centers, visited Kanot (one of our two residential village high schools) and saw our women's empowerment center in Sderot. We heard from one of our scholarship winners making important strides in medical technology, and we had a fun time cooking alongside a chef in Jerusalem.

In addition, we had the opportunity to meet with Hagit Pe'er, the new president of NA'AMAT Israel, formerly chairperson of the Negev region. Hagit's leadership style is warm and visionary. We look forward to working in partnership with her. (You can read more about her in the Fall 2019 issue of *NA'AMAT Now* at naamat.org/naamat-now-fall-2019/.)

Special thanks to our convention chair, Selma Roffman, who spent many hours organizing the trip and helped us experience the diversity of the State of Israel.

I would like to especially thank Chellie Goldwater Wilensky, our outgoing president, for her tireless work on behalf of NA'AMAT. During her presidency, new paths were created for the future of NA'AMAT. They included membership outreach programs, fundraising campaigns and a new strategic plan for NA'AMAT USA. In addition, I would like to thank all of our outgoing board members for their devotion and welcome our newly elected board members.

And now looking forward to the year 2020! I believe our vision is clear. NA'AMAT USA must continue to be a voice for women and children in Israel. We must continue to advocate for those who are in need of our support and help. So, I ask each of you to be a strong spokesperson for both Israel and NA'AMAT. And in this New Year, please consider becoming a pillar of NA'AMAT as a sustaining partner. You can do this at <https://naamat.org/sustaining-partnership-program>.

Wishing you a most happy, healthy and joyous new year.

Seminarists gather, join convention

By **Susan Isaacs**

National vice president, public relations

It was my pleasure to accompany 11 seminarists from across the U.S. on a two-day leadership seminar on Nov. 2 & 3 in Israel. The seminarists were Joyce Edelson, Nazilla Fereydouny, Shari Kornblum, Susan Neubauer, Libi Rothstein, Stacy Rubin, Farahnaz Sumekh from the LA area; Linda Abrams, Ivy Mermelstein and Susan Miller from Philadelphia; and Barbra Labbie from Pittsburgh. This wonderful group of future NA'AMAT USA leaders was selected by Ivy Liebross, former national leadership vice president.

Joining us was NA'AMAT's international director, Shirli Shavit, who planned many exciting leadership activities for us during those two days. I, too, planned leadership activities for the seminarists on the bus rides as we travelled to various locations.



NA'AMAT international director Shirli Shavit and NA'AMAT international president Hagit Pe'er (far left) meet with seminarists before the national convention.

On the first day we visited the Urban Eco Oasis in Gan Yavne in the south. We were met by the farm's director, Orli Kennet, who told us how she and her husband dreamed of creating an eco-farm. Through hard work, activism and leadership, she made the dream come true. She also spoke about qualities of Judaism, including excellence, thinking outside the box, hope, thankfulness, social justice, ecology, future Zionism and creating a community.

That afternoon we travelled to Ayanot Youth Village and the seminarists saw first-hand how NA'AMAT helps teenagers at risk.

On day two, we visited the NA'AMAT office in Tel Aviv, hosted by Shavit and her team. The highlights were meeting and hearing from our international president, Hagit Pe'er, and Masha Lubelsky, formerly a Knesset member and international NA'AMAT president.

The seminarist joined the national convention from Nov. 4-11, traveling throughout Israel to see NA'AMAT facilities and do some sightseeing. Everyone said they had an amazing time and will share their experiences about the important work that NA'AMAT does for families in Israel with NA'AMAT members in their cities.



21515 Vanowen Street, Suite 102
Canoga Park, CA 91303

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

<https://naamat.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/naamatusa>
naamat@naamat.org
(844) 777-5222

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SKOKIE IL
PERMIT NO. 72

NA'AMAT Reports



From Light to Happiness!

By Selma Roffman

Vice President, Membership

As your new Membership Vice-President, I am happy to announce that two new NA'AMAT clubs recently incorporated into the NA'AMAT family in the Western Area. The names of these clubs are "Ora" (light) and "Simcha" (happiness). As we prepare to celebrate the joyous holiday of Hanukkah, it is fitting that "light" and "happiness" have officially joined NA'AMAT. In addition, **121** new members have enrolled in NA'AMAT in 2019. Welcome to all who are joining our efforts to improve lives in Israel!

In my new role, I hope to follow Gail Simpson's example of adding new groups and members to our organization. I live in Elkins Park, PA, and was co-president of the Rimomim chapter of NA'AMAT. Prior to my involvement in NA'AMAT, I served as principal at Schechter Day Schools and regularly visited Israel with students and families. This year, many of us met in Israel at a NA'AMAT USA convention, where we bonded and quickly became friends. We also had the opportunity to see the wonderful work of NA'AMAT in action. Now it is important to connect with even more women to strengthen NA'AMAT USA. Susan Miller (Rimomim Chapter,

Philadelphia) and Sandra Reuben (Mitzvah Chapter, San Fernando Valley) are leaders of the membership committee.

October was our official membership month. This year's theme was "Margaritas and Salsa." Mitzvah Chapter of the San Fernando Council was the winner of a friendly competition, winning Hanukkah treats for their next meeting.

As the Holiday of Lights approaches, let us challenge ourselves to bring light and happiness to ourselves and others by becoming life members or giving a gift of membership to someone special to us. Visit our website and enroll a new member or become a life member. Together, we can grow in numbers in the years ahead!



Do you want to become an advocate? A primer

Marcia J. Weiss, JD

Vice President, Advocacy

An advocate can give voice to issues of importance. The advocate's voice is powerful and can impact the legislative agenda positively and set priorities on a broad set of vital issues.

You must take certain vital steps before becoming an advocate.

First, educate yourself on the issues by means of mainstream media and special-

ty periodicals, radio and television news, as well as information from non-partisan groups. Organize and participate in training sessions using various fictitious scenarios to permit participants to practice their roles as advocates. These sessions can generate genuine buy-in from participants and also may pique the interest of others.

Second, know your audience. Familiarize yourself with the people whom you will address as well as their political activities or leanings. Be prepared for the positive, anticipate the negative, and have the ability to respond to any questions you may encounter. Know your allies and opponents.

Third, build coalitions with elected officials and community leaders. Use the news media to promote your topic or event. Town hall meetings are another means of achieving community collaboration and outreach. Sign petitions and write op-eds. Let your senator or representative know your feelings about important issues. Emails, faxes and mail can be effective.

Fourth, keep abreast of vital topics and express your views. Be the change you want to see and promote your ideas through the above means.

These vowels apply to advocacy:
A = awareness, action, advancement
E = education, email, exploration, excitement
I = information, involvement, implementation
O = organization, opportunity
U = understanding