

## Village Way Educational Initiatives Report to the FYO Board May 2018

### Executive Summary – Update of Activities

It is our honor to present this Board Report reflecting numerous activities since this past November. Our current efforts include working with 6 new educational communities this year, bringing our total number of partners to **36 educational communities**, with 13 currently involved in the three-year process: 3 youth villages and 10 schools. In addition, the total number includes 23 graduate communities: 9 youth villages, 11 schools, and 3 residential communities. **To date, this brings our impact to 1,775 educators and 14,200 youth at-risk.**

The Board's involvement and commitment helps make the three-year Village Way integration process possible as we aim to transform struggling frameworks for youth at risk into empowering educational communities. This transformation is carried out on an individual level, to inspire and change the awareness among educators, and on a communal level, to develop and instill traditions, activities, and policies that reflect the Village Way.

Over the past six months each of the partnering educational communities has dedicated immense time and effort towards integrating Village Way's methodology. The staff of these communities have worked together with their facilitator to find solutions that best fit the needs of their youth, utilizing the tools and wisdom provided from the Village Way framework.

As the school year comes to a close, many of the current partners are now developing their annual Village Way work plan for next year. This plan outlines the educational programs and policies for the entire year, with clear goals and objectives for each, within the framework of the Village Way.

Our work continues to broaden to different groups within Israeli society. This year marks **the first time we are working within an educational framework that addresses those youth who have dropped out of the ultra-orthodox yeshiva system.** This population requires us to adapt our learning and work approach accordingly to fit their needs. We also continue to advance with educational frameworks within the Arab sector and now work with a total of five high schools that educate Israeli-Arab students.

As our work expands, we continue to focus on developing new initiatives for engaging graduate communities in order to sustain the changes made over the three-year integration process. As such, the Education Institute has developed a thirty-hour enhanced course on *Tikkun Halev* in order to offer more continuity than one-day sessions. A pilot version is currently being implemented at Marom Acco Ort Technology High School of which we

have received immense positive feedback. Plans are to develop another series for next year related to *Anchors in the Past* that will focus on dialogue and personal narrative.

In addition to our flagship program of partnering with educational frameworks working with youth at-risk, we are also advancing on citywide initiatives. **This includes our work with the Ministry of Education's Aleph Department**, where we have been partnering with the cities of Tamra and Beitar Illit and through different government agencies within the cities of Netanya and Bat Yam. For next year we are hoping to expand these activities to more towns and cities and are currently in discussions with the Ministry of Education to move this forward.

We continue to expand upon previous work with Israel's security forces. **Our trainings have been making significant inroads into the higher ranks of the military**; we are currently working with Senior Officers of the Command and Staff College (POM) and are moving towards an active partnership with the Officer Training Base of the IDF. We are now part of the weekly internal Border Police trainings deemed "ethical fitness." While at Ofek Juvenile Prison we have made immense achievements in reducing the amount of violence between and among prisoners and prison guards.

We are proud that for many of these partnerships we have expanded above and beyond training sessions, to serious cooperation in relation to changing policy and integrating all aspects of the Village Way methodology.

As for becoming more mainstream with the Israeli public, **we are happy to announce that the Village Way Handbook will be out in Israeli bookstores on May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Our hope is that the book will be used by not only our partnering communities but in academic institutions, by educators, parents and the general public as a way to share our educational methodology and impact future generations on a larger scale. We are preparing a launch campaign through our PR consultant and hope to translate the book into English sometime next year.

Our Gap-Year Leadership Mechina Programs continue to create independent young leaders, with 49 participants in the Young Men's Program in Hatzor Haglilit and 28 participants in the Young Women's Program in Migdal HaEmek. As you will read below, the achievements of our Mechina graduates go well above and beyond expectation, continuing to impress everyone involved.

# Full Report

## Educational Communities

For the 2017-2018 school year there are 6 new educational communities taking part in the Village Way integration process. **This brings our total number of partners to 36 educational communities:**

- ❖ 13 currently involved in the three-year process: 3 youth villages and 10 schools
- ❖ 23 graduate communities: 9 youth villages, 11 schools, and 3 residential communities
- ❖ This brings our total impact to 1,775 educators and 14,200 youth at-risk.

## New Communities 2017-2018

### Youth Villages:

1. **Alumim Youth Village** – Located in the central town of Kfar Saba, with residential programs for children and youth who live at the village, as well as after-school day programs for young children connected with welfare services. Alumim has a total of 200 children and youth: half are in day programs, which includes after-school care under the auspices of social welfare services and half of are in the residential program, there are 50 staff members.
2. **Zoharim Youth Village:** A unique framework for youth who have dropped out of ultra-Orthodox yeshiva schools, with a therapeutic focus, south of Beit Shemesh, serving 100 youth a year, with 65 staff members.

### Community High Schools:

3. **Miftan Tamra High School** – An additional high school in the Arab city of Tamra, includes 96 students and 31 staff members.
4. **Ormat Ort Technical High School** – Located in Yavne, serving 184 students and with 28 staff members. This is a vocational school connected to the adjacent Ormat factory, providing on-site job training.
5. **Psgaot Ort High School** – A technical last-chance school located in the northern town of Migdal HaEmek. This school is growing and being revitalized under new management after almost closing a few years ago, with 104 students and 18 staff members.
6. **Yitzchak Shamir Ort High School** – Located in Kfar Saba, serving 206 students and with 40 staff members.

## Continuing Communities:

### Youth Villages:

7. **Nahalat Yehuda** – Located in the city of Rishon Letzion, this youth village is in the third year of working with VWEI and has 450 youth and 80 staff members. Part of a partnership with the Youth Village Project of the Naor Foundation.

