

Activity Report

The Year of the Coronavirus

2020 & Early 2021



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Inclusion for People
with Disabilities

Activity Report

The Year of the Coronavirus 2020 & Early 2021

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Table of Contents

Foreword from SHEKEL's CEO	5
Foreword from SHEKEL's Vice Director General	7
Professional Development and Training	10
SHEKEL's Continuum of Services	13
Nationwide Activity	21
The Israel Center for Accessibility	22
Special Education	25
Therapeutic Centers	29
Education, Culture and Leisure	32
Regional Activity	37
Jerusalem Area	38
Central Israel	42
Southern Israel and Shfela	46
Administration	49
Resource Development and Public Relations	50
Logistics	56
Finance	58
Human Resources	60
Program Evaluation	61





Foreword from SHEKEL's CEO



"You can't choose the events in your life, but you can choose how to deal with them." (Zig Ziglar).

Once the coronavirus broke out, it brought crises in the health, economic, and social realms, which affected us all. We learned that even good programs are merely the groundwork for future change and the unlimited flexibility of the mind. The pandemic truly tested our ability to respond quickly in order to prevent the spread of the virus. We discovered that with proper management, we can immediately implement adjustments and solutions while maintaining SHEKEL's high professional and humane standards. Thanks to cautious, out-of-the-box thinking and strong faith in our human capital and strengths, we managed to maintain multiple high-quality solutions for thousands of people and even advance SHEKEL's diverse activity.

The difficulties we faced influenced every sphere of SHEKEL activity, its staff, and in many ways- the recipients of our services:

- We dealt with the absence of multiple employment and leisure program staff, while requiring extra staff in the independent housing program due to the lockdowns and quarantines.
- We managed to reinstate and replenish our staff when many took a leave of absence following three lockdowns and some did not return to SHEKEL.
- We dealt with the need to keep residents occupied and deal with behavioral problems as well as physical and health issues.
- We safeguarded the difficult guidelines enacted by the Welfare Ministry preventing in-person meetings between apartment residents and their families.
- We overcame the closing of our vocational centers and their re-opening in capsules, despite the difficulty in preventing interaction and social gatherings that characterize SHEKEL activity.
- We dealt with the conceptual change in our leisure activity, implementing activities in small groups within the apartments themselves while constantly seeking creative alternatives.
- We purchased and distributed equipment and protective gear in all apartments and activity locations. We provided staff with upgraded online equipment in order to ensure continued management and supervision of their units.



The SHEKEL organization, including its many participants, staff, and management, had to quickly and comprehensively respond to the crisis in order to preserve high standards while exercising special sensitivity due to the restrictions. We placed our participants' health above all other concerns, and this policy prevented illness time and time again.

We quickly responded to the crisis by opening a "Coronavirus Emergency Forum" for the management team, which convened daily and responded to government guidelines in real time. The Forum implemented directives immediately and with flexibility, responding to the various developments while continuously circulating updates and guidelines among staff. This helped them effectively deal with all aspects of our participants' lives, such as their physical and emotional health, leisure activity, mobility, contact with their families, as well as with issues relating to staff, budget, equipment, and special situations.

During the ongoing intensive activity during the crisis, we managed to open additional apartments and a new daycare center, and implement renovations in other apartments and activity centers.

We managed to overcome the hurdles and emerge stronger than before. We began to understand how the crisis could be leveraged to create new projects. All of this is thanks to our dedicated staff, who devotedly worked day and night with the conviction that almost anything is possible so long as we remain determined to maintain our participants' health and lifestyle. No pandemic can withstand such conviction and teamwork.

This Activity Report presents SHEKEL's continuum of services, nationwide activities, regional activity, and administrative departments.

- ♥ Thank you to each and every one of our staff and their families who gave their support.
- ♥ Thank you to the many volunteers who came forward to help in every way despite the difficulties entailed.
- ♥ Thank you to the donors who lightened the budgetary burden during this uniquely challenging year.

Sometimes the toughest times can bring us to great heights. Never stop believing in yourself!!!

Clara Feldman



Foreword from SHEKEL's Vice Director General



Challenges during the Coronavirus

The year 2020 can be described as one of the most challenging we've ever had. The coronavirus diverted SHEKEL from its original track and changed the daily habits of our beneficiaries in their homes and workplaces. Instead of live meetings, we switched to Zoom. Instead of vacationing abroad with SHEKEL's apartment residents, we toured our local neighborhoods and appreciated nature anew. Instead of strolling freely outside, we delayed social gatherings and wore masks wherever we went. Our efforts at including our beneficiaries in cultural, leisure, consumer, and entertainment activity within the community - changed drastically due to social distancing and the economic crisis. All of a sudden, we needed to maintain social distancing, hygiene, and protection, apply quarantine measures when necessary, and develop a framework for working in capsules.

In Spite of the Coronavirus: How SHEKEL's Activity Frameworks Dealt with the Pandemic

Living in the Community

SHEKEL's Living in the Community residents displayed great mental resilience. Practically all SHEKEL residents chose to remain in their apartments throughout this challenging year, including during the Passover holiday, the Jewish High Holidays, and three separate lockdowns. This conveyed how the residents view their apartments as their homes and meet their needs via the staff.

Throughout the year, there was no lack in staff. The counselors were there for their residents – whether it was during the full lockdowns, the quarantines, or even during hospital stays. The counselors' personal relationship with the residents and their self-sacrifice helped them deal with the intensive work and burnout that characterized the year.

Employment

SHEKEL's vocational rehabilitation program maintained full activity, save for the first lockdown. The program adjusted its work methods to fit the Health Ministry's Purple Ribbon protection guidelines. The rehabilitative vocational program's



participants were regrouped to work in separate locations, and in capsules, Therefore, transportation to their workplaces was also rearranged.

Rehabilitative vocational frameworks presented a unique challenge during the coronavirus because dozens of beneficiaries from different places converge upon one complex and are prone to gather and infect one another. Therefore, program staff underwent special training in order to ensure separation between groups within the complex. The results speak for themselves, as no outbreaks occurred in the rehabilitative vocational frameworks.

Leisure Activity

Due to social distancing guidelines leisure activity was practically paralyzed. Still, the residents' need for leisure activity, relaxation, and entertainment – particularly during the corona crisis – increased, becoming a crucial necessity for their mental health. Therefore, staff invested special effort to continue activities via distanced learning, packaged kits to the apartment residents, and shared online activities.

