

# Hands on Tzedakah Projects September 2010

## The Poor (8 separate projects that you can expand)

- + **The Hands on Tzedakah Financial Assistance Programs**
  - \* **Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service (Florida)**
  - \* **Boca Helping Hands (Florida)**
  - \* **Caridad Center (Florida)**
  - \* **Family Promise (Florida)**
  - \* **Neve Orot (Israel)**
  - \* **Romema Assistance (Israel)**
- + **House to House (Israel)**
- + **Mercado Global (Guatemala)**

HOT uses 6 Agencies and individuals to implement the **Hands on Tzedakah Financial Assistance Programs** in Florida, New York and in Israel. We have total confidence in the people we work with, review each case file, and insist that all government and private sources of funds are exhausted before we release any funds. Our dollars go only to help the cases we signed off on and only for the purposes we signed off for (rent, clothes, medicine, etc.). In south Florida we make grants to **Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service** (Boca Raton/Delray), **Boca Helping Hands** (Boca Raton), the **Caridad Center** (Boynton Beach), and **Family Promise** (South Palm Beach County). In Israel grants are made thru both **Neve Orot** (Jerusalem), which works with poor Russian immigrants, and a Private Fund that helps the **poor families in the Romema** section of Jerusalem.

The common denominator of all these programs is that none of them have the funds necessary to completely help everyone that come to them with serious problems. If you designate your contribution to one or more of these programs, HOT will be able to help more families that are suffering the ravages of poverty. There are few things I can think of that are more fulfilling than going to sleep knowing you have been directly responsible for someone not losing his home.

In Israel we make grants to **House to House** (H2H) to buy shoes and other day-to-day necessities for indigent children in Jerusalem; in Guatemala we make grants to **Mercado Global** (MG) to buy specific pieces of equipment, or to pay for trade classes for a population that was earning as little as two or three dollars a day before MG set up a cooperative that trains them and sells what they produce. If you designate to H2H more shoes and other necessities will be bought for indigent Israelis, and designations to MG will permit us to continue the process of "teaching the poor to fish", rather than just feeding them.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Hungry (6 Ways to feed the hungry)

- + **The Sandwich Programs**
  - \* **Leket Yisrael (formerly Table to Table) (Israel)**
  - \* **Beit Frankforter Community Center (Israel)**
- + **Dave's Kitchen (Israel)**
- + **Tova (Israel)**
- + **The Rabanit Kapach (Israel)**
- + **Boca Helping Hands (Florida)**
- + **Feeding South Florida (formerly the Daily Bread Food Bank) (Florida)**

Every school day in Israel, through programs being administered by the **Beit Frankforter Community Center** (12 schools) in Jerusalem and **Leket Yisrael** (LY)(formerly called Table to Table) (78 schools

outside of Jerusalem), HOT is providing a sandwich for some, and a sandwich and more for others, for approximately 5,000 students in 90 schools. Many of these children come to school without breakfast and we are concerned that many of them do not get much for dinner. LY has a waiting list of almost 40 schools and 2,000 more students. LY is charging HOT its cost of 48 cents per bag (HOT is getting the advantage of bulk buying and free food that LY gets as contributions) or approximately \$87 per child per school year.

As much as we try to help **Dave's Kitchen** (which HOT built) in Hadera, Dave never has enough food for the hungry in the poor Givat Olga section, and without our funding **Tova** could not feed the people she feeds in the Bukharan section of Jerusalem, nor could the **Rabbanit Kapach** feed the poor who come to her.

In south Florida, **Boca Helping Hands** (BHH) has moved into a new building and does not have the funds to meet the needs of the large (yes, large) amount of Boca's under or unemployed. HOT recently bought BHH a new commercial refrigerator/freezer and paid for them to have a freight elevator installed. BHH has only 5 paid employees (and over 300 volunteers, some of them full-time), so anything you designate for BHH goes directly to helping the hungry.

