



focus

Israel Now / The Spirit of a People

UJC Overseas Supplemental Giving

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Some FACTS. Israel has been ravaged by the violence of the last ninety days. Despair has displaced hope as Israel has become a nation in mourning. Each day brings another family the unbearable anguish of the loss of a loved one – so senselessly taken before their time; another funeral that the country must bear witness to in shared grief. We grieve with them. David Biri, the first soldier killed, was the 19-year-old son of a Jerusalem family. We have not forgotten him. Vadim Norzitch, newlywed, Russian immigrant, lynched by a mob in Ramallah. Rina Didovsky, teacher, wife, mother of six. Gabriel Bitton, father of six. Miri Amitai, teacher and mother of four. We have not forgotten them or the families they have left behind. Yosef Teveje, began life in the Gondor region of Ethiopia, ended life in distinguished service as a captain in a joint Palestinian/Israeli border patrol. Ayelet Hashahar-Levy, 24, innocent bystander. Ninety days ago, each of the Israelis caught in the recent crossfire had their lives before them. And ninety days ago, the future held the promise of a peace that we all were beginning to take for granted. Standing in solidarity with the people of Israel, we look beyond the hurt and confusion of the past three months, past the political rhetoric, in search of something positive. Perhaps it is this: our attention has been refocused and Israel has moved to the front burner in our community consciousness again. And that is important. As the global Jewish family pulls together during these tense days, it is a poignant reminder that no Jew, anywhere in the world, can or should have to go it alone.

Tzvia Shappira with a child participating in Israel Crisis Management Center's healing retreat for new immigrant children recovering from severe trauma and crisis.

For those of us who have visited Israel to show solidarity with her people, we have all been touched by the individuals we've met. These profiles of a handful speak volumes about a nation. They are stories about the indomitable spirit that created the modern State of Israel and that is alive and well today; about commitment and compassion without limits; about the power each of us holds to *repair the world – to make a difference.*

Case in point: Tzvia Shappira and her family.

PROFILE in compassion.

A car bomb explodes on a crowded market street in Hadera. In a split second, at 5:30 in the afternoon on November 22, 2000, life will change forever for so many. As triage gets underway at Hadera's Hillel Yosef hospital, Tzvia is already leaving Tel Aviv for the scene. She never waits to be called. Tzvia is a volunteer for the Israel Crisis Management Center, a nonprofit organization established in 1993 to provide emergency and long-term support for new immigrants, primarily Russian and Ethiopian, suffering trauma or crisis.

Tzvia seeks out those new immigrants who have been at the wrong place at the wrong time. It will be her gentle touch, her hushed tones, which will speak volumes to the injured about care, about community, about not being alone. To help these families work their way out of the profound shock, Tzvia will come back, again and again, with a compassion that knows no boundaries. Looking into their eyes when she asks, "Tell me, what can I do for you? What do you need?" these most vulnerable of Israel's citizens know they are not alone.

Dr. Tzvia Shappira was born in 1943 in Tel Aviv to Ella and Ze'ev Rushkin, early settlers of the country who had immigrated to Israel in 1930 from Latvia and Belarus. Raised in Tel Aviv, Tzvia followed the path of the nation, serving in the army after high school as a *madrichat gadna*, a teacher/guide for youth from distressed neighborhoods throughout Israel.

Once out of the army, Tzvia began her university education at Tel Aviv University, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in two years. She married, had five children, taught and managed to make the time to obtain a Master's of Science degree in Botany in 1969 and her doctorate in 1990 in Ethnobotany and Phytochemistry.

Tzvia herself remains intensely involved in the lives of countless new immigrants after tragedy, extending warmth and empathy, as well as strength and practicality, to the people facing indescribably painful and difficult losses and problems. She has opened her heart and her home to these immigrants in need and works tirelessly on their behalf.

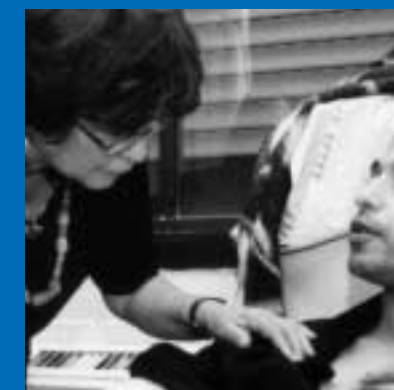
As Tzvia has become increasingly involved with ICMC, other members of her family have been likewise inspired, beginning with her husband, Shlomo. After 25 years of distinguished service in the Air Force and diplomatic work, he is now a director in Israel industry and a full partner in Tzvia's Israel Crisis Management Center commitment.