### Community High Schools:

8. **Emunah Torah and Arts High School** – located in Jerusalem, this school is in the second year of the process. It is a religious girls' high school serving 270 students, with 50 staff members.
9. **Ibn Rushd Tamra Technology** – A high school in the Arab city of Tamra in the north which is in its third year of the process. The school has 204 students and 35 staff members.
10. **Jisr a-Zarqa Atid Technology High School** – 32 staff members and 200 students. This is a technology high school located in the poorest Arab town in Israel, Jisr A-Zarka and is currently in the second year of integrating the Village Way methodology.
11. **Makr-Jdede Naamat High School** – in the second year of integrating Village Way methodology, this all-girls high school has 12 staff members and 80 students. It is located in the combined Arab village of Makr and Jdede east of Akko.
12. **Mitarani Holon Ort Technology** – Located in the Center of the country, a technological high school with a focus on entrepreneurship with 130 students, mostly native-born Israelis, and a small team of 15 staff members. They are in the third year of the process.
13. **Tel Nof Air Force Ort Technical High School** - Located on an air force base just outside of Rehovot, this school is in its second year of working with Village Way. The school serves 350 students with 60 staff members.

### **Graduate Communities who have completed the Village Way process include:**

#### Youth Villages:

1. **Aloney Yitzchak** – Near Binyamina. 450 children (300 live at village), 100 staff members
2. **Hadassah Neurim** – Located on the coast near Netanya, serving 350 youth, including 250 who live at the village and 100 additional students who commute to the school, with 100 staff members.
3. **Kedma** – Located in the northern Negev. 125 children (85 live at the village), 90 staff members.
4. **Kfar Hassidim** – Southeast of Haifa. 200 children (150 live at village), 80 staff members
5. **Ktziney Yam Ort Ashdod** – Located on the southern coast, serving 350 youth, including 220 living at the village. The school is a naval cadet training school and includes technical and naval studies. The village has 55 staff members.
6. **Manof** – Located near Akko in the north, serves as home for 150 youth with special therapeutic needs, with 80 staff members.
7. **Neve Amiel Therapeutic Youth Village** – this was our first partnership village and is located in Sde Ya'aqov. It currently has 80 children and 45 staff members.
8. **Neveh Hadassah** – near Netanya, this youth village has 350 children (180 live at village), 100 staff members
9. **TOM** – south of Hadera this youth village has 350 children (250 live at the village), 100 staff.

### Community High Schools:

10. **Adivi Ashkelon Ort Technology** – Among the largest technical schools in Israel serving 380 students with 80 staff members.
11. **Ashdod Amal Technology** – Serving 118 diverse students, including secular, religious and ultra-orthodox, with 32 staff members.
12. **Beit Ha'arava Ort Technology** – A regional high school in Jerusalem with students traveling from far distances to study in unique technical programs, with 200 children, and 25 staff members.
13. **Beit She'an Ort Technology** – 85 children, 17 staff members.
14. **Branco-Weiss Tachkimoni School** – In Hadera, 120 youth, 20 staff members.
15. **Daliyat Al Carmel Atid Technology** –this school unfortunately closed after being transferred to different ownership, it was located in the Druze town of Daliyat Al Carmel.
16. **Mahat Akko Ort Technology** – serves 140 youth of the Arab community in Akko, with 18 staff members.
17. **Marom Akko Ort Technology** – serves mainly the Jewish population in Akko with 130 children, 17 staff members.
18. **Shimshon Amal Technology** – This school unfortunately closed but its educators have all been placed in other schools and brought the methodology with them.
19. **Tel Aviv Amal Technology** – this is a Hebrew language school serving mainly the Arab population of Jaffa. It has 100 students and 20 staff members.
20. **Yad Shapira Ort Technology** – In south Tel Aviv. As of now, the Tel Aviv Municipality is planning to close this school by next school year after having re-assessed their school system's strategic policy.

### Residential Communities:

21. **Beit HaBoger** – Therapeutic community for teenage boys in the Sharon region. 56 children, 25 staff.
22. **Eden** – Therapeutic community for teenage girls near Ashkelon, 35 children, 35 staff members.
23. **Talpiot** – Therapeutic community for children under 14 in Hadera, with two sections: a residential program and a day-program. 180 children with 80 staff members.

## Village Way Integration

VWEI has continued its efforts to provide innovative solutions on a national scale for Israel's youth-at-risk. Our unique educational methodology, the "Village Way," is a blueprint for educators first developed and refined for decades at Yemin Orde Youth Village in the Carmel Mountains of Israel. The methodology helps educators understand how to better provide each child with a feeling of "wholeness," sense of purpose and tools to break the cycles of poverty and marginalization.

A successful Village Way educational community must integrate each of the methodology's 10 core components into its work:

- ❖ Anchors in the Past
- ❖ Anchors in the Future
- ❖ Earth (the physical environment)
- ❖ Sky (the spiritual environment)
- ❖ Tikkun Halev (repairing the heart)
- ❖ Tikkun Olam (repairing the world)
- ❖ Reliable Representations of Parental Wholeness
- ❖ Community of Meaning
- ❖ Dialogue
- ❖ De-institutionalizing the Institution

Over the three-year Village Way integration process, our team provides each struggling high school, youth village, and residential community with individualized assessments and planning that helps these educational frameworks become communities that inspire the youth they work with. The transformation process is carried out on an *individual level*, to inspire and change awareness among all personnel – management, educators, counselors and support staff as well as at a *communal level*, by developing and instilling traditions, activities and policies that reflect the Village Way methodology. Each partnering community benefits from a dynamic process which includes:

- ✓ Facilitated staff learning sessions and interactive workshops
- ✓ One-on-one staff mentoring
- ✓ Developing educational programming that contains core Village Way components
- ✓ Access to the VWEI Intercommunity Forum Meetings and the intensive Trailblazers Course for emerging leaders in education
- ✓ Access to our large extensive online education portal
- ✓ An invitation to our biennial conference which includes changemakers in education from across Israel

Those who partner with VWEI develop an understanding of what it means to be a more professional, meaningful and authentic educator. They note improvements in their ability to deal with daily challenges in their work, develop stronger relationships with the youth they interact with and reach better outcomes.