We recently bought backpacks for 100 children who are in the Federal School Lunch Program, in Miami's Little Haiti. Why backpacks? So **Feeding South Florida** can fill them every Friday, and the kids have food for the weekend. Many of these kids lost relatives in the earthquake, and when you add in malnutrition, it is pretty ugly. HOT has done very little for relief in Haiti because we will not change our standards which dictates our knowing whom we are dealing with, trusting them, knowing exactly what our money will accomplish, and not paying an organization's costs. HOT and YOU can help this poor community of Haitians by helping us pay for the food to fill these backpacks every Friday.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Youth at Risk (10 Projects that Give Kids a Chance)**

- + **Camp Fiver (New York)**
- + **Crossroads (Israel)**
- + **Bet Hayaed Merav (Israel)**
- + **Bet Elazraki (Israel)**
- + **Netanya Foundation (Israel)**
- + **Shearim Netanya (Israel)**
- + **The Caregiving Youth Project (Florida going National)**
- + **Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Israel (Israel)**
- + **Tech Careers (Israel)**
- + **All For the Kids - India (India)**

Several of HOT's projects to protect and nurture Youth at Risk pair off.

**Camp Fiver** was started almost 20 years ago by an ex-partner of mine who retired early to fulfill a dream, and now he has been responsible for hundreds of inner-city New York City youth having year-round mentors and summers at camp where they learn self-respect and that "they can do it".

**Crossroads** is in Jerusalem, and services predominantly American youth who have succumbed to life on the street and have lost themselves in a land that was supposed to be their roots. Mostly non-observant teenagers who have lost their self respect (see Fiver) and who but for the lifeline Crossroads gives them, and the Internship Program HOT funds, would go back to and probably die on the streets. The needs of both Fiver and Crossroads are too numerous to list.

**Bet Elazraki** (BE) and **Bet Hayaed Merav** (BH) are organizations on opposite sides of Israel that have a common mission. They both take care of orphaned children, but in many cases the children have living parents. How can that be? Sadly, many of these children have been abused and beaten and the State has removed them from their parents' custody. Both of these "homes" provide love and stability. I would

love to take you to see these kids. Both BE and BH have Bar and /Bat Mitzvah's and have even brought some of their "family" to the chupah. What do they need? Picture what your children needed and multiply that by two hundred kids, and realize that we will never raise enough for them, but if you designate here, HOT will fill more of these kids needs

**Shearim Netanya (SN)** and **The Netanya Foundation (NF)** are not related other than being in the same city and having the similar objective of taking care of children. SN is, among other things, a Day Care Center for pre-schoolers of a predominantly Russian population, and the NF runs an after school daycare, for a predominantly Ethiopian (and some Russian) schoolchildren, that HOT renovated. Both programs have continual needs. HOT also funds the shortage for a summer camp that SN runs for kids that would otherwise be spending the summer on the streets.

The last four projects do not pair off but run the gamut of problem solving.

We fund programs of **The Caregiving Youth Project** which gives respite, tutoring and other help to young children who spend a large portion of their non-school hours caring for a parent, grandparent or other relative. Not what you would call a fun childhood. Designations here help HOT make sure these kids get a chance to do well in school and have some fun.

And, we fund activities for **Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Israel** which pairs screened volunteers with children who have no role model and follows up to make sure the kids have a pairing that results in a meaningful long-term relationship. We need designated gifts to help restore some programming that they have had to cut because of reduced funding.

And we fund **Tech Careers** which was set up by an Ethiopian Israeli who knew that unless they could find a twenty first century career, that his fellow Ethiopians would end up members of a low caste society in Israel. We have bought flash drives, textbooks and funded many other things to help him develop a school to teach programming and other computer skills to young (20ish) Ethiopians. He has succeeded as many of them have found good jobs in High Tech (similar to Mercado Global in the section on **Poor**, we are facilitating the "learning to fish").

Last, but the furthest from least, in this section is **All For the Kids India**. Imagine a young man with a huge heart and excellent organizational skills, who has decided to dedicate his life to organizing Israelis who hike through India (don't ask me why, but after the Army, spending 6 months or a year hiking through India is what young Israelis like to do) and stop hiking for a month (or in some cases much longer) to deal with the poverty they run into. They teach in schools, fix and repair homes and schools, and they bring and buy things for the kids. He does not take much money from HOT. But he is expanding, and when he does I want us to be ready to help him

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Elderly (6 Programs you can help expand)**

- + **Holocaust Survivor Programs**
  - \* **Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service (Florida)**
  - \* **The Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel (Israel)**
  - \* **CLICK (Holocaust Survivors Fund) (Israel)**
- + **Project Ezra (New York)**
- + **Diplomat Hotel (Israel)**
- + **CLICK (Seniors - non Holocaust) (Israel)**

