



# WIZO Day Care Centers Lead the Way in “Green” Innovations

*Nothing is wasted in WIZO's 'green' day care centers; every piece of used paper, cardboard and plastic is recycled*

Sima Borkovski

“Our vision for our day care centers is first of all to improve our service and our commitment towards our clients - both parents and children,” says Hassida Danai, Chairperson of the WIZO Early Age Division, whose energy and dynamism belies her diminutive size. “It is important that both children and parents feel ‘at home’ in our centers, and that WIZO will provide all their needs. We

encouraged parents to be part of the process of change that we initiated this year. If we fail to communicate with our ‘clients’ eventually we might lose them,” she states. “Our goal for the coming year is to professionalize our day care centers and provide our care givers with professional training. Our staff is the most precious asset we have and therefore investing in them benefits us all.”



*Turning milk cartons into flower pots*

### *The Green Day Care Center*

"One of the new initiatives is turning our day care centers Green. We emphasize the importance of recycling materials, electricity and water saving, and of course issues like healthy food and hygiene are all part of the Green way of life," she explains. "From the very beginning WIZO concentrated on child care and education, and was the first to open day care centers for very young children in order to allow their mothers to work outside their homes and support their families. Our educational concept puts the child at the center and therefore we emphasize child enrichment in every possible way. Most importantly, we put an emphasis on expanding the children's educational horizons and musical understanding and developing their co-ordination skills. This coming year we intend to open a musical day care center and another one that will integrate the parents into its daily activities."

It seems that environmental issues are slowly finding their way into more and more WIZO day care centers as many of them try to incorporate Green activities into their daily routine. Even the monthly leaflet of WIZO's Early Age Division publishes a "monthly Green tip".

The Even Yehuda day care center, located in the Sharon area in central Israel, is famous for being Green and eco-friendly thanks to its director, Liat Ribovsky who is known for her keen awareness of environmental issues.

Nothing goes to waste, and Ribovsky's room functions as the center of recycling activity as all the plastic bottles, cans and cardboard boxes find their way there.

"My staff already know that paper and plastic should not be thrown into the bin and what began as a personal quest of mine has become the agenda of our center," Ribovsky states, pointing to the corner of her room where the plastic bottles and cans are stored.

Afterwards she proudly shows me her work folders where packages of cereal boxes function as dividers.

### *Imaginative Uses of Waste Paper*

"There are many ways to save paper. For example, after birthday parties we always collect and save the paper decorations, our children draw on used paper and later on we collect the paper in special bins. I have an agreement with Amnir, a company that recycles paper, and since we have collected large amounts of paper they give us all the paper we need for our activities. So thanks to our recycling activity I managed to reduce our expenses and reached the amount of 1.5 tons of recycled paper," she says with pride. "I also try to re-use every piece of paper like envelopes and packages."

"We try to be creative with our waste and create various activities for the children. For example, bottle corks are sorted out according to size and used in different kinds of games."

A tour of the premises reveals the various and amazingly original ways to use waste for the benefit of the children. Why throw away plastic and tin cans when you can turn them into toys? A hole is pierced in the plastic lids of boxes (that previously contained food) and then the children push wooden sticks through the hole. Another coordination improving activity is created with plastic pipes which are fit into a box and the children place plastic rings one on top of the other. Instead of throwing away old mattresses the material was re-used for the benefit of the children. The mattresses were cut into squares; slits were made on top of them and the children enjoy pushing discs inside them.

"A while ago we received quite a large amount of cardboard boxes so we wrapped them with colorful paper and made building boxes from them. When the boxes are worn out we replace them with new ones. Many of our activities and games are made of recycled materials. Even wrappers from candies and snacks are re-used. We stick them and other kinds of materials onto a large board and the babies can touch and squeeze them," explains Ribovski.

It seems that there is no end to creativity when it comes to creating toys from recycled materials; many of them improve the co-ordination skills of the children. The point is to think before throwing something into the bin where it can be useful to no one.



*Tel Mond day care center director, Ronit Schachaf-Liran. On the wall a tapestry from recycled material*

## WIZO Education



*Pushing discs in pieces of an old mattress*

- > We all know how children love to dress up, but why buy special costumes when you can use old clothes and hats from WIZO's second-hand clothing stores? "Here in the toddlers' class we have a special section where they can play with different kinds of hats. It's both educational and also economic since we didn't have to spend funds purchasing these items." In addition to the emphasis on eco-friendly activities, Ribovski pays special attention to the professional training of her staff. "I do my best to give my staff professional training and when I see a talented care-giver I will immediately encourage her to take WIZO's professional care-givers' course. I believe such training gives them better motivation to work and advance themselves," she states.

