

Youth Villages | The Jewish Agency

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Youth Villages

Homes and Services for At-Risk Youth

The Jewish Agency's Youth Villages provide normative, safe, rehabilitative, cost-effective boarding school settings for many hundreds of youth ages 12-18 who suffer from severe emotional, behavioral, and family problems.

The success of the Youth Villages is due to their holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, which includes educational support, customized intervention programs, intensive mentoring, and a variety of enrichment activities, combined with the values of Zionism and social activism. Intensive educational, clinical, and social work services help youth succeed in and complete high school and enter the Israeli army with their peers. Alumni receive ongoing services from Jewish Agency staff, including guidance on employment and finances, scholarships for vocational and college studies, and assistance preparing for college entrance exams.

Youth Villages were initially established to care for young Jews from around the world who arrived in Israel alone. Today, they provide an opportunity for Israelis to break the cycle of social marginalization and integrate as contributing, valued members of Israeli society. Since the establishment of the Youth Aliyah movement in 1933, the villages have educated at least 300,000 children. Each offers distinctive programs to help students overcome barriers to achievement and reach their goals:

Ben Yakir Youth Village, near Hadera, was founded in 1974 and serves 90 adolescent boys, most of whom are immigrants from Ethiopia. The village provides a wide range of therapies and social services — including therapeutic horseback riding, sports and music — with an emphasis on independence, Jewish values, and reaching one's potential.

Kiryat Ye'arim Youth Village, outside Jerusalem, was founded in 1952; today most of its 110 residents, in grades 7-12, are from Ethiopia. Course offerings include graphic design, film and agriculture; students also engage in therapeutic horseback riding. Kiryat Yearim's wide array of enrichment programming includes: "Kol Kore" (an experiential literacy program that helps new immigrants bridge language gaps), jewelry workshops, photography, sports and music, cooking, carpentry and gardening classes.

Hadassah Ne'urim Youth Village, near Netanya, was founded in 1948 and today is home to more than 400 adolescents, both native-born Israelis and olim from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Ethiopia. Hadassah Ne'urim's programs include, among others: sound and audio workshops; surfing; animal therapy; pre-army preparation; and carpentry.

Ramat Hadassah Youth Village, southeast of Haifa, was founded in 1949. The majority of its 280 residents are from Ethiopia and the FSU; most live in the periphery area of the Galilee. The village places a particular focus on teaching values and runs many programs on volunteering, personal responsibility and preparation for army service. Special programs include sports, hip-hop dance, and jewelry-making.

Neve Midbar is a Youth Village and residential high school that caters to several dozen Bedouin teens from southern Israel, who study core academic subjects, agriculture and ecology, in an environment that respects Bedouin culture, builds leadership and fosters the values of the state of Israel: democracy, equality, civics, and social activism.

Mimidbar Matanah is a Youth Village for boys aged 14-16 from Ultra-Orthodox families, who have dropped out of the yeshiva school system and need a nurturing alternative. The youth village combines religious Jewish studies with appropriate secular coursework.

Diplomacy and Shlichut in Youth Villages: This program provides opportunities for at-risk teens who live in Jewish Agency Youth Villages to learn about Diaspora Jewry and about issues of national importance in Israel, increase their communication skills, and participate as campers in a Jewish summer camp in North America, where they both represent their country and engage with peers from overseas. The program launched in the fall of 2021 at the Presidential residence.

Watch Olympian Anat Lelior visit Hadassah Neurim Surf Ranch and talk to students:

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