

On the Right Path

The SHVIL Integrative Therapeutic Center



Barry Davis

The SHVIL ("pathway") Integrative Therapeutic Center at the Ein Yael Living Museum aims to help children, youth and adults with special physical, emotional and behavioral needs cope with their disabilities and acquire basic life skills. The center was established by Danny Bachi and his wife Yael, whose own four year old grandson was born with Cerebral Palsy.

"We put my grandson on a fully grown horse when he was only two and a half years old," Bachi relates. "He had to have an instructor with him on the horse, someone to lead the horse, and a person on either side to get him down if the horse made an unexpected movement. The day he grabbed hold of my shirt to stop himself falling off the horse was a fantastic moment for me. It meant he'd taken responsibility for his own body."

The Bachis originally ran SHVIL from the stables at Kibbutz Tzora, some 25 miles west of Jerusalem.

But, as Bachi explains, "We are Jerusalemites, and Jerusalem has many people in need of assistance who can't afford to travel outside the city. We wanted to provide them with readily accessible therapeutic services."

Bachi turned to the Jerusalem Foundation for help. As luck would have it, London resident

and former Jerusalem resident Abraham Bejerano and his wife Vivien were just looking for a special project to support. "Mr. Bejerano comes from a poor Jerusalem family and he was keen to commemorate his late parents' memory by giving something back to the community he'd grown up in," relates Jerusalem Foundation Director of Community Relations for North America, Yefet Ozery.

when he hadn't done what they'd asked of him."

Some of the teenagers employed in various capacities at the Center are recovering from substance abuse. At SHVIL, they learn about responsibility, self discipline and self-esteem.

One such 16 year old boy takes care of the horses. One day some teenagers turned up at the Center

led by a particularly loud-mouthed, disparaging youth. The care-taker, who had recently almost been thrown out of his school for drug abuse, approached the troublemaker and asked him to place a harness on one of the horses.

The wise guy, thinking



In addition to its nine horses, a treatment room at the SHVIL center offers those with special needs the opportunity to come into contact with all manner of small animals. This contact allows the individuals to build accepting, one-on-one relationships that are not always possible with the people around them and also plays a pivotal role in the therapeutic process.

"One young boy, for example, was standing by the fence with some feed for the goats. But every time the goats approached he'd lift the basket out of their reach, shouting at them and telling them they were bad. We discovered that his own parents had withheld food from him

it would be a piece of cake, approached the horse, but the latter sensed his negative energies and kept moving out of reach. The care-taker then asked the smallest, quietest boy in the group to harness the horse, which he did without difficulty. An important lesson was learned by everyone that day.

Today, Bachi is busy overseeing construction of a club at the center, complete with a carpentry workshop, canteen and recreation room. "There is still a lot of work to be done here," he says, "on the facilities and with the children, but we are all well on our way down the right SHVIL - the right path." 🐾

Donors:

- Abraham and Vivien Bejerano, UK
- The Dorset Foundation, UK

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