

Securing Ofakim's Future

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



Developing Grassroots in a Desert Town

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A small group of university graduates native to the development town of Ofakim joined together 18 years ago, with the common purpose of strengthening their home community in every way. Together, they returned home and created a platform for informal education, social support and empowerment. The platform was called “Afkei Orot” and they quickly earned the respect and partnership of local schools and city officials.



Today, “Afkei Orot” numbers 85 families. Every member is wholly committed to their voluntary activities while maintaining outside paid employment. The organization maintains a 15 member professional staff and a large corps of volunteers.

The Community of Ofakim

The Ofakim community numbers 25,000 residents. The population is a mix of early immigrants from North Africa and India, immigrants from Ethiopia who arrived in the 1990's and other populations, most from difficult backgrounds. 2500 children are enrolled in the local school system and 150 of them have been labeled "at-risk" by the local authorities.

Communal Influence

Working closely with the staff and administration of local schools, parents and the city, Afikei Orot strives to reach each child and teenager and ensure healthy relationships with their core families, skills to compete with other populations and access to opportunity. Programs are designed to increase a sense of communal involvement and responsibility and ultimately to improve the social welfare, communal and educational status of all.



Afikei Orot has developed its programs and reputation methodically over the past 18 years. Many programs are currently held in rented facilities and bomb shelters. A new facility will house the programs and educational performances and will become the central hub for all of Afikei Orot's planning and organizational activities, as well as providing meeting places for improving the lives and future prospects of the children in Ofakim.

Program Highlights:

After School Programs for

- 1. Special needs children and youth**
- 2. Children at-risk**
- 3. Youth at-risk**

All after school programs are run in full cooperation with the welfare and education authorities and supervised by volunteers, qualified social workers and counselors.

Jewish Culture and Identity

The Center for Jewish Identity offers value-based programming in local schools. Issues of Jewish and Zionist identity are explored through workshops and discussions. Jewish holidays, interpersonal relationships and the importance of charitable acts are taught through interactive dialogue, drama and discussion.

The Ofakim Sustainability Center deepens the environmental awareness of children and adults and increases the value placed on environmental protection through educational activities and programming.

The Women's Empowerment Program offers courses and events for local women. The program provides them with an opportunity to break from work and family routines and learn to improve skills and opportunities and to explore their creativity for intellectual and spiritual health and growth.

Communal Connection at Jewish Holidays presents an opportunity for Afikei Orot to reach out to those who are in need, alone or unfamiliar with local customs and celebrations. Activities promote inclusion of people at all levels of ability and limitations.

- **"Sukkot in the Community"** is a week-long series of social and cultural events and activities for all ages.
- **"Singular Sparks"** are workshops and performances developing the themes 'Respecting Others' and 'Understanding the Differences Between Us' during Chanuka celebrations each December.
- **"Shuk BiShvat"** is an opportunity to connect the community with Jewish sources in nature in celebration of Tu BiShvat. Activities are centered on the local fresh produce market, connecting Jewish heritage with the land of Israel and the importance of nurturing ourselves and protecting and sustaining our environment.
- A **"Communal Passover Program"** Afikei Orot conducts a communal "Seder" for needy families and individuals without family, and distributes food packages to hundreds of needy families for the holiday.



Capital Campaign: Afikei Orot's "A Child's World" Center

"A Child's World" Center in Ofakim will be a magnet for children, teens and young parents. The Center's mission is to inspire the young and young at heart to strive for excellence and achievement.

Afikei Orot has purchased an ideal plot of land in the heart of Ofakim, walking distance to most local schools, offering accessibility to all children and their parents.

"By giving children open-minded values-based opportunities we help them develop their minds and their spirits, with confidence. These experiences will help them grow into well-educated adults with many opportunities in life."

Yaron Bunfad, CEO of Afikei Orot

The Project

The "Child's World" Center, designed by award winning architects "Zarta" as an inviting hub for children, teens and adults, will be a two-storey, fully accessible facility with an intergrated rooftop meeting center.

The Center is designed to attract people of all ages and encourage community involvement through engaging activities. It will serve as a resource center for educators and program organizers and host daily programs for children and teens from disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents and members of the community at large will also benefit from year-round inclusive programming.



Ground floor

- Ecological landscaping for the Afikei Orot sustainability and community gardening programs.
- After school programs for disadvantaged children.

Second floor

- Seminars and workshops for adults and teens.
- A resource room will service informal educators who prepare Jewish identity, value-based and holiday-related lessons to be used in the local schools.

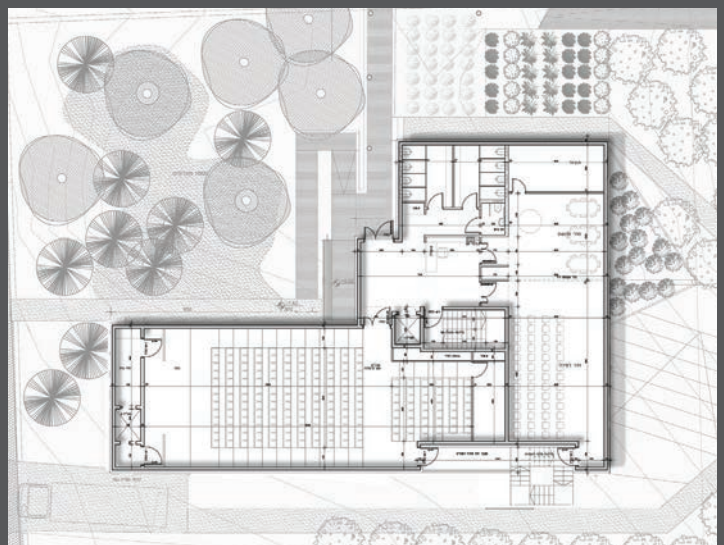


The youth club

- A dedicated youth club will serve the teenagers in Ofakim. The club will offer a comfortable and inviting environment for teens with music and games.
- Regular courses and interesting classes for teens.
- Ongoing programs and activities of interest to the youth in Ofakim.

Rooftop

- The integrated rooftop and meeting center will be used for gatherings and events.
- Teenagers, in particular, will benefit from having their own space, apart from the younger age groups. The rooftop will serve as a more wholesome teen meeting place than the current alternatives in town.



The "Child's World" is expected to be operational in the first half of the academic year 2016-2017.

Thank you for your generous support.

Donations to "Afkei Orot" are tax deductible in the USA and Israel.

Israel checks are payable to:

"Hamercaz Lechinuch Yehudi Tzioni – Bet Midrash Letorah Vehalacha Ofakim"

U.S. Checks are payable to:

P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc. Israeli tax ID # 580293728, with 46a Israeli tax status.

With a note to earmark it for: "Hamercaz Lechinuch Yehudi Tzioni – Bet Midrash Letorah Vehalacha"

Afkei Orot Partners include:



משרד הרווחה והשירותים החברתיים
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