

## Seminars Strengthen Ties

School vacation is approaching, and although many pupils will be on holiday, seminars and retreats are planned for the Institute. During the Chanukah vacation in December of 2000, dozens of blind and partially sighted teens from all over Israel gathered at the Institute to meet and learn from each other how to deal with common problems and situations. They also had helpful lectures on interpersonal relations, bodily image, volunteering in society, and workshops in art, psychodrama, music and design were available. Despite the sensitive political situation, Jews, Christians and Moslems all participated in the seminar as guests of the Jewish Institute for the Blind.

This Passover vacation a similar follow-up seminar will be organized. According to Shabtai Deutsch, Director of the Department of Community Services at the Institute, these seminars help to break down barriers between groups, and they are very valuable in helping students raise their self esteem and develop life skills. This April, the theme of the seminar will be personal challenges, and the participants will decide on their own goals as well as take part in exciting tours.

"These teens are all mainstreamed in regular high schools where their blindness still presents a handicap whether in educational or social situations," explains Deutsch. "In our seminars at the Institute, the fact that all of these young people have a common denominator enables them to learn from each other while acquiring independent skills." Co-sponsored by the Jewish Institute for the Blind as well as the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare and the Joint, this project is part of the *Be-yachad* Central Service Center for the Blind. (see related story on pg. 2)

## Institute Project Revitalizes Beersheva Pre-School

The Dekel Pre-Kindergarten, or Gan Dekel, as the children call it is becoming one of southern Israel's most successful educational institutions. As a pre-school for the blind and partially sighted in Beersheva, this framework helps to prepare these youngsters for school. The Jewish Institute for the Blind can be thanked for matching the pre-school with donors who have undertaken the task of refurbishing the building and its grounds, transforming the pre-school into a state-of-the-art facility.

Children are transported to the pre-school from all over the Negev for a long school day, and the framework includes Jewish as well as Bedouin children. Just recently, the Jewish Institute for the Blind helped to forward funds from a large donation from "Hilfe Fur Blinde" of Basle, chaired by Dr. Jakob Silbiger.

"These funds will make a big difference in the quality

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Learning and exploring at the Dekel Pre-School in Beersheva



### Director's Corner

The Jewish Institute for the Blind is entering a new era. Approaching the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institute, I feel humbled to be a part of this national landmark. It has made its way from the Old City of Jerusalem in the year 1902 to our new large campus in Kiryat Moshe; moreover the Jewish Institute for the Blind is well known and respected for its efforts for all of Israel's blind and partially sighted.

As the centennial of the Institute will start in early 2002, the Institute will celebrate accordingly. The Israeli Philatelic Service will issue a new stamp commemorating the event, and also a medal will be designed by the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation. Not only are we proud of the achievements that have been attained over the years by the Jewish Institute for the Blind, but it seems as if the Institute is well known and recognized throughout the country.

Of course, the Institute cannot rest on its laurels for even a minute. There is always work to be done — new ways to help our students who are blind and partially sighted in addition to other handicaps which limit their studies in a regular classroom. More than ever, through *Be-yachad* as introduced in this issue, we are in contact and in a position to offer our services to the blind and partially sighted of all ages throughout Israel.

As we continue in our daily efforts, however, it is reaffirming to see that the Institute receives national recognition. We are proud and will continue to look for new ways to offer professional services as well as the warm care and attention that comes from the heart.

Please allow me to extend heartfelt wishes for a happy and kosher Passover.



Chaim Reshelbach,  
Director