6,500 miles apart the problems are the same; the remnants of vibrant Jewish communities. Jews who suffered unimaginable depraved treatment. Their common bond? Living through the horrors inflicted upon them and surviving. They all have multiple scars, both physical and mental. Many of them, at this point, wish to live out their years as independently as possible. Group living reminds them of how they

lived "in the camps". **Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service in Boca Raton and The Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel** both pay for home health care, cleaning services, and visits to survivors by social workers, and the Foundation also provides funds for alert buttons, hearing aids, glasses and other "necessities". Both of these programs are short hundreds of thousands of dollars to give all of the help these survivors are entitled to. **CLICK**, an organization in Hod HaSharon, Israel has a have a special "**Holocaust Survivor Fund**" which is never big enough to give all the help that is needed.

**Project Ezra** is in New York City and services a very aged and poor population that includes several seniors over 100 years old. HOT through the years has purchased gravestones so elderly widows could see their beloved's names rather than visit an unmarked piece of earth, bought a bed for a 70 year-old living with her 90 year-old mother. Her bed was older than she (it was her first and only bed) and had springs popping out. HOT sponsors two group meals a year: one at Rosh Hashanah and one at Passover. For many of these seniors, it is one of the few times they ever get dressed to go out. There is so much more we could do with your help

**The Diplomat Hotel** houses many frail elderly in Jerusalem. Through the years we have funded many programs for the mostly impoverished residents. At this point what is needed more than anything else is home care and transportation. We need some designated funds to increase how we help these seniors,

In addition to their helping Holocaust Survivors (see above) **CLICK (Seniors - non Holocaust)** has 5 Centers where they have a series of programs that keep the elderly active. I have spent time at several of these centers, and it was clear to me that without the daily social interaction many of these elders would have little to live for. They made dolls and chachkas that were packaged and sold in a little novelty store. Not everything was sold, and none of it for a lot of shekels, but it gave these seniors a purpose. Many of the participants are disabled, and going to the center and working is "their purpose". In addition to other cuts this program has faced, they are now short funds for transportation. And without transportation there are no programs.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Special Needs (6 Critical Programs)**

#### **+ Special Needs Children's Camps**

\* **Camp Kavod (Florida)**

\* **Camp Shutaf (Jerusalem)**

#### **+ New Jersey Pediatric Patients Charitable Trust (New Jersey)**

#### **+ Pal-O-Mine Equestrian Center (New York)**

#### **+ Martin County Special Needs (Florida)**

#### **+ Martin County Best Buddies (Florida)**

**Camp Kavod** and **Camp Shutaf** represent another example of parallel programs (6,500 miles apart) for parallel needs. Both are camps for special needs children. In the case of Camp Kavod, HOT has bought equipment for science and photography programs. Since the parents of CS do not have a Federation and/or local generous people to help them, HOT supplies funds for scholarships. Any of you that have a special needs child in your family knows the incredible costs for intervention and therapy, and that when it comes to something like camp often the families do not have the ability to pay. I have visited Camp Kavod and seen the happiness on the children's faces. It is not something I can describe. Camp Shutaf has added a year- round Thursday afternoon program, and I am going to see it in action next month.

**New Jersey Patients Charitable Trust (NJPCT)** was formed by a friend of mine who recognized what a "special computer" or a "special swing set" or other specialized pieces of equipment can do to provide recreation and/or learning for children with a series of debilitating disabilities like Cerebral Palsy and Downs Syndrome. There is a never-ending list of children with these and other disabilities. In an attempt

to help as many children as possible, NJPCT has limited its help to \$1,200 per child. I would like HOT to be able to help more children.

You have to go to **Pal-O-Mine Equestrian Center** to see the incredible difference its riding programs make in the lives of physically, mentally and emotionally disabled individuals of all ages. Unfortunately very few families that include a member with these problems can afford even the discounted rates available to them. HOT has been funding scholarships at \$2,500 per rider, per year for this therapeutic service.