### *Save, save, save*

Not far from Even Yehuda, at a different day care center located in Tel Mond, similar eco-friendly activities take place. Here as well the Green spirit is the initiative of its director, Ronit Shachaf-Liran.

"I took a Ministry of Environment Protection course by which I am a supervisor and protector of animals and the environment. I can actually fine people who throw garbage on the streets," she says. "I felt it was very important to start the change here and turn this day care center into a Green environment. Being Green is not only about recycling but also involves

a change in one's behavior. For example, air-conditioners should be turned off when the children go outside to the yard and of course electricity should be turned off when you leave a room. I constantly try to save electricity and the parents are already used to the fact that our entrance is a bit dim. Gradually my staff became accustomed to my way of thinking and I don't have to keep reminding them to turn off lights. Now I feel that we work in complete cooperation and they even come up to me with ideas of their own," she says.

Shachaf-Liran proudly shows me around the classes where children are engaged with their mid-day activity – outside in the yard and indoors. We see a live presentation of the children's work with recycled materials. None of these games

### **WIZO Innovations**

WIZO operates innovative projects that bring a spirit of change to both children and their parents. These projects are made possible thanks to the generous support of WIZO federations.

**WIZO's Parents' Hot Line:** Although this project has already been in operation for two years, it is still extremely important. Parents of young children from all over Israel can call this hot line and ask the advice of experts regarding problems they encounter.

**First steps in Math:** A unique kindergarten project recently opened at the Ramat-Israel day care center in Tel Aviv. Thirty-five children study math and geometry in small groups of four to six children. This program is made possible thanks to the support of the German Federation.

**Refuge for early age children:** An exclusive program for

children at risk and their parents, encouraging parents' involvement in the process of rehabilitation of the children acknowledging the central place of the parents in their children's lives.

**The Green day care center:** A new center that has recently opened in Tel Aviv, containing three classes - for children, toddlers and babies. This day care center is part of a new campus presenting a new educational approach. (see page 7)

**The musical day care center in Kiryat Gat:** Musical education and workshops for the children of this special center is made possible thanks to the generous support of WIZO Holland. The children and the staff enjoy musical education, concerts and music classes. This day care operates as a bridge between the city's residents and its Ethiopian community.

were purchased and all of them were prepared by the staff. But the children don't seem to mind. They love to push all kinds of objects into plastic boxes (that previously contained food), place plastic animals on Plasticine coated trays and engage in various other recycled activities.

Once a week the children enjoy a special activity with various petting animals; organic waste is collected and given to the animals. The leaves that fall on the ground are also being collected into a plastic bag and later used as fertilizer.

### *Curtains as aprons*

"I plan to create a special section in our yard where recycled toys will be made," says Shachaf-Liran. "I try to create awareness about the issue of ecology both among my staff and among the parents. For example, on birthday parties we ask parents not to use disposable plates or polystyrene. Parents also bring us all sorts of materials from their homes that we can re-use instead of throwing them away.

For example, we received a huge carpet from a family that moved out of their apartment. The carpet was cut into squares and they are used as boards. We also took an old curtain, cleaned it and used the fabric as aprons for the children. Even our babies enjoy recycled toys. Different kinds of fabrics were sewn on top of pieces of material and babies crawl on them and feel them."

Eco-friendly behavior is very much part of the center's routine. One can see recycled artifacts in every corner - flowerpots made of empty milk cartons and different kinds of decorations made of recycled materials.

"I feel that the change starts from within and if people start thinking differently they will act upon their thoughts. When I explain to my staff the benefits of being Green I get their full cooperation," concludes Ronit.



*Babies feeling different textures*



*Even Yehuda day care center director, Liat Ribovsky*



*Containers for recycling batteries*

### *Attentiveness towards children and their parents in the community*

The Early Age division believes in the involvement of parents and their participation in the daily activities of their child's day care center. The professional staff participates in workshops where they are given tools to conduct a better dialogue with the children's parents and learns to be attentive to their needs.

Hassida: "I find it extremely important that we work in full cooperation with the parents so they are relaxed leaving their children in our day care centers while they go to work. We need to apply some changes and elevate our services in order to attract parents who look for high standards of education for their children. My vision is that our staff will work in cooperation and full transparency with the parents so they feel that WIZO gives them the best service," she explains. ■



*Nothing goes to waste, even greeting cards are re-used*



*Liat's work folders from recycled cereal boxes*