Their daughter, Avital, a neuropsychologist at the Weizmann Institute, volunteers as a consultant to ICMC on specific cases. Son Zohar, trained as a physicist and now a modern dance performer, has been a key youth volunteer, acting as big brother to a generation of immigrant children who have lost their parents or endured other terrible loss. Yonatan, who as a helicopter pilot in the Israel Air Force participated in countless rescue operations, has gone on to carry out rescues of a different sort – becoming the strong, caring presence in the lives of numerous children isolated and despondent because of the tragedy they have suffered.

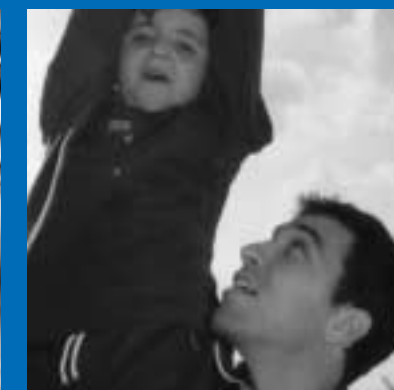
Tzvia's youngest daughter, Dorit, a medical student, has become a key figure in the planning and implementation of the ICMC's youth support activities, including trips and healing summer camps. Additionally, Dorit serves as an ICMC volunteer in the Jerusalem area, most recently with soldiers and civilians seriously wounded in the current violence. Even youngest son Itamar currently in the Army, when on leave joins in his family's efforts.



Shlomo Shappira caring for a child.



Tzvia with Hadera bombing victim.



Yonatan with one of his little brothers.'

“The countless immigrants Tzvia has helped – through her remarkable compassion, finding solutions, offering hope – are easily identified: their eyes light up when they see her.”

Ruth Bar-On, Executive Director
The Israel Crisis Management Center

Today, with her children grown, Tzvia divides her time as a lecturer between Haifa University and Tel-Hai Rodman College in the north and Ben Gurion University in the Negev. In other words, Tzvia has more than a full-time career.

It makes it all the more astonishing that for the past seven years, Tzvia has found the time to play such a crucial and invaluable role as a volunteer for the Israel Crisis Management Center.

As one of the chief coordinators of ICMC volunteers, Tzvia's primary responsibility is to mobilize the emergency teams that make first contact with stricken new immigrants at the moment of crisis. In a mass disaster, such as the Hadera terrorist attack, Tzvia will often be the first on the scene to identify the new immigrants involved, determine the degree of emergency and start the process of assistance. Wherever the disaster, ICMC volunteers throughout the country are dispatched quickly and effectively.

Volunteers will continue to work with individuals and families, attending funerals, visiting during long hospital stays, and providing help throughout the long weeks, months and often, years that follow tragedy and crisis. The volunteers need coordination, direction, training, briefing and debriefing. *Tzvia plays a vital role in all of these functions.*

It is six o'clock in the evening, November 27, 2000, five days after the carnage in Hadera. Tzvia Shappira – scholar, mother, guide, teacher, volunteer, untiring doer of deeds of kindness and mercy – fights rush hour traffic from Tel Aviv to make another trip to the hospital in Hadera.

The children, wives and father of the injured know her by now; are comforted merely by her presence. She will arrange nursing care for Eliezer, who has been blinded in the blast, so his daughter can sleep at home at night with her child. Tzvia brings a financial aid check for Grigory's wife; this young mother can manage bus fare to the hospital, but that leaves her nothing for even one cup of coffee during the long hours by his side. The five injured new immigrants remaining in the hospital don't really know Tzvia yet – they have been in surgery or gripped in profound shock on her previous visits. Today, they will learn to call her friend.

Unfortunately, each day now seems to bring another victim of the senseless violence. Tzvia's work continues. At the graveside of a new immigrant, as the mourning family barely holds itself together in its unimaginable grief, Tzvia kneels and plants a seedling she has found from their native country – planting hope in their broken hearts. □

People all over Israel are living on the front line. Some physically, all emotionally. But life goes on. In good times and in not such good times, there is work to be done and challenges to be met. And, as is always the case in Israel, the spirit you find traversing the country is palpable. We want you to meet some people who quietly, through their day-to-day lives, are building a nation. From the factory worker to the individual citizen-activist; the 18-year-old new immigrant from the FSU to the 76-year-old sabra; each is contributing to the future of a stronger Jewish homeland for us all.