One of the key factors in the success of the integration process remains the professional, high-quality work of our staff at the Village Way Educational Institute. The team of

educational facilitators is a diverse group of individuals, each with impressive experience in fields such as education, therapeutic services, group facilitation, program development and organizational management. They utilize their wide range of skills to work in conjunction with the partnering communities.

In addition, the Educational Institute serves as a unique educational think-tank helping to develop the methodology within each educational partner. The high schools, youth villages, residential centers, etc. are assigned one to two facilitators for the three year process. In addition, the facilitators receive support from the entire framework of the Educational Institute including other facilitators and a leadership team focused on content and methodological development.

To ensure the effectiveness of the process, the entire Institute team comes together one day each week for internal staff and content development. Over the summer months the Institute staff engage in a thorough review of the previous year and prepare for the upcoming year. This kind of regular internal development ensures that the Institute provides the best possible professional services to our Village Way partners. The Educational Institute's high level of work is one of our organization's greatest resources, one that sets us apart from other organizations in the field.

The impact of the Village Way process represents a different result within each of our communities, depending on the identified needs of the children and the strengths and abilities of the staff. There is so much that we could share with you, the list goes on at length. **Below you will find we have chosen to provide some highlights of the past six months representing a diverse range of our partnering educational communities:**

At **Zoharim Youth Village**, located 15 miles south of Beit Shemesh, this is our first time working within an educational framework that addresses issues faced by youth who have dropped out of the ultra-orthodox yeshiva system. This population requires us to adapt our learning and work approach accordingly to fit their needs (deciding how to apply Village Way methodology to their population and cultural norms, use of proper materials and focus on relevant topics) For example – what is the application of *Anchors in the Past* for this community that educates and houses youth who grew up in ultra-orthodox homes but because of rebellion, trauma or crisis of faith no longer find their place within that society. Our facilitators have been able to establish a strong connection with the village leadership and have created a feeling of trust and understanding that sets the groundwork for a productive process. At one meeting, the staff of Zoharim discussed ethical education with the Village Way Facilitators. The feedback we received included a statement that *“this was the most significant day in their educational learning experience and has touched the very core of action.”* The staff is extremely committed to their youth and to improving any way they can. As working with Zoharim is only in the beginning stages, we can't wait to see what will happen in the second year when program initiatives start to be fully implemented for the youth.

**Miftan Tamra High School** represents the second high school we are partnering with in the northern Arab city of Tamra (the other school is Ibn Rushd Tamra Technology, in its third year of the process). This is a last chance school for students who have been kicked out or

left other schools in the community. They don't have strong foundations at home and as such they tend to test the patience of many teachers and staff. On the upside, the relationship between the Village Way facilitator and the school's leadership team has become a strong and positive force after only seven months. They are open to change, want to improve and have shown excitement about implementing our methodology. One example is their work with the component of *Anchors in the Past* in which the school's principal used Mohammad the Prophets story as a means to teach about someone who had a hard life growing up and would have been considered a "youth at-risk." However, he was able to face adversity and become a leader. In this way, the youth celebrated a role model specific to their culture and religion by decorating walls in the school with photos and pictures related to Islam and Mohammad. Such a simple act that had never been done or even thought of before led the students to be proud of their heritage.

**Psgaot Ort High School** is one of our new partnering community's in the town of Migdal HaEmek. The student population would be considered the bottom of their class if in another school, whether due to behavior issues, lack of a stable home life, or learning disabilities. This school has a strong principal, and even with the need to improve communication among staff, she has dramatically improved the school atmosphere and proven to be a team leader. The principal clearly recognizes the need to work with Village Way: *"Every meeting sharpens and strengthens activities here. Village Way paves the way for us. It gives us a method of working and thinking together, how to dream; and it creates a language for us, something that we've tried to do before (but failed.) This leads our entire pedagogical outlook. Jonathan (Village Way Facilitator) is the resource, he teaches us and then says it's all you guys ... he's a source of inspiration."* With such a strong base, this school should be able to make vast improvements in communication within a short time frame.

At **Yitzchak Shamir Ort High School** in Kfar Saba we are in the first year of helping to reinvigorate a sense of excitement for education and learning by working with the leadership team and staff. They continue to show substantial interest in the Village Way methodology with consistent attendance at meetings with the facilitator. The current focus is on the component of *Sky* (the spiritual environment) which involves reinforcement of communal values and national belonging, finding meaning in tradition and holidays and promoting moral judgment to help the staff have a more fulfilling commitment to their work. The staff are already starting to consider possibilities for next year when they will implement different programs related to the Village Way methodology. Such possibilities include a graduate's day, a day for staff team-building, and a day of workshops with students, instructors and parents. Most recently at a conference of Ort High Schools from across Israel, the Principal spoke about his school's experience so far implementing the Village Way methodology. He stated, *"that even though the team was only just starting the process, they are already having more meaningful discussions among the teacher's and management regarding the atmosphere of the school."*

**Makr-Jdede Naamat High School** is in its second year of partnering with Village Way. It is a small all-girls high school located in the combined Arab village of Makr and Jdede, east of Akko. The population of the school comes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with



30% entering without knowing how to read or write, they have low motivation, low self-esteem, some come from special education and have special needs. However, the staff invests tremendous time and effort enabling these girls to succeed in their studies, receive life skills training and be upstanding citizens. The school maintains a positive family-like atmosphere which gives the students a feeling that they can rely on the staff for help. Currently, one of the educators is part of the Village Way Trailblazers Course for emerging leaders. Earlier this year she organized a “Success Day” and brought local inspirational women to the school to speak (representing components of Tikkun Halev and Anchors in the Future). One of the presentations was from the school’s own principal where she spoke of growing up with 12 siblings and illiterate parents but went on to get a Master’s degree. Such experiences are crucial to providing these girls with role models that they can relate and look up to, helping them understand that they have a chance at a better life.

