

The Young Community in Hatzor

Background:

Yemin Orde Initiatives is dedicated to strengthening Israel's periphery, whether it is social, geographic or economic. Nine years ago, Yemin Orde established the Pre-Military Leadership Program for Immigrant Youth, in the Upper Galilee development town of Hatzor, to imbue Israel's young immigrants with the leadership skills necessary to excel in the IDF and to become productive adults in mainstream Israeli society. The current 50 participants and over 250 graduates of the Mechina are almost exclusively immigrants from Ethiopia and the Former Soviet Union. With support of YOI, following their release from the IDF, graduates of the Mechina are now returning to Hatzor to establish a young community.

The Problem/Need:

This program addresses two separate problems. The first concerns young immigrants who wish to study in institutes of higher education following their release from the army. One of the main problems that young immigrants face after completing the army is their lack of a financial support system. Most of them spent their high school years in a residential school setting and three (or more) years in the army, where all of their needs were taken care of. Some came to Israel as children without their families; others are from single-parent families. Even those from normative families come from a low socio-economic demographic and their families cannot help them financially. While academic scholarships are available from many different sources, the real challenge they face is in supporting themselves while they study.

A second problem addressed by this program relates to its location in the Upper Galilee development town of Hatzor. Hatzor is populated mostly by first generation Israelis of North African origin and new immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. The majority of the residents earn well below the national average, and many of the local youth's dream of success is to move to the center of the country. Located in the geographic periphery, Hatzor's residents feel marginalized in many spheres of Israeli society.

The Response:

Seven graduates of the Mechina (and two wives) have settled in Hatzor in order to establish a young community in this struggling town. By moving to Hatzor, these young immigrants hope to influence local youngsters to stay in order to revitalize the community. All of these young men are highly motivated to succeed professionally and possess a strong sense of social responsibility. They are currently studying in Tel Hai Academic College and volunteering in the local community. They came to Hatzor because of their idealism, and were able to stay through the generous support of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and UIA Canada.

Students of economics, social work, education and multi-disciplinary studies in Tel Hai, these 9 young immigrant Israelis are all the first generation in their families to enter the gates of higher education and are determined to break out of the cycle of poverty. Without financial support, they would not be able to dedicate themselves to their academic pursuits. These young immigrants have the potential to lead their communities into the Israeli mainstream – and there are others like them who dream of success. Enabling them to complete their college degrees will put them on equal footing with their Israeli-born peers and make it possible for them to fulfill their dreams.

The young community in Hatzor provides them with rent subsidies and a monthly stipend which they spend on food, clothes and other incidentals. In exchange for this support, they volunteer 10 hours a week in different settings in the city – in the youth center (3 volunteers), library (2 volunteers) and schools (4 volunteers). Between them they are impacting close to 100 children in Hatzor.

An added benefit of the graduate community is that it provides an opportunity for local residents to interact with successful Ethiopian immigrants. While the majority of this immigrant community is still struggling with myriad difficulties, these young men and women are headed toward successful futures. Through their presence and work in Hatzor, they are helping to change the negative stereotype that many people have of the Ethiopian-Israeli community.

Target Population:

The program has been designed for immigrants from Ethiopia and the Former Soviet Union who have completed the one-year Yemin Orde Pre-Military Leadership Program, completed their army service (usually in command positions in combat units) and are studying Tel Hai Academic College. There are currently 9 members of the young community. We plan to expand to 15 participants next year, which will in turn expand our positive effect on Hatzor.

Project Components:

The project consists of providing housing and financial support to immigrant Israeli college students. The project coordinator is the contact person with the local municipality and is responsible for arranging volunteer work in the community and mentoring the young students as necessary.

Evaluation:

The program participants meet every 2-3 weeks with the program coordinator to evaluate the effectiveness of their volunteer work and their academic studies. They are also in regular contact with the staff in the places where they volunteer. Their academic progress is reflected in their grades. The effect of a strong group of young Ethiopian-Israelis in changing the negative stereotype of the community vis-à-vis native Israelis is immeasurable.

Project Partners:

This is a small program currently supported exclusively by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. In the coming year we hope to expand to 15 participants, and to interest others in supporting the program.

About us:

Yemin Orde Initiatives (YOI) was established in 2006 to provide innovative and timely educational solutions for Israel's youth-at-risk, including unique long-term support programs which will guide them towards a productive and positive adult life. YOI is based on expanding the scope and impact of the successful educational philosophy and novel programs developed over the course of 30 years by outstanding, creative educational staff under the leadership of visionary educator Dr. Chaim Peri at Yemin Orde Youth Village

Yemin Orde Youth Village, established in 1953, is an internationally acclaimed, residential educational institution that is home to 500 immigrant and disadvantaged teenagers from around the world. Yemin Orde's experience has proven that when immigrant, marginalized and at-risk youngsters are given the proper tools and opportunities they are able to assimilate into the mainstream and succeed. Yemin Orde graduates include leaders in every sector of Israeli society - business, government, education, social services, NGOs and the IDF, and role models for every Israeli youngster, especially immigrants and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Budget:

Annual Budget per student

1 NIS = 3.2 CAD\$

Item	Cost in CAD\$
Rent subsidy	2250
Monthly living stipend	7500
Project coordinator/personal mentor	1875
Cultural and enrichment activities, transportation, administrative and programmatic costs	400
TOTAL COST	CAD\$12,000

We anticipate 15 students in the program in the coming year and would like to invite you to sponsor our students. **The cost per student per year is CAD\$12,000.** Acquiring a BA at Tel Hai College generally takes 3 years.

We are committed to finding partners to fund this unique project.