



I was very honored to be chosen as one of the Canadian representatives to the Lapid Seminar in January. It was a very exciting and emotional week for me, seeing the projects that CHW helps fund. Intellectually, I knew that we were contributing to help build a better Israel by helping the children and women of underprivileged backgrounds, but I was lucky to be able to now actually see it. I can attest that nothing replaces actually being there, as opposed to hearing someone tell you about the work we do.

Our first visit was to the Rose Dunkelman Daycare Centre, which is located in a very poor, rundown neighbourhood. The daycare has approximately 80 children. Many are subsidized, as the parents cannot afford the tuition. Most of the children come from disadvantaged family backgrounds. Consequently, enhanced, enriching programs have been instituted in their daily play and learning activities.

During our visit, we saw toddlers and children up to five years of age. They were clean, happy and well-fed. We saw the staff amusing the children, leading them in songs and watching them at play. The teachers exuded energy and devotion. We were also shown where our fundraising dollars had gone: renovations in the bathrooms, tiles over the sand in the outside play area, as well as new and safe equipment for the children to climb on.

The nursery and the classrooms were bright and cheery, with pictures on the walls. Quite a contrast to the outside world they were coming from! They had a beautiful and modern daycare centre to play in and were not aware of the tenements surrounding them.

We also visited the Clara Balinsky Daycare Centre, which of course, has special meaning for me as a member of the Anna Zaitchick Chapter of CHW Montreal Centre. The daycare centre has three pre-kindergarten classes and nurtures over 70 children, including 18 babies. We met the director of the daycare centre and the teachers, who spoke with enthusiasm and love for the centre. The Emergency Appeal in September 2009 which raised funds for renovations was put to good use. The classrooms and the nursery all look modern, clean and cheery. The cribs are new and the babies look wonderful.

Funds are still needed to cover the sand in the children's play area because of tiny insects in the sand which leads to infection and makes it more difficult to keep the children clean.

A small percentage of the children come from poor neighborhoods, and some handicapped children are here, to help integrate them into a regular, typical facility. However, the majority of youngsters at the Clara Balinsky Daycare Centre are the children of Assaf Harofeh Medical Center's hardworking doctors, nurses and other employees. The peace of mind this gives the medical staff who have little ones at this daycare should not be underestimated. These are the healers and surgeons who take care of terror victims and tend to other emergencies daily, and they function with much less stress just knowing that their children are in loving, competent hands while they work.



Recycling, a relatively new phenomenon for Israel, is now being done at this centre. The children are taught about taking care of the environment and are selling containers and bottles to help raise funds for their school.

We were given a tour of the playroom which doubles as their security shelter. It was a surreal experience for us to be in a playroom knowing that it is also major protection against a terrorist attack - a normal reality for Israelis!!

We also visited the Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, which has grown tremendously over the years, serving approximately 500,000 people in the region. It has 800 beds, plus 120 beds for outpatient procedures. We saw the modern blood bank, microbiology labs and the emergency rooms. Everything was very modern and organized.

There is a huge, very modern cardiology rehabilitation centre, with the latest aerobic equipment. This facility was built with funds received from CHW Vancouver Centre. The rehabilitation personnel have added another exercise room to their wish list due to the long waiting list of patients.

The Esther Matlow Ophthalmology Department was very impressive. Everywhere we turned there were acknowledgements of thanks to CHW for helping build and maintain the health of the people.

We visited Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital which was an unbelievable facility. Where else in the world would you see a Heredi woman followed by her children, walking next to a Muslim woman and her kids? The hospital is a melting pot of nationalities. Our guide explained that the buildings are constructed of layers of steel and concrete, which can become a shelter and protection against chemical warfare missiles. Mindblowing stuff!!!

Our guide went on to tell us that Hadassah Hospital does not discriminate in their hiring practices and accepts all patients, regardless of background. We visited the Trauma Unit, a fantastic modern facility, headed by Dr. Avi Rifkind. I remember hearing Dr. Rifkind speak in Montreal about the unit and how passionate he was about the miracles that have been performed on their patients. I felt privileged to be able to see this facility. We passed the children's wing and saw how child-friendly it had been designed. We saw wonderful play areas, with computers and toys for children to keep busy while their parents are being treated. We were also lucky to tour the Chagall Windows and hear their history.

We also visited a shelter for battered women. The Executive Director met us and gave us a little history of the shelter. It can house up to 12 women and 25 children. The women receive therapy, guidance and support with the help of psychologists, social workers and the other women in the shelter. The goal is to make them stronger, independent and more secure so that eventually they can leave the shelter and find jobs, usually with the help of the staff of the centre, to support themselves and their family. The women usually stay from 6 - 12 months, longer if needed. We toured the shelter and saw how well-cared for the babies and children



are. The baby area was beautiful, with new-looking cribs, new tables and chairs. The playroom is in a bomb shelter, an integral part of the security that all Israelis live with. The bomb shelter is very well camouflaged with computers, toys and cheery pictures on the wall.

Two of the women at the shelter told us their stories of how they arrived at the shelter with their children. It was as hard for us to hear their stories as it was difficult for them to tell them. They expressed their thanks for our funding and the dedication of the staff. These women were ready to leave the shelter and start a new life. One of the women was 26 years old and the other in her 30s. Thanks to CHW and the wonderful dedicated staff, these women now have a chance for a better life for themselves and their children.

It was a very difficult visit for me, imagining how it must be for these young women to open themselves up to strangers. I'm hoping that they are strong enough now and proud of how much they've accomplished.