Organizational Activity

SHEKEL's flexibility paved the way to success, and the staff's ability to disassemble and rebuild activity frameworks became paramount. As an organization, this year accelerated various initiatives such as infrastructure improvement, instant communications, and efficacy methods.

Adapting to Distance Working – Many SHEKEL employees adjusted to working from home via the necessary hardware and software. SHEKEL management immediately switched to Zoom meetings, allowing for daily conferencing to manage the crisis. The corona crisis became a forced, unregulated experiment in which we became exposed to the flexible work conditions of distance working.

Data Management and its Application in the Field – The coronavirus increased the need to digest an abundance of changing information, continuously changing government guidelines, and "fake news". This need encouraged us to manage information better and immediately develop tools in order to update our beneficiaries and staff, provide management with an accurate picture of the situation, and enable them to respond accordingly. Also, we distributed periodic flyers in order to disseminate the government's new guidelines as they were made public.

New Technology – Despite the increased workload, we intensely continued SHEKEL's computerization process by embedding the financial management, attendance, and activity management software. The coronavirus accelerated assimilation of these tools due to the need for distance working and accessing



information online. No less important was learning to rely on the digital software's efficacy and reliability.

Heightened Hygiene Awareness – The coronavirus modified SHEKEL's work procedures. This is primarily noticeable regarding hygiene, as policies were significantly updated, and new regulations were instituted. The Logistics Department's activity was very important as it provided technological equipment and mobility, coronavirus protection equipment, and food distribution when necessary in order to safeguard social distancing, and helped staff celebrate the holiday season with the residents. We assume the new hygiene procedures will continue after the crisis.



National Service Superwomen Team

Summary: "Never Waste a Good Crisis"

This quote, attributed to Winston Churchill, has become our motto during this challenging period. Authorship, it has become our motto during this challenging period. While this year has been one of disease, sorrow, and economic and emotional crises, it has also provided real opportunity for unity, initiative, volunteerism, support, and professionalism.

My thanks go out to all SHEKEL employees, volunteers, and partners, for all the hard work during this difficult time, as well as for their creativity and self-sacrifice. Thanks to you and the responsible policies we kept to, SHEKEL has responded so far with resourcefulness and success, and has become a model for dealing with the crisis as an inclusive social change organization for thousands of people with disabilities over a large geographic area.

Together we will beat the coronavirus and continue to serve our beneficiaries and employees.

Offer Dahari



Professional Development and Training



Activity during the Coronavirus

The coronavirus challenged us all. Despite the difficulties and uncertainty, we continued SHEKEL's wide array of activity by thinking creatively and putting faith in our employees and resources. We continuously held meetings (mostly online) with mayors, supervisors, and Welfare Ministry directors. We participated in steering committees on topics such as how to deal with the pandemic, advance Welfare Ministry services for elderly, adopt activities at daycare centers, and also participated in the Ministry's webinars. We held many consultations with parents interested in opening new independent living options, daycare frameworks etc. These developments convey public need, as well as high appreciation, for SHEKEL among parents and professionals.

New Therapeutic Frameworks and Services

Employment

- A Multi-Disability Day Center at the therapeutic farm in Kibbutz Ramat Rachel near Jerusalem.
- A vocational rehabilitative center and social business enterprise together with the "Dogiz" dog-walking company in Tel Aviv.
- The transitional program "Yotzrim Atid" preparing people with disabilities aged 16-21 for employment. The program has created inroads in the field and began operating in Jerusalem area schools.
- A Directional Center for diagnosing, training, and placing people with high-functioning autism in jobs in the Jerusalem area.
- A new branch of the "Hametzion" vintage second-hand store in Ramat Gan
- Equipment and outdoor renovations were completed at the Ramat Shlomo Day Center for People with Autism in Jerusalem.
- Renovations and expansion of SHEKEL's Open Space Farm in Kfar Shmuel

Housing

- Shoham – continued development of the Bayit La'Hayim permanent housing complex for low-functioning residents.
- Kfar Aza – development of a permanent housing program for low-functioning residents.
- New independent living apartments in Ramat Gan, Jerusalem, and Modi'in.



Quality Management Control ISO9001

We successfully passed an external evaluation of ISO9001 working procedures at the onset of 2021. This was achieved thanks to the hard work of the department directors and staff.

Development, Instruction, and Consultation

- Providing information to regional directors and participation in conferences, seminars, and professionals' meetings on topics such as: The Elderly and Disabled, Continued Operation of Activity at Daycare Centers, Individualized Development Models, Future Orientation, Life Transitions of People with Disabilities, Welfare Ministry Courses for Supported Vocational Rehabilitation Program Directors, and Motivation for Change.
- Participation in Welfare Ministry directors' meetings (online)
- Assistance and consultation for mayors, entrepreneurs, and parent groups interested in advancing housing and employment options within the community
- Advancing instruction and development of regional professional management teams
- Developing advanced training seminars for external bodies through SHEKEL's professional staff

RFPs and Bids

RFPs - Mobileye allocated special support during the coronavirus period. The National Institute/Bituach Leumi allocated special support for activity during the coronavirus pandemic, and for specialized small daycare center programs for people on the autism spectrum.

The Ramat Gan Municipality designated an area for the Hametzion store in Ramat Gan.

Bids - Despite the unique difficulties during this trying time, SHEKEL won several important bids as follows: the "Individual Response Basket" – a new pilot JDC program for individualized allocations, a JDC bid for purchasing apartments for the Supported Independent Living Program, and a bid to open a multi-disability day center in Tel Aviv-Jaffa (set to open in September 2021). We submitted qualifications for additional bids yet the winners have yet to be announced.



Plans for 2021

Nationwide Programming

Housing – Continued development of the Bayit La'Hayim permanent housing complex in Kfar Aza and Shoham; opening an independent living apartment in Kibbutz Ein Tzurim; opening additional apartments in Jerusalem, Ramat Gan, Shoham, Modi'in, and other areas such as Ashdod and Petach Tikva; and opening apartments for Sherut Leumi National Servicewomen in conjunction with the Bat Ami Organization.

Employment – Commencing activities at the multi-disability daycare center in Tel Aviv; opening new day centers at Kibbutz Hafetz Haim, Kibbutz Nachshonim, and Michlelet Rupin; expanding transitional employment activities including supported employment options in Central Israel; expanding training and studies; and opening another branch of the Hametzion franchise in Modi'in, Tel Aviv, Ashdod, or Rishon Lezion.