HOT created a real life experience for a group of "substantially developmentally disabled children helped by **Martin County (Florida) Special Needs**. These children are in special high school classes and intern in the morning at stores like Publix Supermarkets, and then go to class where they are taught "responsibility" and basic life skills that might ultimately result in their having some limited autonomy. By paying them a base-rate of one dollar for each day they go to work, with a 50 cent bonus for "a great day" and a 50 cent deduction for a series of X's (being late, sloppy, etc.), they learn the importance of responsibility. After more than six years the teachers are still amazed that some of the kids who responded to nothing else drag themselves to school to stay eligible for the financial reward of perfect attendance (they share the dollars that the students who stayed home didn't earn).

My same friend is the interface with the local **Best Buddies** Chapter that pairs off developmentally disabled kids with students on a regular academic track. I am proud to this selfless friend established **Martin County (Florida) Special Needs** which does far more than the programs we support. Jerry Cohen has been spending his retirement years helping kids who no one else was helping. My last sentence under this "Special Needs" Section is: "Jerry Cohen is a very Special Man."

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Compassionate Care (6 stories you want to read)**

- + **Camp Sunshine (located in Maine, but serving the entire United States)**
- + **Summit Institute (Israel)**
- + **Caridad Center (Florida)**
- + **Vets Helping Heroes (all through the United States)**
- + **Of Home Family and Future (New York)**
- + **A Social Worker in a Hospital (Israel)**

I just finished reading letters from two families that live more than 2,000 miles from **Camp Sunshine**. They thanked HOT for a truly life-altering week. Those two families each have a child that will probably not live more than another few years. Both sets of parents hurt as they see their children suffering and have trouble dealing and living with the reality that they will outlive their children. Each week, Camp Sunshine has families with a different illness spend a week in a camp setting where siblings (many of whom are resentful of all the attention their very ill or dying brother or sister is getting) get to meet kids who also have siblings with the same illness. The parents meet other parents; the ill child meets children with the same illness. There is time to meet as a group, as a sub-group, and to enjoy camp activities. There is no charge, but the family has to get to the camp. HOT originally started paying for transportation for families in Florida to get to Maine, but we have since expanded to families in other parts of the United States. Not all the children have a fatal illness, some have chronic illnesses that annually require weeks or months in the hospital or hours every week, or a few weeks in an oncologist's office taking chemotherapy.....Imagine having a week of fun and a week where everyone in the family sees that they are not alone and spending time being able to talk with the only people who "truly understand" what they are going through.....Imagine, you being responsible for more families having that chance... Imagine....

**Summit Institute** helps Israelis with a history of psychiatric illnesses. They do this in several different ways, but the program HOT has been supporting is their incredible Vocational Training Workshop in Jerusalem. It needs new machines in their Carpentry, Sewing and Assembly and Packing Workshops. By teaching a trade they can teach self-respect and responsibility. It is not a cure, but it is a big step.

More than a hundred doctors and dentists volunteer their time at **The Caridad Center** taking care of an under-served population of mostly migrant farm laborers. Many of the doctors and dentists speak little or no Spanish (the predominant language of their patients), but communicate through bilingual nurses, dental hygienists or dental assistants. The one field this can't work in is psychiatric or psychological services. HOT has paid for a part-time clinical social worker whom the patients can trust and communicate with. We began this program almost 5 years ago, and to continue it we need a donor or donors to come forward and designate their gift to help these people.

32/220. What do these numbers mean? Whether it is Afghanistan or Iraq or anywhere else in the world American soldiers go to protect liberty and freedom. There are soldiers who return with missing limbs, with partial paralysis, or worse. Many of these kids (not a typo, most are young kids) can gain some sort of independence with a service dog (yes, dogs can be trained for more than leading the blind). Depending on the life of the vet and his dogs, it is estimated that purchasing the dog and training it will cost approximately \$50,000. Oh, the 32 and the 220? **Vets Helping Heroes** has purchased 32 dogs but still has a waiting list of 220 vets.

Another friend had a dream which HOT is helping become a reality. He and his wife, a psychologist, recognizing the difficulties a battered and abused wife and her children have, decided they, in addition to making generous contributions, would cover all the expenses (where do you think they got that idea?) of **Of Home, Family and Future** (OHFF); an organization that works with women and their children to stabilize their lives and give them a chance at a future. It is a partnership between the woman, their children and OHFF. The women will get help preparing for and obtaining a job, and OHFF will also pay for child care and psychological counseling, and supply mentors and tuition for the woman and/or her children, but only if they will work towards a future.