**Tel Nof Air Force Ort Technical High School** is also in its second year with Village Way and is located on the Tel Nof Air Force Base just outside of Rehovot. One of the main issues the school is working to improve is that of communication between staff and students. The Village Way facilitator is helping to define core values with the schools' leadership team and holds training sessions with staff to translate those values into action. As such, the education staff has begun to conduct weekly roundtable meetings with students to summarize activities, hear their thoughts and involve guest speakers from the air force base. The meetings give students direct involvement in school development and create chances for them to take leadership roles in helping improve the school community. Such meetings relate to the component of Tikkun Halev and are important in helping create a sense of community, empowerment and improvement in communication for all.

Our partnering communities put in extra hours to implement change that benefits the youth in their care; they go above and beyond the norm. We are proud of their achievements helping to provide better educational experiences for youth who then can go on to become functioning, contributing members of Israeli society.

## Graduate Communities

For most partnering communities, the end of the three-year integration process marks the beginning of becoming Village Way "Graduate Communities." The local educational staff become responsible for continuing their own version of the Village Way in their community – through traditions, policies, programs, work plans, staff training and community spirit.

This year our network of graduate communities has **grown to a total of twenty-three**. These communities remain active in key Village Way activities by attending Intercommunity Forum meetings and sending educational representatives to participate in our Trailblazers Course. Activities from graduate communities are shared in Village Way e-newsletters to all partnering communities and uploaded to the online Village Way portal. These communities are an invaluable resource to high schools and villages newer to Village Way, providing inspiration and ideas for implementing successful programs and policies.

Village Way constantly evaluates its work with our graduate communities in order to meet their needs while better understanding how to sustain the impact of the integration process. This school year the Education Institute has designed a thirty-hour enhanced course on *Tikkun Halev*; it is a series that offers more continuity than one-day sessions. A pilot version is currently being implemented at Marom Acco Ort Technology High School of which we have received immense positive feedback. Plans are to develop another series for next year related to *Anchors in the Past* that will focus on dialogue and personal narrative. In addition, the Educational Institute continues its work to develop a system by which educational communities spend their third or fourth year developing and writing a “master work plan.” This serves to codify all of the program and policy changes that have been made over the course of the process and guides our educational partners as they become graduate communities.

Those communities in their fourth year of the process still maintain an intense schedule with the Educational Institute and all its components. After the fourth year, they then begin to receive "With You All the Way" support, such as the communities above. This added benefit provides incentives to maintain activity across the Village Way blueprint, allowing graduate communities to continue full implementation of their programs. In order to receive this support, communities must meet 7 out of 10 criteria, such as continued activity with Tikkun Olam programming, implementation of a Graduate Support Program and continued involvement of parents. In addition, communities must continue active staff learning sessions on the Village Way methodology. **Below are just some examples of the many graduate communities in our network:**

**Adivi Ashkelon Ort Technology** is among one of the largest technical high schools in Israel. As the school has entered its fourth year with Village Way, the staff benefit from reduced but present facilitator involvement. The facilitator is currently helping the leadership team develop a Master Educational Plan that integrates policy and program change into a codified long-term plan. The leadership team is also working with Village Way to create a *Dialogue Strategy* that defines appropriate language protocols when interacting with students. Drafting such plans ensures this school sustains the changes made over the past three years and provides a chance to re-analyze and improve pedagogical methods.

**Beit Ha'arava Ort Technology** is a regional high school in Jerusalem. Students travel from beyond Jerusalem to study here in unique technical programs. The staff have continued to extensively implement Village Way methodology and programming; including a graduate support program, parents' activities and cultural celebrations and are active participants in Intercommunity Forum meetings. A recent example of program continuance includes that of celebrating the birthdays of all teacher's. For one educator, four graduates brought a cake to her class and described how her caring about them improved them as individuals. It should be noted that this was an educator who broke down two years ago in front of Village Way staff because of the difficulties at the school. Additionally, the PTA is extremely active within the school which is rare in a school with a vulnerable population and a significant number of at-risk youth. Such an active parent body shows that there is appreciation between staff and parents.

**Beit She'an Ort Technology High School** maintains many programs established during its three year intense process with Village Way. In the spirit of Village Way, the school continues to create strong connections with parents through meaningful activities, including a mothers evening and taking parents to the Tomb of the Matriarch Rachel while discussing the relationship between mother and child. This high school maintains a strong graduate community; staff attend weddings and military ceremonies for graduates and everyone who has a baby gets a present. The school is not just a school but also a community center, bringing past and present together.

## Intercommunity Forums

The Educational Institute provides opportunities for educators from our partnering communities to meet for a day of focused learning and discussion on a specific topic. These Intercommunity Forums on Village Way subjects inspire educators into action, provide a platform for sharing best practices and an opportunity to participate in peer learning activities.

The meetings provide applicable resources and a means for educators to re-assess issues they come across on a daily basis. Our Village Way Educational Institute facilitators lead the discussions by providing relevant content and opportunities for knowledge sharing. These meetings serve as an important element in the three-year Village Way integration process, as participating educators then bring this knowledge and inspiration back to their own educational communities.

So far this year, **five Intercommunity Forums** have taken place with another two due to be organized before June. The first was a Directors Forum meeting in September which brought together management and support staff such as janitors, secretaries and maintenance workers. This provided an opportunity for these staff members to participate in Village Way learning sessions, recognizing and celebrating their contribution as informal educators within their communities.