General Activity – Responding to RFPs, providing guidance and new services in accordance with new bids; adding new branches of SHEKEL activity; expanding current activities; and assisting in fundraising for new and renewed projects.

Consultation, Training, Follow Up and Evaluation

- Continued development and professional guidance, including planning and in-house consultation
- Formulating individualized advancement programs, general programs, and policies, in accordance with the Welfare Ministry's guidelines and the Disabilities Department
- Developing instructional and informational databases to include articles, staff enrichment material, and reading groups, and preparing study material divided by topic
- Initiating research and writing a research-based paper, including strategies, new therapeutic programs, and case studies while services are being implemented
- Continued development of working relationships and partnerships with the Ministry of Welfare, municipalities, businesses, universities, colleges, National Service, the IDF etc
- Participation in conferences, seminars, and professionals' meetings in Israel and abroad, as well as planning seminars for SHEKEL staff
- Developing instructional and advanced training for external bodies via SHEKEL's professional staff
- Developing technological initiatives in the fields of health, employment, and housing



SHEKEL's Continuum of Services



SHEKEL's continuum of services includes a variety of solutions regarding independent housing, employment, leisure activity, social activity, as well as an individualized response in the realms of mental health, therapy for children and youth, and accessibility. During the coronavirus period, SHEKEL dealt with unique situations including lockdowns and quarantine, and reorganized in order to safeguard the Health Ministry's safety precautions. These changes will be detailed in the coming chapters.



Living in the Community

SHEKEL's Living in the Community Housing Program seeks to enable every person with a disability to live with his or her family and community. The program aspires to provide every special-needs resident with a permanent residence, specifically suited to his or her needs, while ensuring a high quality of life. It aims to include special-needs residents in the general community by influencing societal frameworks and community institutions, and by creating an individualized integration program for the resident himself. The program provides professional solutions for people with disabilities and their families via two subdivisions: the **Living in the Community Housing Program**, which provides a comprehensive housing solution for residents with low to medium functioning, and the **Supported Independent Living Program** for residents with high level functioning. The housing program also creates housing solutions within the community for various local authorities, and groups of parents seeking a shared solution for their children's specific needs.

The Living in the Community Housing Program

The program presents different models of housing within the community, such as shared apartments (of four to six residents), apartments for couples, and apartments for individuals. The level of guidance each group receives is in accordance with its needs. The program provides staff who guide residents on every aspect of daily living, from the physical needs of running a household, cleanliness, food and equipment, to the residents' health needs, such as building therapeutic programs and follow up, escorting residents to community services, and seeing to their emotional and social needs. Responsibility for the residents is complete and comprehensive- around the clock, and year-round.

In the framework of the Living in the Community Housing Program, unique housing models were created, such as housing at kibbutzim, individual apartments for single residents living in close proximity, community housing for people requiring nursing care, and housing in the the community for high-functioning individuals on the autism spectrum.



The Supported Independent Living Program

The program includes apartments for individuals, married couples, and shared apartments. Residents independently rent their apartments and run their own households, but receive ongoing professional guidance. The Program employs a "tailored treatment" approach and mediation. It helps residents exercise their rights and assists them with social issues.

Living in the Community serves people from all sectors of Israeli society: Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, and is open to individuals with various disabilities, including: intellectual and developmental disability (light, moderate, or severe), major learning disabilities and borderline intellectual ability, physical disabilities (wheelchair users, or individuals with impaired mobility) and people on the autism spectrum (ASD).

Regional directors will expand on the details of activities in each of their geographic areas.

Vocational Programs

A person's ability to work is a central component of normative living. Therefore, SHEKEL's Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a central SHEKEL program. SHEKEL's objective is, on the one hand, to provide guidance in a way that challenges and demands high vocational skills from the participant, and on the other hand, constantly monitors the person's capabilities in order to fulfill his desires and ensure his quality of life. SHEKEL's vision is to provide an individualized employment solution for every person with a disability, stemming from a comprehensive outlook on his life, while recruiting the support of family members, professionals, and his social environment. Our goal is to maximize the person's potential, impart skills, promote economic independence, assist social integration, and provide opportunities for a variety of employment alternatives.

SHEKEL operates according to a **vocational rehabilitation continuum model**, which includes training and adaptation to a working world and entails a complex educational-rehabilitative process, choosing an occupation, acquiring appropriate skills, becoming familiar with the vocational world and its components, and developing social behaviors and communication skills. The transition begins at the person's school and advances to day center programs, rehabilitative vocational environments training, courses and advanced training, rehabilitative vocational environments, and finally supported employment positions in the free market.



SHEKEL typically works to provide individuals with vocational work in a format closest to standard jobs in the workforce. Thus, SHEKEL factories and workspaces look and operate similarly to those found in the free market, and operate according to ISO-9001 standards. A work contract is signed each year. Participants sign in as they enter the building and sign out upon leaving, and ceremonies and workplace activities are held as in any other company. There is also a program for participants' well-being, reflected in nice and cozy dining areas, gifts prior to the holidays, an annual field trip, and various social activities. Safety is emphasized in all work areas.

Transitional Programs

Effective transition to adulthood is optimally influenced by several factors, including the young adult's ability to develop appropriate skills and knowledge for integrating into the world of employment, his ability to live independently while exercising personal choice, the existence of opportunities for interpersonal relationships, self-advocacy and participation in community life. SHEKEL's Transition Program focuses on the transition stages from high school to adulthood, with the goal of preparing the young graduate for post-high school work life. The program is designed for adolescents with disabilities aged 16 to 21, providing them with several hours of employment experience in both rehabilitative vocational environments programs, enabling them to gain a feel for the field of employment and fine-tune their vocational aspirations.

Day Centers

Therapeutic nursing-care day centers are "fringe frameworks" for special-needs adults requiring close guidance and care, sometimes nursing care. They cater to people with developmental and low-functioning intellectual disabilities, some of whom are wheelchair users, people with physical disabilities and borderline mental disabilities, and people on the autism spectrum with moderate to low functioning. The centers hold therapeutic and educational activities, aimed at enabling participants to practice personal and interpersonal skills to attain greater independence in their lives, develop a higher sense of self-control, self-worth and satisfaction, as well as physical and mental wellbeing. Some of the day centers operate with an occupational orientation, depending on the participants' level of functioning. Day centers advance each participant by assisting in his or her emotional rehabilitation via therapists, physical rehabilitation via physiotherapists, and with the help of occupational therapists and nursing staff. The centers also collaborate with the participant's family through a social worker, and constantly invest in the participant's occupational and social advancement. The day centers also promote enrichment and recreation through activities such as therapeutic gardening, music, art, and activities with animals.