**A Social Worker in a Hospital** in Jerusalem comes to us a few times a year with the difficult financial problems of indigent patients. Checks and balances? We send our check to the hospital and they confirm the problem and disburse 100% of what we send.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Student Community Service Projects**

For 7 years HOT has tried to interest the faculties of local high schools and colleges to challenge their students to come up with ideas where the students would spend their time, and HOT would spend the money, on community service projects. It is one of the few, maybe the only area where I feel HOT did not meet or exceed my expectations.

The organization that is currently taking most advantage of this very broad offer is Hillel through their chapters on the Boca Raton campus of Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and the Gainesville campus of the University of Florida (UF). Hillel sponsors "Alternative Breaks" where students instead of spending their free time at the beach or skiing, travel to places like New Orleans and help rebuild it. The UF chapter has also done a lot of work with the indigent in Gainesville, and HOT has paid for paint for them to paint houses.

I may be too hard on myself on how I evaluate this project as we have had almost a dozen successes through the years ranging from students from Pope John Paul II High School under the supervision of an Art Teacher, teaching art to a bunch of kids that live in a trailer camp (HOT paid for the brushes and the paint) to paying the transportation for a young woman to go to Uganda to teach Arts and Crafts

techniques, and ended up spending half of every week teaching High School Math, and English, to children living in one of the most impoverished countries in Africa

\* \* \* \* \*

## Victims of War and Terror

+ **Israel Emergency Fund (Israel)**

+ **The Organization to Support the Fiancees of Fallen Soldiers of the Israel Defense Force (Israel)**

Hezbollah (Lebanon) in the North and Hamas (Gaza) in the South. Add a border with Syria, throw in a few suicide bombers, and even with the recognition, as a State, by the bordering Jordan and Egypt, it takes a very special kind of person to live in Israel. In addition to constant fear, in the last few years Israelis have had to move south to avoid the missiles from Hezbollah, and north to avoid the missiles of Hamas. HOT has paid for a Civilian Command Center in Shlomi, and for psychological help in Kyryat Shmona (both on the northern border), and has paid to renovate a total of 9 bomb shelters allowing for a dual function: a second hand store run by teens for teens, a youth training and leadership center for teens, after-school day care centers, etc., etc.) in both Sderot and Ashkelon (both on the southern border). Additionally HOT has paid for thousand of meals and for the expansion of more than a dozen of HOT's on-going projects during the times of crisis. It is critical that we have an **Israel Emergency Fund**, so that we can act IMMEDIATELY if and when there is a new crisis.

While the Israeli government takes care of the families of its fallen soldiers, it does not consider a fiancee part of the family, nor does it recognize the realities of relationships in the twenty-first century. Think of the emotions of a girl (or boy) who has just been told of the death of the person they love, who they have been living with for five years or who they have been engaged to for a year. **The Organization to Support the Fiancees of Fallen Soldiers of the Israel Defense Force** supplies support groups and in certain cases individual therapy for these devastated young people. Nothing can bring back a loved one that was tragically lost in defense of their homeland, but with a professional helping them share their emotions with others who are living through the same agony, many of them are able to move forward and establish new relationships. We hope we are never called on to support another group (of around 10) and hope there are no relapses that will require additional private therapy, but if there are, HOT needs to be there

\* \* \* \* \*

## Victims of Natural Disasters

In the days that followed Hurricane Katrina, HOT was there and sent 10 trailer loads of requested goods to Mississippi.

In the days that followed Hurricane Wilma HOT was there buying and delivering basic toiletries and food and other necessities for those in south Florida who had no electricity for as much as a week..

In Guatemala, After Hurricane Stan and Tropical Storm Agatha, HOT was there to pay for food to be delivered by horseback and to buy the seed to replant the fields that were washed away in a series of devastating mud slides.

As I wrote earlier HOT did not expend a lot on the Haitian Earthquake Relief, because we were not satisfied that we could get aid to Haiti and be sure that it all got where we wanted it to go. We will NEVER waste our donor's money, If we can't do the kind of due-diligence we require, we don't get involved. As for the future, similar to the Israel Emergency Fund, HOT needs to maintain a fund for the **Victims of Natural Disasters**. Please help us so we can be ready and be there in those first few days when other organizations are mired down in meeting after meeting after meeting, all taking place when the aid is most needed.