Koby Aviezer is a founding member of Kibbutz Nirim, one of the first settlements in the Eshkol Region of the Negev, established in 1946, the day after Yom Kippur. He is a fourth-generation Israeli. His grandfather was born in Sefad; Koby was born in Rehovot. Yet, he chose to raise his family on Israel's frontier. He understood, like Ben-Gurion, that it wasn't enough to draw lines on a map. The borders of the modern Jewish homeland would be created by the people who lived along those borders.

It took a special spirit to decide to make a life in this region. Kibbutz Nirim, one of 29 settlements in Eshkol, borders Gaza and Egypt. It has never been easy. The War of Independence, in 1948, started with a battle against the Egyptians at Nirim. Koby was wounded twice, the first time in 1948 near Kfar Darom in Gaza, and the second time in 1957.

Koby established the scouts battalion of the Southern Command,



Koby Aviezer, still on patrol at 76 years of age



A new generation of pioneers in the Eshkol Region



Orna Shimony with photo of her beloved son, Eyal (z'l)



Oren Akerman with his CHALOM kids



Yehuda Rabinjan in the Merkavim bus factory



Protecting Israel's most precious resource – her children

...serving as its first commander. Remarkably, until the age of seventy, Koby continued to serve in the Israel Defense Forces reserves – an unprecedented commitment to military service in Israel considering the mandatory age for completion of reserve duty is 55. In his current position as a security scout for the Eshkol Regional Council, he travels daily among the agricultural settlements that border the Gaza Strip, checking for infiltration. Since its founding, Koby has stood on the front line for Israel, a nation builder in every sense. As he drives along the border, you can see the pride in his eyes. Today, you can also see the concern.

Tanks are now deployed in the area and all settlements are on high alert. Koby notes that the situation along the border has not been as tense since the war in 1967. Just three months ago, joint planning was underway in this region for the development of an Israeli/Palestinian Hospital on the border and for a shared high-tech Industrial and Trade Park. Today, tractors and farmers in the fields need army protection. From an atmosphere of burgeoning cooperation and peaceful co-existence to the tension of nightly infiltrations and explosive charges among the crops, the people of Eshkol are reeling under the constant siege.

After a national tragedy, in February 1997, claimed the lives of 73 young soldiers in a fiery helicopter collision over the northern skies of Israel, Orna Shimony took action on her long-held belief that it was time to pull Israeli forces out of Lebanon and defend Israel's borders "army to army." How ironic that her stake as a founder of the Four Mother Movement would become so tragically personal with the loss of her fifth child, Eyal, seven months later during a military operation in Lebanon.

The Lebanon war dwelled in Orna's home in Kibbutz Ashdod Yaacov in the Jordan Valley for 18 years. It started when her late husband, Uzi, fought in the war. Her youngest child, Eyal, was six years old. During those years, all her children served in Lebanon. Orna had seven grandchildren born throughout these years, and still the Lebanon War continued. *At some point she began to question why.* While soldiers were killed, Kiryat Shmona and northern communities continued to be hit, residents forced into shelters.

The economic state in the north reflected these difficult conditions. "Was the Security Zone really protecting the northern border, and was it necessary to protect this border from within Lebanon? Lebanon was a national dilemma that had not been truly confronted."

Four months after the establishment of Four Mothers, Eyal Shimony was assigned to serve in Lebanon. He would never come home. Orna's mission took on new urgency. She was relentless, sitting in front of the President's residence for a month to demand meetings with the government; riding a bicycle from Metula in the north to Beersheva in the south to visit personally with 18 mayors. Today, Israel protects its northern citizens from an international border. "I know that we still face difficult days, and I won't quit demanding that the northern border be a top priority on the national agenda. It is our responsibility to strengthen the social, economic and cultural fabric of these communities."

Now Orna is committed to reaching for another dream: the construction of a much needed hydrotherapy/recreational center at Kibbutz Ashdod Yaacov for wounded soldiers and area residents. To be built in memory of her son, "Beit Eyal will be a testament to his spirit – to his soul of caring and giving."

Oren Akerman takes his job seriously. You have to when you have 72 young people who have just arrived in Israel in September as your primary responsibility, and a matched set of worried parents back in the former Soviet Union, afraid to open the newspaper each day. Oren is the director of the Jewish Agency CHALOM vocational study program in Beersheva for new immigrant youth from the FSU. And he also takes his job very personally: "Right now I feel these are my 72 kids."