Rehabilitative Vocational Program

The Rehabilitative Vocational Program (or its alternative name: vocation-advancing work environment) is a vocational center for people with disabilities aged 21 and up who have not integrated into the free market. The rehabilitative vocational program provides on-the-job training. It provides two services:

- **Outsourcing for Various Customers:** Receiving external assignments without the need for investment in assembly line infrastructure. This means financial security for the employment factory.
- **Operation of production lines for sellable products in the free market,** from raw material to finished products, including marketing in the free market, while taking into account marketing factors (outputs, quality, meeting schedules, and prices), and the employees' therapeutic, motor, cognitive, and communicative advancement. The level of difficulty on the assembly lines vary (from simple operations to complex and meticulous requirements) and contribute greatly to the participants' skill development.

The combination of these two services affords an opportunity to choose from a wide range of employment-oriented tasks and attain a wide range of skills. In order to ensure employment continuity, transitions between SHEKEL's factories are applied, enriching employees' job experience and their familiarity with other employment demands. The factories motivate employees to strive towards higher vocational development, and the wide array of employment opportunities serves those who require rehabilitative vocational work indefinitely.

Regular and occasional volunteers from Israel and abroad work in the sheltered employment program. Their participation increases the employees' work output. Beyond their assistance with the day-to-day work, volunteers' participation helps fulfill SHEKEL's vision of becoming a meeting point between people with disabilities and the wider community.

Vocational Training Groups and "Industrial Rehabilitation" Groups

In recent years, there has been a need to expand opportunities for employment rehabilitation in the free market, while providing ongoing guidance, tailored employment training, and higher wages for advanced employment output. As a first step on the way to external employment, SHEKEL employees are given the option to transition as a group to a standard factory or business. Employees can transition either via a "trainee group" in which the group format is temporary and aims to prepare participants for individual integration in the labor market, or via an Industrial Rehabilitation Group in which the group stays together permanently. Working as a group in a regular factory allows employees to adapt to the job market in a tailored way, allowing them to discover their abilities,



improve their skills, meet demands while under pressure, practice working relationships with colleagues, and learn accepted norms of behavior in the job market.

Courses

The employment program offers a variety of training courses aimed at imparting essential skills for coping in the world of employment. The courses are taught in Hebrew and Arabic and combine theoretical material, frontal lectures, discussions, workshops, simulations, experience, guest lectures, and professional tours. Courses are offered at two levels: basic courses for imparting work habits and skills, vocational guidance, basic computer skills etc. and professional courses that provide specific training in various fields, such as cooking, horticulture, office management, and graphic design.

Supported Employment

People with disabilities work in the free market in an employer-employee relationship and are paid using a pay slip with an adjusted salary. The employee begins working in a place suitable to his interests, employment options, and the needs and style of the particular workplace. An employee in the free market undergoes a personalized introductory period, in which he attains work habits and discipline, allowing him independence in the workplace and the ability to independently travel to work and return on his own. At the end of the introductory period, the participant is accompanied by a counselor from the supported employment program, who arrives weekly or whenever necessary, in coordination with the workplace.

Marketing and Sales

SHEKEL markets products produced in its rehabilitative vocational environments while developing its own marketing methods. Products include candles, soaps, sewing products, nursery products, and others. The marketing system also locates and recruits new clients for the rehabilitative vocational program who are interested in outsourcing packaging and assembly tasks. Shekel's gift shop, "Shekel's Gifts of Love", publicly displays SHEKEL's activity in general and its rehabilitative vocational activity in particular. The store is located in Jerusalem. It conducts sales online via its website, and at special events around the country. The store itself serves as a venue for employment and vocational training.

The regional managers will provide details below on the activity in their respective areas.



Education, Culture and Leisure

SHEKEL's vision is to initiate and implement enrichment, cultural, and leisure activities that are suited to everyone and are centered around the needs of people with physical, intellectual, or emotional disabilities. These activities are implemented within the wider community while ensuring high quality of life and social integration. SHEKEL's Culture and Leisure Unit constantly balances between the need people with disabilities have to engage in activities and meet with their peers, and the need to integrate into normative community recreation with people outside their peer group. The department's goals are to promote and develop the person's abilities as he chooses, and empower him by focusing on his strengths. The programs not only enrich his skills but also strengthen his independence in the community in developing his social skills and expanding his circle of friends.

The department emphasizes the following aspects in its activities: respecting each individual's capabilities and interests, providing a sense of self-fulfillment, adapting activities to various disabilities while understanding the differences between them, providing enrichment and advancement through activities including learning how to best deal with the physical, mental, or emotional disability at hand.

SHEKEL's Cultural and Leisure Center operates a continuum of leisure and cultural services, from sheltered activities to supported activities, including participation in standard community study programs within the community.

Leisure and Culture Activity details are listed below in the Nationwide Activity section.

Children and Youth in Special Education

SHEKEL's vision for children and youth with disabilities is to provide quality therapeutic solutions and relief activities for children with disabilities who live in the community with their families.

The Extended School Day Program for Children and Youth extends the child's school day from two o'clock in the afternoon until five o'clock, and aims to provide him with enrichment, relief, nourishment, and physical treatment. The programs' goals are to ease the burden on families by allowing them to raise their children with severe disabilities at home without requiring an outpatient arrangement at their young age. The program also enables parents to continue working without the need to shorten their workday. In this way, the program assists inclusion for children with disabilities in the community. SHEKEL has been operating extended school day programs in



special education schools and kindergartens since 1992.

Details of the Extended School Day Program are listed below in the Nationwide Activity section.

The Israel Center for Accessibility

The Israel Center for Accessibility was founded towards the end of 1998 in order to increase knowledge of accessibility, improve the process of accessibility provision through planning and implementation of physical accessibility, and provide accessibility solutions for people with disabilities. The center has increased accessibility awareness, promoted accessibility in hundreds of projects throughout the country, and made many public transportation projects accessible. The center currently markets its professional advisory services to a variety of bodies, while developing expertise in several areas, including public transportation, institutions of higher education, access to services for people with disabilities, and building master plans for accessibility for municipalities.

