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# Empowering Youth-at-Risk **ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY CENTRE**

## Ramat Hadassah Educational Youth Village

A Project Proposal | December 2020



## SUPPORTING THE PROJECT

Animal therapy is a proven successful framework in helping youth to overcome their difficult emotional and psychological trauma. Keren Hayesod invites you to be our partner in supporting the Ramat Hadassah Youth Village's Animal Therapy program which is open for all the youth in the village. With a donation of Euro 150,000 for 100 children for one year, we can support animal therapy education and empowerment, giving youth at risk hope for a brighter future.

## THE ALEXANDER AND IMBI KOFKIN RAMAT HADASSAH SZOLD YOUTH VILLAGE: SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING

The Jewish Agency's Alexander and Imbi Kofkin Ramat Hadassah Szold Youth Village, supported by Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, continues to transform young lives. Each year, some 250 at-risk youth from the ages of 13-20 begin their journey toward a brighter future. An additional 25 students' study toward 13th and 14th-grade vocational training degrees, many of whom are graduates of Ramat Hadassah's high school.

Most of the youth, as well as their veteran Israeli peers, come from severely disadvantaged homes where abuse, delinquency, poverty, and violence are common. Approximately two-thirds of the students at the Ramat Hadassah are new immigrants, the majority of whom are of Ethiopian origin and from Russian speaking countries, with the remaining students being native-born Israelis. Many of them are accustomed to failure, are school dropouts and/or were rejected by other academic institutions and consequently used to being judged negatively. Jewish Agency Youth Villages like Ramat Hadassah are often their last chance to integrate into the Israeli educational system, graduate high school and become productive members of society.

## ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY CENTRE AT RAMAT HADASSAH

Ramat Hadassah's Animal-Assisted Therapy Centre, in operation for the last 20 years, continues to impact lives. Its core objectives include:



Helping students **build resilience**, relieve stress, overcome feelings of isolation and improve social skills through therapeutic recreational activities.



Nurturing **feelings of success**, security, trust, satisfaction and enjoyment among the youngsters, while helping them deal with their fears and traumas.



**Bolstering students' confidence and self-image** while allowing them to personify their emotions through interaction with the animals.



**Facilitating a sense of calm** in the life of each child, with an aim toward decreasing violent behavior, encouraging patience and tolerance, developing health relationships and improving their ability to cooperate and listen.



Assisting therapists in **diagnosing each child's emotional** and mental state.

## 'A TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT'

Tamar is a sweet but fragile 17-year-old -- the second of four siblings who grew up in a violent and abusive household.

Soon after Tamar was referred to the Ramat Hadassah Educational Youth Village four years ago, staff members noticed her extreme shyness and fear of interacting with others. She would not talk about herself or her family. On the rare occasion Tamar mustered the courage to utter a few words, she would start to convulse. On occasion she would have emotional, angry outbursts. "We needed to get through to this wonderful child," recalled her therapist. "That's when we introduced her to Rexi."

Tamar's interactions with the brown Labrador retriever -- a therapeutic dog utilized by the Village's trained animal-assisted therapy staff -- would produce transformative results.

"We have seen tremendous changes in Tamar's behavior and in her social interaction," added her therapist. "Tamar's self-image and self-confidence have improved markedly. Today, she is a popular student leader who earned a certificate of excellence. Animal-assisted therapy helped trigger Tamar's breakthrough."

