

Integration Through Art



Art student prepares mask

Perhaps one of this year's most successful projects was a week-long marathon in which second and third-year art students of the Emunah College of Fine Arts decorated the Institute's dormitories. Moshe Ben-Mocha contacted the college adminis-

trative director, hoping to find volunteers to brighten the walls of the dormitory building. Not only did he end up with colorful and creative decorations, but a lovely relationship has started between the art students and the Institute's pupils who helped in many aspects of the project.

The dormitory of the Institute was built over sixty years ago, and its high ceilings and wide hallways give it a special charm. The art students fell in love with the building and accepted the project although it meant missing a week of their studies. Institute pupils were invited to an arts and crafts workshop and introductory meeting at the Emunah College. This proved to be so successful, the Institute pupils clamored for another workshop. When the girls initially visited the Institute, Ben-Mocha opened all the storage rooms to them, and basically with old musical instruments, fabrics woven by the blind and other tactile objects, the art students went to work. They insisted that the Institute pupils help in all stages of the process, and the two

groups worked together for a week.

And the results — artistically the project has been successful — the dorms have never looked brighter and better. Projects include braille anecdotes fashioned out of colorful beads placed on the walls which can be 'read', colorful wind chimes that the children can reach and activate, paper mache casts of faces and hands of pupils, wooden benches that have been painted in three colors, and a three dimensional bas relief made out of old instruments. An entire wall of the Institute's dining room is also decorated with woven fabrics that have been appliqued.

The art students insisted that in addition to aesthetics and bright colors, three-dimensional objects would be used whenever possible in order to ensure that pupils, both blind and partially sighted could really appreciate the decorations. Not only did the Institute's pupils enjoy working on the art marathon, but their dorms have been brightened immeasurably.

One of the Institute's Most Outstanding Employees

For 23 years, Mazal Tal worked in the glamour and glory of the fashion industry. Although for years she has lived in close proximity to the JIB, she did not have too much contact with them. When Tal took early retirement, she began thinking of a new career. Taking a close look at the Institute for the first time, she thought of employment possibilities here.

Today, as housemother at the Institute, Tal has developed a new career and a new love — the students of the Jewish Institute for the Blind. "My best qualifications were perhaps my own four children that I have raised," smiles Tal. And maybe that is what she does best — mothering. She gives a bit of advice to a child worried about a test; adds a smile and a bit of cheer in the morning to help a tired pupil rise; she brings a warm cup of tea to someone sick in bed, and offers sug-



Mazal Tal

gestions about matching clothing.

"I check on the students in the dining room where I can hear if there are any special needs or requests," adds Tal. Very often the students ask her to walk them to school just to have a few words with her or a little special attention. Or maybe someone would like help in preparing for a difficult exam. Later in the morning, there is cleaning and laundry that must be supervised, and just like most moth-

ers, Tal's job defies description.

Back at the dormitory in the evening hours, Tal checks to make sure special diets are prepared when they are necessary, helping a girl to steady her hand as she learns to apply make-up, and checking the rooms to see that all is in order. Basically, when she is needed, Tal can always be counted on, and the students appreciate her every effort.

"I find the pupils full of joy, and it is a pleasure to work with them," says Tal. And she has nothing but praise for the entire staff. "There is teamwork and camaraderie here, and everyone works together for the good of the students. It looks like Tal succeeds in being a fulltime mom, to her four children at home (her youngest son was just drafted into the Israeli Defense Forces), as well as the children eagerly awaiting her at the Institute.