Details of the Israel Center for Accessibility's activity are available in the Nationwide Activity section.

Therapeutic Centers

SHEKEL's Therapeutic Centers provide emotional therapeutic services for children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities (autism, intellectual and developmental, disabilities and mental health disabilities). The Center's Units include the following: Emotional Therapy, Social Sex Education, Treatment of Victims, and Treatment of Inappropriate and Abusive Sexual Behavior. The Center provides treatment services for individuals and couples, in groups and seminars, as well as parental instruction and caregiver staff training. Services are adapted to the type of disability and the cultural and religious background of the applicant in both the Jewish and Arab sectors. The purpose of the Centers is to give the person the best possible care, suitable to his needs and condition, while aware of his social environment.

The Centers' services are recognized by the Ministry of Welfare, the Disability Administration, and the Adult Probation Service, and are completely accessible.

Details of the Therapeutic Centers' activities are listed in the Nationwide Activity section.



Nationwide Activity

The Israel Center
for Accessibility

Dr. Avi Ramot

Special Education

Sally Magsimof

Therapeutic Centers

Aya Roth

Education, Culture
and Leisure

Ariel Nevo



The Israel Center for Accessibility



The Coronavirus Period

The Coronavirus came at a time when the Center was greatly expanding its accessibility projects in new neighborhoods, educational institutions, and transportation. Fifteen staff members worked on nearly 150 projects nationwide. The Center's organizational capacity was downsized, but remained capable of maintaining its operations at a reasonable level.

We initially began the coronavirus period by checking each of the Center's projects and the pandemic's effect on their advancement. It turned out that not only did infrastructural projects remain unharmed, they actually accelerated, as the roads were clear and it became possible to close off certain areas in order to easily transport materials. Building projects were unaffected during the lockdowns. However, other projects in which infrastructure was a minor component were greatly harmed; most were postponed along with any other project deemed non-crucial.

All employees were given special permits allowing free passage to construction sites. Still, we had problems reaching construction sites in places such as Elad, Modi'in Ilit, Bnei Brak, Kfar Kassem, and certain Jerusalem neighborhoods, as the guidelines for staff were not to enter these areas without special clearance. I had to personally check the accessibility of one particular neighborhood in Jerusalem, and despite my SHEKEL authorization, a police officer at the checkpoint insisted on providing a police escort.

Special consideration was given to high-risk staff suffering from chronic illness, chemotherapy treatments etc. These employees were forbidden to work at all outside their homes. Thankfully, no Accessibility Center staff were infected with coronavirus, but two were quarantined.

Activity

Similar to previous years, the Center worked with government entities, public institutions, and private clients. Approximately 150 projects of various sorts were completed. The following list characterizes the projects implemented:



The Ministry of Transportation – Activity this year was primarily in providing accessible ticketing and validation technology, and preparing legislative corrections in the field of accessible public transportation. We also provided extensive consultations for the Ministry of Transportation regarding class action lawsuits against them on accessibility issues.

The Light Rail Train in Jerusalem – Activity primarily centered on working with the Light Rail's new commercial operator, obtaining accessibility approval for the new train line, and implementing eighteen infrastructural projects for new lines set to open in the coming years.

Moriah Company – Work with the Moriah Company expanded considerably to include several infrastructural projects, such as schools' accessibility and public parks' development.

The East Jerusalem Development Company – Continued work in Jerusalem's Old City, including the Old City Basin

Israel's Knesset – Continued accessibility projects but with less intensity due to the coronavirus outbreak

The Government Tourism Company – Planning and construction supervision on 24 of the company's projects, particularly in the country's southern and northern regions

Mifal HaPayis – Continued consultations including participating in the design of its future lotto stations

Clalit Health Services – Supervising accessibility accommodations in 165 of Clalit's clinics, accessibility consultation for seven of its new clinics, and accessibility guidance in three hospitals

The Tower of David Museum – Accessibility consultation in the museum's renovation, including new technology for assisting visitors with disabilities.

The Haifa Center – Development of the Accessible Tourism Website for people with disabilities and their families

The Guidance Center – Provision of 44 counseling sessions via Zoom for nine clients and approximately 2,000 employees

Other Events

During the year it became clear that the government had not authorized the State Budget. Thousands of infrastructural projects depending on this authorization, including sixteen major projects by the Accessibility Center,



were stopped or slowed considerably. We concurrently advanced activity in projects not linked to the State Budget, or those that received special allocations for its continued activity. For example, the Light Rail Train in Jerusalem received approval of NIS 25m for its continued planning, and this included our NIS 800,000 contract with the company.

As we did not win the Ministry of Transportation's tender this year, we built an alternative strategy for providing transportation services for certain bodies in which we formerly had a possible conflict of interest. We have also accumulated invitations from many new potential clients.

Plans for 2021

There remains uncertainty regarding 2021- not only due to the coronavirus, but also due to the lack of a State Budget, the failure to win the Ministry of Transportation's tender, and other possible factors that may impede progress during the coming year. In the meantime, we have sealed contracts totaling approximately NIS 1m, as well as several small and medium-size projects awaiting the Center's involvement.

Dr. Avi Ramot



HaDvir HaChadash School field trip to the Biblical Zoo



Special Education



SHEKEL has been operating extended school day programs in special education schools since 1992. During the 2020-2021 school year, SHEKEL implemented extended school day programs in six special education frameworks - five in Jerusalem and one in Petach Tikva. Four of the schools are under the auspices of the Dept. for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and two are under the auspices of the Dept. for Rehabilitation.

The program seeks to ease the burden on families by allowing them to raise their children at home without the need for distant treatment at a young age. This allows parents an easier daily routine by not having to shorten their workday. The program significantly lowers the percentage of special-needs children in distant frameworks, enabling them to remain with their families and lead a normative routine.

Staff includes counselors, a doctor, social workers, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. The program is led by a director who builds an individualized therapy schedule for each student together with the school principal, and is responsible for follow up. The director serves as the intermediary between the school and SHEKEL. SHEKEL conducts fundraising for schools in order to purchase advanced equipment and improve therapy and working conditions.