Our last visit before the start of the WIZO Seminar was the CHW Netanya Technological High School. The school is set up like a kibbutz with one-story buildings in a beautiful park-like setting. Yamit Shannon-Mizrahi, CHW Israeli Representative who accompanied us on the tour, introduced us to Yonatan Quart, the principal, who has been with the school for 30 years. He is a dynamic and passionate man who is very proud of what the students in his school have accomplished. The school takes in adolescents who have a huge gamut of issues – dropped out of all schools, drug and/or alcohol problems, skirmishes with the law, mental problems, high-risk families, immigrant backgrounds, etc. One of the social workers called it “the second Israel.”

The school has both a vocational side – teaching the kids a trade such as hairdressing, chef training, pastry chef, technical training on computers – or they can continue to pursue academic studies. Students were invited to talk to us and we heard how the teachers instilled a desire for them to succeed and continue their education. Their faces lit up when they talked about their teachers and the respect and love they have for their principal.

We were given a tour of the school and were very impressed by the state-of-the-art patisserie class equipment which was funded by Aubrey and Marla Dan. The pastry students have a store where they sell their pastry. We were treated to a wonderful and delicious array of fancy pastries which we enjoyed very much. And, of course, we were given a quick tour of their store, where we had a chance to buy some delicious and very professionally packed cookies. The school administrators, teachers, social workers and psychologists have all come up with an innovative program to turn the life around for these kids. These students study and are motivated and proud of their achievements. Rachel, an English teacher in the school for 19 years, was very proud to tell us that the Ministry of Education designated the school a model for other vocational schools to follow, and that the principal, Yonatan, was awarded a life achievement prize by the Ministry of Education. Everywhere we went, we saw the positive input CHW has had in these people's lives.



For me, the highlight of this trip was seeing the daycare centres and schools funded by CHW and World WIZO. Witnessing how well the daycare centres were run and visiting Echnat where drop-outs are turning their lives around, learning a profession and given a chance to get a job and make a future for themselves. Children, who were considered at risk at home, have a place to learn and get help from social workers and psychologists in a warm and nurturing environment.

Other highlights included visiting CHW Hadassim Children and Youth Village and meeting the children and houseparents. Speaking to Nicole, one of the housemothers, and seeing how well-cared-for the children are. Seeing for myself the love and devotion of the professional staff and teachers was so meaningful. Listening to the director of Kadima-Zoran shelter and seeing how women are being empowered with tools and resources to go out and become more confident and independent.

CHW Nahalal Youth Village is a beautiful campus and emanates energy and hope through the students, teachers and administrators.

The Ilse & Michael Katz Day Care Centre was very impressive. Inside the building the classrooms were very fresh and modern looking with lots of toys. The children were busy either playing with the teachers or on the computer. What was also very touching was that some of the mothers were in attendance playing with their children.

Visiting the projects we fund, and seeing how they give children and adolescents a chance at a future to become good contributing Israeli citizens who are proud of their country, made me realize how important our work is.

Also, being able to speak to some of the children and to hear the testimonials of the teenagers who now want to go to school and are encouraged by very dedicated and experienced teachers to do their best, was a very heartwarming and emotional experience.

After visiting the projects for a few days, the rest of my trip focused on the World WIZO Lapid Seminar. The keynote speakers were very professional and inspiring. They spoke eloquently, made the workshops interesting, and provided us with ideas on how to become persuasive ambassadors for WIZO and Israel.

Consultant and trainer Hamutal Gouri gave us suggestions and different methods on how to attract new members by mentoring younger members, sharing our passion, using new technology with traditional ways to build a bridge between younger and older members.

Leading Israeli political commentator and analyst Ehud Ya'ari updated us on the very somber situation of Israel and the international media. He also gave us a deeper understanding of all the political undercurrents going on with Israel and its neighbors. He communicated facts for us to be aware of to use in the defense of Israel. It is up to us in the Diaspora to combat the unfair and false impressions of current events in Israel presented by the media.



MARCY SEGALÉ
LAPID DELEGATE REPORT
JANUARY 2010

This message was also echoed by Celia Michonik, Chairperson, Public Affairs & NGO Department, and Brenda Katten, Chairperson, Public Relations Department. They spoke with passion and conviction about the challenges facing Israel, but also gave us a synopsis of the positive and exciting things taking place – medical research, new technologies and strategies for a stronger Israel.

Ido Aharoni, Manager of the Israel Branding Project, Israel Foreign Ministry, was a very interesting and exciting speaker, who expanded on how we can overcome some of Israel's false war-like image and emphasize Israel's very positive attributes, being a safe and exciting tourist destination.

I also have to mention Helena Glaser, President, World WIZO, Tova Ben-Dov, Chairperson, World WIZO Executive, and Sylvie Pelossof, Chairperson, Organization & Education Department, who did such a great job chairing and addressing the various meetings and giving us a deeper understanding of WIZO. Also, Michal Modai, Honorary Life president, gave us a very concise update on Israel and its security measures. Her delivery was both articulate and passionate.

Special mention should be made Sylvie who very graciously invited the Lapid participants for dinner before the start of the seminar so that we could meet and mingle with the chairpersons and speakers of the event in a social and informal setting. It was a fun evening for all and much appreciated.

I also have to mention that another constructive outcome of this seminar was the opportunity to meet so many dynamic women from all over the world, who share the same passion to help children at risk and empower women to take charge of their lives and take care of their children. Strengthening them strengthens Israel. All this is possible under the umbrella of WIZO and CHW.

In closing, my visit as a Lapid delegate was a very positive and exciting experience. I look forward to sharing my impressions of the daycare centres, schools and hospitals that we help fund with my chapter members, friends and family. I also wish to share with CHW Montreal the tools, ideas and techniques I learned during the lectures and workshops, to help us continue our good work and further empower our organization by attracting more members and increasing our fundraising.

Best regards,
Marcy Segall