
Revolutionary Technology for the Blind

Braille printing and writing for the blind created a revolution over 170 years ago when it was invented by Louis Braille, a blind teacher from France. Today a stylus and slate or alternatively a Braille are invaluable for forming raised dots and patterns which are later 'read' by the fingertips.



Reading and writing is made possible with a Braillewriter

"Braille is a necessary tool for every blind and partially sighted youngster," explains Rachel Scrobish, Director of the Institute's Department of Education and Rehabilitation. "This tool enables everyone to learn how to read and write." At one time, it was believed that partially sighted students should use their residual vision with all types of aids such as magnifying screens and additional lighting. Today people realize the importance of literacy, and if a child is in danger of losing his sight, or even if reading is trying because of visual difficulties, the instruction of Braille can offer independence and quality of life. Braille skills can enable a blind student to write messages, take notes and even label checks for independent financial management.

In the last half century there are talking books or tapes and discs to hear textbooks or simply enjoy a novel. A blind person can easily tape messages to himself or other people. The computer, however, is perhaps the tool that will offer the sight impaired the push into the third millennium.

One of the Institute's Most Outstanding Employees

According to Shabtai ('Shabbi') Deutsch, many industrialized countries have a work week of 4.5 days and leisure time activities fill up more and more of a person's weekly schedule. As director of the Institute's Department of Community Services, Deutsch is trying to insert more positive and physical activities into the curriculum of the Institute as well as Israel's blind population. In other words, forget that refreshing nap and get out to the gym or the pool!

In his three years at the Institute, Deutsch has kept a busy schedule. Constantly organizing new sports activities, he is widening the scope of the Institute outside of Jerusalem, helping to organize league and individual activity for the blind and partially sighted in other locations as well.

"If we can train counselors and educators to work with the blind, then we can initiate more programming in community centers throughout the country," Deutsch explains. Oftentimes the blind themselves need encouragement. Do you ever see blind people running?"



**Shabtai
Deutsch**

he asks. "They need to practice on the treadmill with a counselor, developing their muscles, and then they will have the self confidence to get out to a track and jog."

Deutsch helped to found IBSO, or the Israeli Blind Sport Organization two years ago, and the number of blind and partially sighted participants is on the rise. He has also introduced Etgar, or more challenging activities for the sight impaired. Rock climbing and tandem bike riding are two of the more popular activities.

Deutsch is also responsible for the Sports Center at the Institute, recording studio, rehabilitation industry and summer programming. "Over the years, the Institute has garnered so much knowledge and expertise in work with the sight impaired," explains Deutsch. "I am glad that we can utilize this excellence to spread from our gates to other parts of the country." And now for a run around the track, or a few laps in the pool...