Activity during the Coronavirus

The coronavirus posed many challenges. It necessitated great creativity in order to enrich students' knowledge while maintaining a pleasant learning atmosphere. Extracurricular staff, including all external enrichment and recreation staff, were prohibited from entering the building, and we were not allowed to take field trips or attend community functions. We also had to be resourceful in order to reach students and staff infected or quarantined. Special activities included building a support system for the families of sick and quarantined students' through our social worker, who provided emotional support and sent materials to their homes. The various educational frameworks, and how each dealt with the crisis, are detailed below.

The Hettena School for Severely Disabled Children

The Hettena School for Severely Disabled Children has 52 students aged 3-21, 35 of whom with severe intellectual disabilities, CP, hearing and vision impairments, motoric disabilities, and sometimes additional ailments.



The extended school day program operates five afternoons a week from 2pm to 6pm. Besides extracurricular enrichment, Hettena students receive a hot lunch, dinner, paramedical therapies, and field trips. Volunteers and donations help to expand the school's activity in general and the afternoon program in particular. In light of the students' complex therapy needs, SHEKEL also extends great effort in order to add staff to the morning program.

The extended school day program operated throughout the coronavirus period (in fixed capsules) in order to preserve students' health and calm. It was also meant to assist their families, who needed the program more than ever during the crisis. Ten students and five staff members contracted the virus, and both staff and students had been quarantined several times.

In accordance with the health guidelines, the program was closed to visitors. This prevented extracurricular activities from people who were not regular instructors. Still, despite all the hurdles, a routine was maintained. Therapy schedules in the extended school day program were ongoing, and staff went out of their way in order to be creative and improvise wherever necessary in order to conduct activities.

Hadvir Hachadash School

The Hadvir Hachadash School employs an anthroposophist method. It has 29 students aged 6-21 with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities - some with hearing and visual impairments, some with autism. The program operates five afternoons each week. Routine activity includes the following: communication, agriculture, carpentry, movement therapy, hydrotherapy, community outings, and field trips. Pre-holiday activities, plays, and field trips are provided thanks to donors and volunteers, and SHEKEL invests significant efforts in order to provide the school with additional staff for the morning hours as well.

The school operated in full capacity throughout the coronavirus period. During the full lockdown, it hosted a municipal emergency response center for several students who could not remain at home. Also, during the lockdown, study kits were sent to students' homes, including motoric equipment, sensory equipment, and i-pads, as well as food packages to needy families in conjunction with the Jerusalem Municipality. A distance-learning schedule was implemented that included four daily classes: a morning meeting, an activity instructing parents how to conduct activity with their child at home (gardening, baking, arts, or crafts), occupational therapy (physical therapy, contact therapy, and communicative activity), and



further enrichment for student's parents. In addition, teachers held Zoom meetings and video discussions with the students. Some classes were held via distance learning. During quarantine, we conducted phone contact with students' families.

The Eddy Shore Preschool

The Eddy Shore Preschool has 24 students aged 3-7 with various levels of delayed intellectual development. Most of the school's children participate in the extended school day program, which runs five afternoons each week. Routine activity includes the following: music, therapeutic dog training, animal care therapy, rhythmic activity, nature classes, community outings, and field trips. During the coronavirus period, activity continued in fixed groups throughout the day. Counselors had to deliver classes on their own, including cooking, arts, crafts, and a puppet theater, and provided activity films for quarantined children to enjoy at home.

The Abu Tor Hearing-Impaired Center

The Abu Tor Hearing-Impaired Center has 70 children with various hearing impairments. Forty-one receive therapy sponsored by the Welfare Ministry, and SHEKEL sponsors therapy for all the other children. The afternoon program provided routine activity that included classes, meals, and outings, as well as the following therapies and activities: speech and communication therapy, capoeira, a soccer team for boys and girls, assistance in preparing homework, and special programs involving the parents. During the coronavirus period, external activity instructors were prohibited from entering the building, and therefore the counselors themselves provided activities such as arts, sports, crafts, and music. Unfortunately, the afternoon program closed in December 2020 after 18 months of rich activity, due to the lack of a physical location for the program.

The Kiach School

The Kiach School is under the auspices of the Rehabilitation Department and serves both Jewish and Arab students with hearing impairments. SHEKEL runs the afternoon program for 34 students, funded by the Welfare Ministry. The program runs three afternoons a week, twice at the Philip Leon Matnas Community Center, and one at the school itself. Routine afternoon activities include a wide array of high-level workshops and classes, including the following: swimming, sewing, ceramics, soccer, therapeutic dog training, and computers. All activities are led by certified and highly experienced teachers in each field. The program provides leisure and enrichment activities, while building individualized advancement programs for each child in order to



individually advance his or her social and emotional behavior, language and communication skills, self-management and independence, and movement and sensory capabilities. The coronavirus period presented a great challenge in continuing the afternoon program in accordance with the health guidelines. We implemented an alternative program utilizing teachers from the school's staff who provided as many activities as possible in arts, crafts, soccer, and bike riding. The students worked in fixed capsules, and quarantined students received educational films and activities to enjoy at home.

Nofar Preschool - Petach Tikva

The Nofar Preschool has 20 students aged 3-6 with intellectual development disabilities. The afternoon program operates Sunday to Thursday, and provides animal care, clay, and cooking activities. Additional details are listed in the Central Region section.

Additional Activity during 2020

Additional activity included equipment provision and fundraising for the benefit of all the schools' students. We received a donation for adding special high-quality playground installations, suited to the children's needs, for the Eddy Shore preschool. A special project held in conjunction with the Shiur Acheir Organization provided ninth and tenth graders from ordinary schools a series of enrichment classes familiarizing them with the world of disabilities and taught them how employment in the open market facilitates independence. We also won a tender for opening an afternoon program at the Ne'urim School in Jerusalem.

Plans for 2021

Plans include continued efforts to obtain rehabilitation equipment and volunteers in order to expand and improve schools' activity, including a request from the National Insurance Institute/Bituach Leumi for equipment at the Hadvir Hachadash School; submitting requests for equipment from the Keren Shalem Foundation for the Hettena School in conjunction with the school's management; expanded activity in the Central Region in cities offering SHEKEL's continuum of activity; and assistance in fundraising from external resources, such as donations and foundations.

Sally Magsimof



Therapeutic Centers



SHEKEL's Therapeutic Treatment Centers provide counseling for children, adults, and teenagers with disabilities in the Jerusalem area and Israel's southern periphery.