The other four Forums were open to managers and educators and focused on topics related to specific roles staff may hold within a community, such as graduate coordinators or counselors. The first such Forum discussed the use of holidays and events throughout the calendar year to teach youth about cultural diversity and understand one's own personal relationship within larger society. The second Forum gave participants ideas for increasing involvement of graduates in school activities, such as volunteering at events and being mentors to current students. One participant stated *"I've been a graduate coordinator since 2008. This is one of the best workshops I've been to. All in all, we learned a lot, and from who? From each other!"*

The third Forum focused on the Village Way component of *Earth*, in which participants discussed how to use the physical environment to convey lessons and communal values. The daylong event was held at Gitam PR Firm and included two of the company's employees presenting concepts about the power of design and what messages our surroundings transmit to us. The most recent Forum in March provided partnering communities with the chance to learn more about Village Way's science enrichment

program and have a hands-on experience. It was important that the educators, especially from first year communities, walked away with a better understanding of the structure of the program; that it leads to building confidence in the youth they work with, which carries over into other areas of their lives.

## Trailblazers Course

Another critical resource we provide is that of our year-long Village Way Trailblazer's Course for Emerging Leaders, in cooperation with Tel Aviv University's Continuing Education Unit. A select group of mid-level leaders from across our partnering educational communities come together twice a month for in-depth day-long training workshops on the Village Way. The course represents a professional framework that provides participants with the tools to become leaders in their own educational communities. They tackle important issues on an advanced level and share their own experiences from a diverse spectrum of communities.

This year, educators from across our educational movement represent the third cohort. They bring their diverse experience into the course and have open, honest conversations on their challenges and goals. As part of the course, they must develop an educational project that meets the needs of the youth they work with while utilizing the tools and outlook of the Village Way methodology.

**A recent example, demonstrating teamwork amongst all the course participants involved that of facing a terrible loss** – a former student, of one Trailblazer participant, was recently killed in a car crash. The event sent shockwaves through his peers and local Ethiopian community, demonstrating how fragile life is. After his death, the young man's personal journal was found by his parents, containing one memorable statement that stood out from the rest: *"to always be stronger than my excuses."* The Trailblazer participant brought this story to the course and together, they turned this amazing quote into an inspiring life lesson: to carve the quote onto wooden benches that are designed by students and graduates. These benches are not only going to be installed on the campus of the young man who passed away but also on the high school and youth village campuses of all the Trailblazer participants; with an expectation that each place to receive a bench will in turn create benches for another educational community. Additionally, the educational leadership of Bat Yam's municipality, in which Village Way is working to advance our methodology on a city-wide scale, heard about the story and has decided to install these benches at their schools. The benches offer inspiration, a place for contemplation and dialogue, commemorates a former student and shows youth that they will not be forgotten, that even in such sad events their lives do not go unnoticed.

## Knowledge Sharing and Content Development

Our facilitators are constantly working to enhance and expand the Village Way Educational Institute; creating new materials for study sessions and updating training methods to best align with our diverse partnering communities. Once a week, the entire Institute comes together for a day of internal staff and content development. This kind of

regular internal development ensures that the Institute provides the most relevant, tailor-made and professional services to our educational partners. Come summertime, facilitators spend hours holding internal staff training sessions to develop solutions for issues from the previous school year, to share best practices and content and to prepare for the school year ahead. Since August 2017, the Institute has added three new facilitators: Noga Kasai, Yonatan Shapira and more recently Shaked Beerli.

As our outreach continues to expand, bringing new educational communities on board each year, it is important to be able to share any ground-breaking achievements, new methodologies and ideas for programs and activities. We consistently maintain such a large amount of information and updates through our online portal, Facebook page and regular newsletter. The online portal is a digital database of Village Way educational materials: lesson plans, activities, videos, articles of interest, project related assessments and more. It is accessed by educators from across our partnership communities, by students in Village Way academic courses and by those wanting to learn more about the Village Way philosophy. Our Facebook page is updated regularly with short briefings and photos, while our newsletter covers relevant topics more in-depth and is sent to staff from all our partnering communities.

## Evaluation

We continue our work with the evaluation consultant, Dr. Irit Sasson, however as she has moved to another research institution, we are now working with her through the Shamir Research Institute at the University of Haifa. Dr. Sasson evaluates the impact and effectiveness of the Village Way Educational Institute's work with educational communities. The methods of evaluation include interviews, opinion questionnaires and questionnaires testing the understanding of the Village Way philosophy for staff from across all our educational communities .

Dr. Sasson is also helping us develop a study of the impact our work has on the success of students as they move from being students to graduates of the communities we work with. This evaluation examines three points in their lives – ninth/tenth grade, twelfth grade and as full graduates of the system. Our findings are still being assessed and will be presented this summer.

In addition, we will be conducting a second intensive graduate survey, starting this fall, to track milestones of former students from across the partnering educational communities. To conduct the survey, we have developed a graduate questionnaire to serve as a basis for obtaining the required information. For the upcoming school year, we will meet with graduate coordinators (the staff members responsible for keeping in touch and supporting school/village graduates) at the relevant educational communities and review the questionnaire with them. It is the graduate coordinators responsibility to find and call graduates from the relevant years (beginning with graduates who attended the educational community while in its third year of the process) to conduct the survey. Our first such year doing this had an impressive 89% response rate in tracking the following outcomes:

- Participating in army service / national service

- Participating in Pre-army leadership programs
- Where and what jobs graduates are holding
- Are they thinking about or participating in higher education
- Where graduates are living
- Marital / Family Status

We continue to refine and improve the internal meetings and workshops with our partners based on their feedback and are currently reviewing how to adapt our Logic Model used by Village Way staff to conduct internal evaluations of each community. The results measurement evaluation process of our Logic Model is currently carried out using a form of 72 measurements. Each community is measured every six months – in the middle of the academic year, and again at the end. This continues to serve as a valuable tool for assessing an individual community's progress in the integration process.

## Academia

In addition to partnerships with educational communities, the Educational Institute also continues to teach the Village Way methodology in academic settings, including full-semester courses in the education departments at Oranim Teacher's College and Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For the Spring 2018 semester we have a total of 31 registered students between the two academic institutions. We also continue to provide one-time seminars and workshops to students of higher education around the country.