If "timing is everything" some might argue that the recently arrived CHALOM kids could not have come to Israel to begin their new life at a least propitious time. These kids and Oren would beg to differ. "Sure, my parents are worried but they are proud of me and what I am trying to accomplish with my life" says 17-year-old Segey Leibster, from Moldova. The current uncertainty and crisis aside, there are still those who dream of building their lives in the Jewish homeland.

Oren Akerman and his colleagues are going to help them realize their dreams.

He understands the incredible obstacles each faced getting to Israel and the challenges in front of them on the road to their full and successful absorption. Oren will be their guide; their advocate. "These are great kids. They are fully engaged in becoming part of the community even with the tension of the current situation. Almost right after they arrived, our kids volunteered to harvest oranges near Rafia in the Eshkol Region when field workers were prevented from entering Israel from Gaza. Right now, they are volunteering here in the community with the elderly and have put together a performing choir."

Oren, teachers, social workers and counselors are working with each young person to assess his or her abilities and to develop an individualized path to enable them to realize their goals. They are also working to ensure that these kids, alone in Israel without family, have the support system to guide them through this difficult period.

Summer 2000 – Yehuda Rabinjan, director of sales with the Merkavim bus manufacturing company in Caesaria, is hoping that production of tourist buses can keep up with the forecasted projections for record tourism in Israel. Only a handful of months later, Merkavim workers are frantically working around the clock to meet an unanticipated need – for armored buses. Producing an average of twenty armored buses annually, in the last two months alone orders have soared to more than fifty.

All of us felt it – the dawning of a new age in Israel. Finally, peace was within grasp, with foreign investments at an all time high and Israel emerging as a dynamic international partner. Merkavim, the largest manufacturer of municipal and tourist bus coaches in Israel, was a model of this new paradigm, a growth company preparing to enter the international market. Excitement about the direction of the country and company reverberated on the floor of the factory.

Established in 1946, this privately-held company, owned by Mayer's Cars and Trucks, had recently relocated to a cutting-edge, environmentally state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Caesaria. One of the major employers in this area, the new Merkavim plant provided scores of jobs for the area's large new immigrant population. "We were on the verge of a new Middle East – there was real hope for the first time. Volvo had invested significantly as a partner with our company." And then, as the world watched, years of peace progress seemed to disappear as if a phantom, disintegrating into uncertainty. As tourism has ground to a halt, the company is having to shift its focus. Fortunately, its workers are holding on to their jobs.

Today, the Merkavim workforce is doing everything it can to meet the critical need to provide protection for Israel's most precious resource – her children. Each and every day, thousands of children traveling to and from school are being put at risk in non-armored vehicles. Although manufacturing time for armored buses is dependent on the availability of essential imported parts, the company is doing all it can to reduce the three-month turnaround time on these life-saving vehicles.

KATZIR / HARISH Building Bridges.

The development of a Jewish presence throughout the Galilee became a strategic priority of the Israeli government during the early 1980s. Considerable areas remained largely underpopulated by Jews – ultimately putting ownership of this part of Israel at risk. Located in the Wadi Ara, in the foothills of the Shomron range, the establishment of Katzir marked the first Jewish municipality in this area of the lower Galilee in two thousand years. Pioneers within their own country, the residents of Katzir-Harish and other small communities in this area, such as Mei Ami, were “living here in the name of the Jewish people, for the Jewish people, and for all Israeli citizens.”

Visiting with Mayor Dubbi Sandrov and his colleagues, one immediately senses the individual initiative and cooperative spirit that led some 3,500 residents to settle here. Their vision and commitment were the first important steps in creating a new demographic reality in this critical region and until the last few months, exemplified a working model of co-existence with largely Arab neighbors.

Perhaps due to their isolation as a lone Jewish community sited between the Palestinian-controlled city of Jenin and the Israeli-Arab village of Umm Al-Facham; or their own unique physical layout – Katzir-Harish is really a cluster of three distinct communal areas, separated from one another by rocky foothills; or perhaps, their success in bridging cultural differences for a population base comprised of 47 percent new olim – whatever the reasons, this community has excelled at ‘bridge building.’

And that brings us to focus on one of their residents. Karen Eini, a native of Montreal, moved to Israel for the first time in January, 1983, as an 18-year-old participant in a student exchange program. She would meet her future husband during that six months – a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces. After completing her BA at McGill University in 1989, newlywed Karen made aliyah and moved to Kibbutz Barkai to start a family. In 1995, the young family decided to stake their future on Katzir. “We felt that Katzir had so much potential. Standing on a hilltop, you could see forever. It was such an uplifting feeling, with our whole future in front of us, that we just knew that we had to buy the land here for our home and begin the next chapter in our lives.”