The Toni Eliashar Therapeutic Center at Hebrew University's Haruv Campus in Jerusalem has three units: a treatment unit for people with disabilities suffering from trauma, a unit for social sex education and sex treatment, and a unit for general emotional therapy. These units are funded and supervised by the Welfare Ministry's Disabilities Administration, and with the support of the Jerusalem Foundation.

The Center for Treatment of Offenders, located in a separate building, provides treatment for sex offenders from the Jerusalem area, funded and supervised by the Adult Probation Service.

SHEKEL's Beersheva Therapeutic Center provides people with disabilities therapy for trauma, social sex education, sex treatment, and general emotional therapy, in Israel's southern region. Activity is funded and supervised by the Disabilities Administration and with the support of the Schusterman Foundation, the Ted Arison Family Foundation, and the Henry and Anne Zarrow Foundation.

Activity during the Coronavirus

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year when the coronavirus entered our lives. It obligated us to initiate creative solutions for the needs and crises that arose. Quarantine, lockdowns, infection, and loss, became part of the routine, and this affected everyone, particularly adults, youth, and children with disabilities. It created and exacerbated emotional distress. In response, we quickly learned to improvise, provide accessible resources, and respond to emotional needs. Therefore, despite the great challenge, 2020 was a year of great productivity, creativity, and innovation, as detailed below.

At the onset of 2020, prior to the outbreak, we were informed of the State budget's lack of funding for our services. The Therapeutic Centers' budget was therefore significantly downsized compared to last year's budget. The Centers' directors were advised to only provide emergency therapy for trauma sufferers and offenders.



During March and April 2020 (the first lockdown), the Ministry of Welfare ceased the Therapeutic Centers' activity, though the Ministry soon changed its policy and classified our centers as providing a crucial service. We were then able to continue operating normally throughout the lockdowns, and activity actually intensified.

When the Centers ceased activity as originally required by the Welfare Ministry, we opened an Emergency Hotline to provide an urgent response to the Centers' patients. This included not only patients in the process of receiving treatment, but also new referrals for people with disabilities across Israel requiring emotional therapy during this difficult period. From September 2020 and on, special funding was raised and former budget restrictions were lifted. This allowed us to open almost a dozen courses for therapeutic frameworks across Israel, primarily via Zoom meetings. Also, a special advanced training course was held for municipal social workers and Jerusalem Rehabilitation Centers' management, training professionals to treat special-needs sex offenders and victims, as well as their families.

The scope of private therapy sessions increased this year by nearly 50%. This clearly reflects higher needs for emotional response during government guidelines' instability. Another indicator of the crisis was a 30% increase in referrals by the Probation Service compared to last year.

Due to budgetary cuts at the year's beginning and the Centers' shutdown for nearly a month, there had originally been a decrease in referrals. However, from mid-2020 and on, the number of referrals from the Disabilities Administration matched last year's amount, and we concurrently opened seven new training courses- three in the southern periphery and four in the Jerusalem area.

We opened a dating relationships course to train professionals how to guide people on the autistic spectrum. The course included ten meetings for professionals and concluded with a "Singles Event" for people on the spectrum, via Zoom. The Event was moderated by the course's graduates. In addition, the Centers' staff built a sex-education training program for professionals together with Sapir College. In order to compile the course's syllabus, a steering committee of sex education professionals was formed. The course is scheduled to begin in 2021.

Towards the end of 2020, subsidies for providing therapeutic counseling was provided by the Schusterman Foundation. This grant was designated for female patients in the framework of the government's Rehabilitation Program for residents in Israel's south who were strongly emotionally affected by the pandemic.



In summary, the coronavirus crisis highlighted the Centers' great importance for special-needs adults, youth, and children, as well as their families and caregivers, in overcoming uncertainty, sickness, and loneliness, while dealing with post-trauma.

Plans for 2021

We hope the coronavirus will become a memory next year. Still, this year has taught us flexibility and creativity, and we have made plans for 2021 to accommodate both scenarios. In any event, training activities will be held in person as much as possible.

Activity includes the following: opening a social sex education training course in conjunction with Sapir College; opening another couples' counseling training course for professionals, to assist people on the autistic spectrum; expanding the Centers' treatment options for people included in the Rehabilitation Program via subsidized therapy sessions in conjunction with the Schusterman Foundation, as well as publicizing these options among Rehabilitation Program directors; locating a new location for our activities and additional staff recruitment for treating special-needs sex offenders in Jerusalem.

I wish to take this opportunity to share a few personal words about the Centers' staff. They carried the burden and succeeded in continuing to guide, support, accept and provide treatment during times of uncertainty, which included periods of unpaid vacation and a decrease in working hours. The Centers' staff remained in constant contact with their patients and happily came together to initiate the Emergency Hotline. I am very proud of them, and feel privileged to lead such a professional and caring team.

Aya Roth



Education, Culture and Leisure



The Department for Education, Culture and Leisure provides people with disabilities a way to expose and realize their talents. It strives to fulfill their dreams in every realm of life while creating a positive way of living in health, happiness, and self-fulfillment - placing the person and his interests in the foreground. We therefore created a wide variety of programs in education, social activity, culture, health, sports, relationships and leisure activity. The Department's activity stems from a sense of responsibility for promoting an accepting, inclusive, and tolerant society in which a person's disability presents opportunity, not hurdles.

Our activity during the coronavirus period required us to join forces more than usual. It brought renewal and created social initiatives in a variety of ways. While we had to delay some of our activities, we managed to seize many opportunities and identify where the Department can make a difference, such as when we temporarily transitioned SHEKEL College into an online interactive program.

When we realized the lack of available materials for educational and leisure activity at home, we developed games, kits, books, and itineraries, special recreational programs, and other suitable activities for people with special needs. Over 1,800 people participated regularly in the recreational programs and another 20,000 benefited from the books, kits, and games.

This expanded activity indirectly helped participants' families, SHEKEL's apartment staff, people from the wider community who became exposed to SHEKEL's activities, municipalities, the Welfare Ministry, social services, institutions, and organizations that provide culture and leisure activities.

One of the highlights this year was Seder Night. The lockdown was tight, and everyone, including people with special needs, were forced to spend the holiday in quarantine. We got together to create an accessible Haggada for people with special needs and their families, and 15,000 of them were printed and distributed. The Seder was held online via Zoom and people with special needs in quarantine joined in from their homes. The feeling was that of an extended family, and an opportunity to extend our togetherness and feel each other's sense of family as well. Thus, instead of a Seder detached from family, we actually gained a powerful, unforgettable Seder Night experience and an opportunity for better familiarity with people with special needs.