## Village Way Handbook

**We are very proud to report that the Hebrew version of the Village Way Handbook will be in Israeli bookstores on May 1<sup>st</sup>.** The book serves as an inspirational resource, presenting the knowledge, experience and best practices that our organization has amassed over the past decade of activity. Our hope is that the book will be used by not only our partnering communities but in academic institutions, by educators, parents and the general public as a way to share our educational methodology and impact future generations on a larger scale. We are preparing a launch campaign through our PR consultant and hope to translate the book into English sometime next year.

## **Additional Village Way Projects**

The above reporting outlines our flagship program of working with individual educational communities (schools, youth villages, and residential centers) over an intense three-year process. This work constitutes the core of the Educational Institute's activities. In addition, we have outlined below those additional activities and initiatives that contribute to our organization's mission and goals.

### **Ministry of Education**

#### **Ministry of Education Aleph Department for Youth At-Risk**

The Aleph Department is a section in the Ministry of Education responsible for all educational methodologies and services for at-risk youth. This includes but is not limited to: classes for youth at-risk within mainstream schools, out-of-home facilities, truancy programs, after-school programs, community initiatives, and more. The department is trying to build city-wide models that unite all of these services provided in a community, in an attempt to have better communication between all of the available services for this population.

A little more than half a year ago, we were approached by various leaders within the Aleph Department to accompany this unification process and have designed an integrated 60 hours of training for staff within a city-wide context. The scope of the work is significant as it includes training, mentoring and advising sessions over the course of a year.

#### **Aleph Department City Wide Process**

Currently, we are in the early stages of working with educators and the welfare system **within the cities of Tamra and Beitar Illit**. We were initially asked to pilot the program in three cities but Ramle, due to internal city politics, suspended the relationship. So far, we have held roundtables particular to each city's needs that have included discussion and analysis of Village Way methodology and the need to create one unified language for those professionals dealing with youth at-risk.

**Tamra is an Arab village** with which we already have strong connections as we have two high schools there that are Village Way communities. We have held numerous meetings with municipal leaders and educational representatives in this city, including a beit midrash session for the main leadership. Due to our involvement, the city has created a local leadership unit for at-risk youth. A director working with this population in Tamra noted *“they initially had three separate units dealing with such issues within the community but are now operating as one unified group that meets every two weeks to discuss and solve issues. Today, we are putting into practice communal thinking and language.”*

**In Beitar Illit, a fast-growing ultra-orthodox city** located outside of Jerusalem, we are making significant headway with the city's educational leadership. Thanks in part to a written recommendation from the Rabbi of Zoharim (one of our partnering communities)

we were able to establish cooperative efforts and have held an opening conference and numerous meetings with the cities educational leadership. This is a great step forward in working with this city as the population is generally skeptical of outsiders. One female education director noted *“I attend many courses and I want to tell you that this is a special program. The group is special and Lara (VWEI Facilitator) delivers the material in an attractive and professional way. We always want more...”*

As these relationships further develop, it is important to note that the process is complex – in addition to the training and integration, the cooperation of many different city agencies, organizations and individuals is needed. Despite these challenges, we are committed to making a significant impact on the many professionals working with youth at-risk in a city. We hope to maintain this momentum next school year and are in current discussions with the Aleph Department.

### [Kidum Noar – Netanya](#)

Kidum Noar (“Youth Advancement”) is one of the divisions that works under the auspices of the Aleph Department, working specifically with youth that have dropped out of the formal education system. The staff of this division includes therapeutic staff, counselors, coordinators and teachers. In the past, we have provided courses on Village Way components to different representatives of this program from different regions across the country. This year, we are providing a 30-hour integration course with the aim of constructing a common educational approach and language for forty staff of the Kidum Noar unit in Netanya. This is an important location for this work – as Netanya is a large city, with a high concentration of immigrants and other youth at-risk. To date we have held eight meetings with the staff with a goal of finishing the introductory process by the end of the school year. We are also considering how to continue work with Kidum Noar into next year and look forward to seeing how this process evolves.

### [Bat-Yam Municipality](#)

Last year we were approached by the municipality of the city of Bat Yam (just south of Tel Aviv) to provide limited sessions for its welfare and social services staff, primarily to assist them in working with the Ethiopian Israeli population. Over the summer as follow-up the municipality asked us to expand this work and provide a 30-hour course for key leaders in the municipality who are responsible for areas such as education, the welfare system, Ethiopian Israelis and more. The idea is that this course is the first step in providing city-wide integration of the Village Way, coming from the municipality’s leadership. To date we have held eight meetings and one intense day of training on the premises of Yemin Orde. The day-long training was key to allowing us to hold lengthy discussions and learning sessions with the city’s top leaders from the education, welfare and social work departments. With the involvement of such top heads of departments working with at-risk youth, we are creating an integrated model advancing the change that is needed in Bat-Yam.



## Ichad Meshalanu Mechina

While this Mechina is not funded or operated by Village Way, we continue to maintain our relationship with this gap year program which serves at-risk young men. We provide applicable tools from the Village Way methodology for staff, specifically in best practices for developing deeper connections to participants, exploring and strengthening connections to cultural heritage and in relationship building with family members. Additionally, one of the instructors is a current participant in our Trailblazers Course for emerging leaders in education while the Director of this Mechina was a past participant.

## Multifaceted Israeli Culture

This program provides innovative training sessions for organizational leadership and field staff that are working in multi-cultural environments. **This initiative provides our organization with the opportunity to reach professionals who are working with immigrant, minority, and at-risk youth and young adults in many diverse frameworks, primarily Israel's security forces.** We are proud that for many of these partnerships we have expanded above and beyond training sessions in these specific areas, to serious partnerships involved in changing policy and integrating all aspects of the Village Way into their work. We have achieved amazing results working with the Border Police, IDF, Civilian Police and Ofek Juvenile Prison.