Until recently, Karen bought her fresh produce in Ar'ara, the Israeli-Arab village across the way from Katzir; she had her hair cut at the beauty shop there; felt safe taking her children on picnics in the beautiful lower Galilee countryside on Shabbat. An English teacher for twelve years, for the last two years Karen has also been a teacher trainer for the Ministry of Education in two Israeli-Arab villages – Bara and Tiebe. So when the first rock hit the family car on a Shabbat three months ago, Karen could not quite believe it was really happening. Fortunately, she and her family were not physically harmed. But Karen's soul was wounded that day. Because more than anything else, Karen Eini is a bridge-builder, an individual who has the ability to reach out to others, in understanding and cooperation, to create personal connections.

friends and flags

Dear “Friends and Flags” family: We are busy working on our project. We feel very worried for our friends in Israel. On the news in Italy every day we hear terrible things. Are you safe? Remember, every day we think about you so you aren't alone!”

Instituto Santo Spirito School, Italy
Friends and Flags Circle 12

One of the two hundred classes in schools in over thirty countries participating in Friends and Flags.

In 1999, while completing her Master's degree on the Internet, Karen learned first-hand about the incredible potential this communication medium held for education. Then she had an award-winning idea. She would use computers that were an underutilized resource in the classroom, along with her students' enthusiasm for anything Internet, to create a multi-cultural learning project. In addition to her excitement about the integration of the Internet into the curriculum as a way to increase students' use of practical English, Karen saw an exciting opportunity to move her students from their remote hilltop into a wider community.

What started in one classroom in Katzir has grown beyond all expectations. In late 1999, in time for the 1999/2000 school year, Karen launched the program with one “circle exchange,” an online email group comprised of her ninth-grade class and classes from five other countries. Within weeks, word of the program spread and Karen had coordinated 15 learning circles. Today, in only its second year, www.friendsandflags.org is the virtual meeting place for youth in 200 classrooms representing over 30 countries, including 25 Israeli schools participating in the program. The situation of the last three months has really underscored the Friends and Flags message for participants around the world – that differences need not divide and that community really has no boundaries.

Karen is now a full-time coordinator for the Friends and Flags program, teaches academic English for adults at Ruppin College, and continues in her position as a teacher trainer in the Israeli-Arab communities of Bara and Tiebe. She is particularly proud that last year a class in Bara represented Israel in one of the circles. Although the drive there twice a week is not terribly safe anymore, there are tanks on the way and roadblocks, “When I get to the school, I feel better.” She does not minimize the danger, but she knows that even now, perhaps even more so now, maintaining her personal connection is vital. “I listen to them and share my feelings. Everyone has so much to learn from what has happened.”

UJC Overseas Supplemental Giving is committed to being your partner in meeting these challenges, providing donors a broad range of direct, ‘above and beyond’ named opportunities.

About FOCUS.

United Jewish Communities Overseas Supplemental Giving looks at funding as a creative process. Aligning donor interests with critical overseas needs in Israel, the FSU and eastern Europe, donors within the UJC family have a personal platform for direct impact through ‘above and beyond’ commitments.

Each issue of FOCUS, a quarterly publication, will highlight people, projects and initiatives representative of an area of overseas need presented through one of the three funding vehicles of UJC Overseas Supplemental Giving:

Israel Education Fund (IEF)

One in every six Israelis benefits from an IEF project. Over the past 38 years, IEF has completed over 1,250 educational and community capital projects.

Unity Campaign

Bringing donors into partnership with the religious streams and non-denominational organizations committed to a pluralistic and tolerant Israel.

OPPORTUNITIES for action. Numerous funding opportunities are available to help meet the urgent and continuing challenges throughout Israel today, including:

- After-School Programming in Isolated Communities
- Armored Transportation
- Assistance to Families of Missing in Action Soldiers
- Assistance to Victims of Violence
- Economic Development Initiatives
- Educational Programs
- Mobile Psychological Counseling Services
- Social Service Programs for Front Line Communities
- Social Service Programs for Vulnerable Populations
for children at risk
for the elderly
for new immigrants
- Sponsorship of CHALOM, SELAH AND NA'ALEH Kids Alone in Israel
- Support for IDF Soliders Alone in Israel

Upcoming in next issue of FOCUS: ISRAEL EDUCATION FUND – Building a Nation One Soul at a Time