## Israel Border Police

The Israel Border Police is a branch of the Israeli security forces, providing border security, counter terrorism and law enforcement operations, with a diverse population among their ranks, including immigrant and cultural minority populations and work in complex situations. Our work with the Israel Border Police has continued to expand, we retain a very strong relationship with the leadership, which requires all those in officer training and additional courses and all division leaders to attend training sessions. This means that every officer in the Border Police that goes through any training course will take part in one of our sessions, and a number will go through multiple sessions.

Since the beginning of this school year, we have reached over 250 participants. These have included those in the officer's course, staff of basic training, squad commanders, and squad commander training staff, education officers and senior command. **The sessions had such positive reactions that our team was asked to take part in internal Border Police trainings deemed "ethical fitness."** These sessions are internal week-long trainings that force commanders to think about how to become effective leaders and to understand the influence they have in these roles. We started these specific training sessions in January and have focused on ideas of belonging and community. The structure is such that we are working with 50 squads of Border Police, in three-hour sessions, with each unit containing 13 people (commanders and officers). This is an exciting opportunity for us as it means we will work directly with 650 professional operational staff already in the field, not while they are in their training periods before professional placements. We are currently averaging two such trainings per week.

## Israel Defense Forces

On the basis of the successful and relevant partnership with the Border Police, and the full integration into their ranks, we are now providing training courses to the IDF. The focus of our work initially began with training sessions for educational officers in the Education Corps Special Populations department which includes new immigrants, minorities and those with a history of behavioral or mental health issues. We then went on to work with commanders and officers within the Special Populations department and are now helping the IDF rewrite their education policy for working with these populations.

Even though the process has been and continues to be lengthy, we are now making inroads into higher ranks of the military; we are currently working with Senior Officers of the Command and Staff College (POM) and are trying to partner with the only Officer Training Base of the IDF. Working with higher military ranks is significant as these represent the future leaders of the IDF. The trainings are a top down approach, with the idea that what these senior officers learn now will then be brought to the rank and file of the military. Since September, we have reached almost 400 commanders and officers of multiple IDF units and have received much positive feedback from participants. **Currently, we are negotiating an agreement with the IDF that allows us to work across all units and departments. This is an immense privilege as not all nonprofits pass the vetting process and receive such approval.**

## Police Force

Our work with the Police has reached close to 500 officers and considered the complex everyday reality that is theirs. We see this as a particularly critical partner, in light of past reports in the media of police violence, discrimination towards Ethiopian Israelis and the protests that followed.

We would like to note however that after working with these police officers, and even though the feedback we received was positive, we came to the decision that the training sessions didn't have enough impact to reach the top echelons of the force. Therefore, we have proposed better alternatives that involve middle management and leadership levels and are awaiting answers.

## Ofek Juvenile Prison

Ofek Juvenile Prison is the only prison for youth in Israel. Over the past year, we have made immense achievements in not only training the prison guards but creating a long-term, holistic training program for all 130 staff members of the prison. This includes the guards, therapists, counselors, teachers and management. Even with the approximately 100 inmates constantly changing at any given time, we have made significant achievements with changing the atmosphere of interaction between staff and youth. So far, we have:

- Offered parallel training sessions with all professional staff: management, school staff, the educational-therapeutic personnel, the three units of wardens (3 shifts) and the unit managers.

- Redefined the Ofek Prison language to facilitate youth rehabilitation.
- Covered topics such as mapping youth profiles and needs, understanding the anti-social cycle, interaction with "wallflowers" or those youth who don't stand out and advancing the stages of moral judgement between staff and youth.
- Collaborated with the prison's Chief Administrative Officer to draft an operating plan that will ensure the continuity of the prison's mode of operation and help withstand changes in leadership.

**Our efforts have seen a significant drop in incidents and complaints between and among both guards and prisoners. Violence inflicted by prison guards has decreased and behavioral incidents by prisoners has gone down.** Last year forty-five serious behavioral incidents were reported but in the last six months there have been zero. The prison's Director attributes this unequivocally to Village Way.

The feedback we have received has been overly positive with one welfare officer noting that in past work with the prison guards, they never succeeded in helping them better understand their role as people who can effect change. The change Village Way has brought to the guards' interactions with the prison population, in his eyes, is the most significant impetus for the prisons overall transformation.

## **The Gap Year Programs (Mechinot)**

### [The Young Men's Mechina in Hatzor Haglilit](#)

We are already more than halfway through our 18<sup>th</sup> cohorts intensive gap-year that includes 49 young men from across Israel. This cohort has been one of our most challenging groups to work with which makes it even more rewarding to see such immense progress made by these participants since coming to the Mechina in September. This progress is demonstrated in their daily interactions and behavior as these young men begin to focus on their future aspirations, where they hope to serve in the military, where they see themselves after their service and becoming contributing members to both their local communities and Israeli society.

This year's cohort is very active with Tikkun Olam activities both within the local community of Hatzor Haglilit and as special group service projects. These activities are a central anchor of the Mechina and give these young men a chance to give back to others while making a direct connection to populations they may not otherwise interact with on a consistent basis. They have volunteered with children who suffer from complex disabilities and rare syndromes and serve as mentors for kids in various frameworks; at a local absorption center, a program for youth at-risk and for the fourth year in a row as Big Brothers in an after-school program for local schoolchildren. They have established meaningful connections to youth who have a real need for positive role models and who come from similar backgrounds as themselves.

As the Mechina is self-governing, the participants are given an enormous amount of responsibility in running the day-to-day activities. After a short introductory period on the

program, the Mechina holds elections to choose a Chairman while the rest of the participants are divided into committees such as finance, food, housework and special events. For this current cohort, they have established a new committee that past cohorts have tried but failed to successfully implement. This new committee is known as a "Shekem" in Hebrew, which translates to a concession stand. The house father initially helped those involved with set-up, but the committee members have taken it from there, being responsible for maintaining the stock (bread, cheese, snacks, drinks, dry goods, etc), preparing basic snacks such as grilled cheese and managing the money. It has become a place in the Mechina where participants and staff gather, creating a communal atmosphere outside of the structured program while also providing an important opportunity for learning and growth.

Regarding curriculum, participants benefit from a unique educational structure which has been developed to fit their needs and to better prepare them for lives as productive young adults. They participate in courses that teach life skills, management of personal finances, development of healthy interpersonal relationships, public speaking, navigation and orienteering skills, physical training, a week-long survival course, a week at a paratrooper training camp and teaching first aid. Participants go on extensive hikes and field trips focusing on the history and geography of the Land of Israel and delve into Jewish studies, issues in modern Israeli society and their own cultural heritage.

One of the most popular courses is that of the Cognitive Thinking course which provides participants with a system for self-awareness and dealing with life's stresses and challenges. For one such participant this course has had immense benefits. Unfortunately, this young man started the Mechina year extremely depressed due to his father having cancer. His self-perception was that of a glass half empty and a lack of energy for life. Through this course, he has been shown by both staff and his fellow participants that he can rise above life's challenges and now sees the glass as half full.

One of the most interesting days this year involved a visit to the Netanya Police Headquarters, which serves a significant population of Ethiopian, Russian and French immigrants. The Deputy Chief of Police, Mevorach Avraham, opened the session with an intense provocative discussion related to police violence and the feelings of frustration and anger coming from both sides. A former graduate of Yemin Orde, Deputy Chief Avraham was born in Ethiopia and became an orphan at an early age. His knowledge and charisma created a lively atmosphere allowing for such an open discussion, and his background immediately placed him as an accessible role model to our participants. Presentations were also given by another officer who graduated from Yemin Orde and one graduate from the Mechina. The staff also organized a role reversal simulation where the police played the role of a detainee and the young men played the role of the police. The experience created an open and candid exchange forcing each person to see what it was like for the other side.

As for our more than 800 graduates, we continue to aid in navigating independent life in the army and beyond. Most recently, a scholarship ceremony was held for 23 Mechina graduates in their first or second year of academic studies. These young men are studying

everything from law to computer science at colleges and universities across Israel. We look forward to awarding vocational scholarships at an additional ceremony in mid-May.

### [The Young Women's Mechina in Migdal HaEmek](#)

Our fifth cohort of 28 young women has made impressive progress, both as a strong unified group as well as within the scope of their personal development. These young women are focusing more on their future dreams and aspirations, better understanding how they can contribute to their community and Israeli society.

These young women actively participate in local municipal events, help with initiatives, volunteer with school children, the disabled and senior citizens and are consistently invited into the homes of community members for Shabbat meals. Even with the program only lasting ten months for each cohort, these young women have truly become a dynamic part of enhancing the culture of Migdal HaEmek. For the second year in a row, the municipality set aside funding to create a large-scale event for Sigd holiday celebrations. Our participants worked in cooperation with the local community center, nonprofits and municipal officials to organize the city-wide event. Requests by local schools, to give Sigd holiday presentations, dramatically increased, requiring our participants to develop presentations and practice their public speaking skills in front of groups of 25 or more people.

Part of the program includes learning in interactive courses and workshops, which are designed to expand participants horizons in a multitude of subjects. The courses include time management, public speaking, conflict management, leadership and gender, writing a personal narrative and family history, Jewish studies and army service preparation. The informal, interactive setting also provides many opportunities for success. This is especially important for young women who may have never had positive experiences in an academic environment in the past.

One means of developing leadership skills is through monthly roundtable sessions with more than 200 young Israelis from other Mechinot throughout Israel's North (of which most come from middle to upper class homes). Each month a different Mechina organizes and presents a topic for discussion. This past February, IsraElite was responsible for choosing, preparing and organizing the day's presentation. Their topic of choice related to feminism and violence against women. IsraElite's own Dr. Meirav Meidan, who has a PhD in Gender Studies, opened the day's events by presenting the current #Me Too Movement. Our young women organized an interactive session where the participants were divided into groups to discuss the meaning of #Me Too, bringing up tense topics such as who's duty and responsibility it is to stop violence against women. It was a great experience for our young women to lead such a day of discussion and thought.

In addition to their regular schedule of courses, volunteering, committees, and activities in Migdal HaEmek, the young women have gone on unique seminars and trips throughout the country. They have participated in outdoor education experiences where they cooked their meals over an open fire, scaled mountains with heavy backpacks, faced the heat and rain, navigated in the dark, slept outside and hiked long distances. They have spent two

separate weeks in Jerusalem, where for many it's the first-time touring and fully understanding the city's connection to the Jewish people as well as its significance to many populations throughout history. They experienced academic life at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot where they received lessons in science and mathematics and discussed how to involve more girls and women in the STEM fields. They have had a taste of army culture by participating in the Gadna Army Experience. They also participated in a 5K race, organized by the Yigal Allon Center, and the Jerusalem Marathon 10K or 5K events. All of these experiences help build self-confidence and instill leadership ability in each of our young women participants.

As they move on to become graduates of the Mechina, they continue to prove that if given the chance, within the right atmosphere and with proper encouragement, they can fulfill their potential and become contributing members of Israeli society. This is ever so apparent with four graduates of the third cohort who have become IDF Officer's; a first for IsraElite graduates that has included publicity in the Israeli newspaper, Yediot Aharonot, by the Mayor of Migdal HaEmek, Eli Barda and most notably by Israel President, Reuven Rivlin. We are also proud to report that a graduate from the second cohort recently received an Outstanding Soldier Award at the President's Residence in Jerusalem as part of the ceremonies marking Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> year of independence. Every year only 120 of the best soldiers are chosen to receive this award. Yetaesh Ayalo is now serving her third year as a fighter with the Airborne Rescue and Evacuation Unit and has also helped raise awareness of the plight of those stuck in transit camps in Ethiopia, waiting for Israeli government approval to immigrate.