The Department's Programs

"Leisure Activity at Your Door"

At the onset of the coronavirus, we began a new program in which 900 people participated from home. The program's activity kits took into account the lack of materials available at home, and were adapted for people with special needs. The program provided original games, produced and shipped from China, and activity kits including all accessories and video instruction manuals.

Games:

- "Nice to Meet You" – a card game for getting to know one another
- Englishekel – two card games for teaching English (Level One and Level Two)
- Race against the Virus – a board game for learning about and encouraging hygiene
- Vacation Time! – a board game promoting implementation of complex assignments, financial management, and dealing with different factors. The game personifies a person with special needs who wants to go on vacation.
- Jerusalem's Gates – two board games (in one box) that teach participants how to find one's way around Jerusalem
- Supermarket Hakol B'Shekel – a board game teaching basic shopping skills, including arithmetic exercises such as addition and subtraction

Arts and Crafts Kits:

Kits included the following: bead necklace and bracelet creation, "Mr. Flex", a room accessories set including a dresser-drawer lighting preparation kit, door sign, accessories for affixing pictures with nails, laundry basket creation, plaster of paris kit, a "dream catcher", a cement flowerbed kit in preparation for Tu B'shvat and a pencil box kit.

Activity Kits:

- Hygiene Kit for creating a fragrance dispenser and a "bathtub bomb" in order to encourage hygiene
- Cooking Kits for preparing chocolate balls, pralines, sushi, challa, and stir-fried food. All kits included ingredients.
- Sports at Home Kit
- Karaoke Kit
- Pakal Si'ach – equipment for making coffee, including games for friendly group interaction.



College for All

550 students participated in dozens of courses, classes, and seminars suited for people with various disabilities, delivered by staff who received ongoing professional training. When the coronavirus broke out, the College switched to online instruction for two weeks. This included courses, enrichment studies and training. An operational team helped students with technological challenges. We focused on the following subjects: languages, computers, graphic design, and enrichment material production.

Social Interaction for All

This program had 450 steady participants and approximately 3,000 other participants. When the coronavirus began, the Department initiated and produced rich activity booklets distributed in print and over the internet, in order to create a lively daily itinerary while at home. Steady participants received all necessary equipment and accessories, besides the booklets. By now, six booklets have been circulated, about 3,000 copies for each.

Health and Sports for All

Sports became an important and urgent activity in light of the coronavirus. Many participants experienced a downturn in their health and the amount of exercise they used to engage in. Therefore, during the year, we ran a special preventive medicine program in which a sports instructor conducted exercises in the apartments. Over 150 people participated. Special sports equipment was purchased and distributed among the many participants.

Relationships for All

Activities included lectures on the topic of relationships in conjunction with SHEKEL Therapeutic Centers' staff, as well as meetings for people with communicative disabilities. During 2020 and in light of the coronavirus, meetings were held online.

The Unit for Social Involvement

The coronavirus period brought about a real need for additional volunteers as thousands of people with special needs needed an attentive ear in order to ease their loneliness. We saw this as an opportunity to recruit volunteers for many special projects. For example, we began a volunteer project where volunteers converse with those who felt lonely and with people who were on the verge of becoming depressed. The Unit led recruitment efforts that brought in hundreds of volunteers. The Unit also began distributing its weekly newspaper this year, summarizing SHEKEL's activity. The newspaper is distributed among hundreds of recipients online.



Alter Nativ

The Alter Nativ theater program, led by **Ada Oz**, began in 2017 in conjunction with the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio in Tel Aviv and the Ministry of Social Welfare. The program trains talented people with disabilities who have a knack for acting, and integrates them in the world of theater. The first class graduated after a three-year training program and performed the play "The Truly Important Things" on a tour across Israel. Productions ceased due to the coronavirus restrictions in March 2020.

The opening of a second class was delayed due to the coronavirus until September 2020. Twelve students classified as "rehabilitated" began studies, and their training schedule was condensed to two years. All students were vaccinated and training was held in accordance with the Ministry of Culture's Purple Ribbon guidelines. After only a few days of activity, we began another lockdown, and therefore began delivering classes via Zoom including one-on-one mentoring. It was initially difficult for students to take part in these virtual studies three times a week but as time went on they became used to it and enjoyed studying in pairs and internalizing the subject material. We immediately returned to regular frontal meetings when it became possible, but continued using Zoom periodically in order to make things easier for the students (such as during inclement weather).



Theater production of "The Truly Important Things". Photo: Efrat Eshel, Israel Hayom



Activity Summary during this Unique Year

This year was certainly a year requiring unconventional thinking. It caused us to find unique solutions to complicated issues due to the coronavirus. We maintained our determination to provide services for advancing our participants, and preserved our collaborations with external institutions. Professional knowledge and instructional training advanced.



Plans for 2021

While we hope the coronavirus will soon be behind us, we are nonetheless preparing ourselves for a complex and challenging year. We are confident we'll find professional and creative solutions for the population requiring them. In light of the "Leisure Activity at Your Door" program's great success, we plan to expand, including marketing our products to external bodies. We plan to invest further in advancing the emotional health field and open a similar activity center for the Arabic-speaking population, as well as additional enrichment and educational activities at SHEKEL College.

Ariel Nevo



Regional Activity

Jerusalem Area

Zehavit Edelstein

Central Israel

Netanel Miller

Southern Israel
and Shfela

Dafi Liber



Purim celebration at the Petach Tikva Vocational Day Center



Jerusalem Area



SHEKEL runs housing, employment, and leisure programs for approximately 550 people with disabilities in the Jerusalem area.

Activity during the Coronavirus

The coronavirus outbreak required immediate adjustments in our activities. The first months of the pandemic brought uncertainty due to the shutdown of several employment programs and restrictions on other programs. SHEKEL's independent housing program, however, operated nonstop. Residents had to decide whether to remain in their apartments or return to their parents, because we had to limit transition between the apartments and their parents' homes in order to prevent infection. During the first lockdown, apartment residents were closed in throughout the day and could not attend their vocational frameworks. We also had to find a way to deal with residents, employees, and staff who contracted coronavirus and had to be quarantined.

This situation required special arrangements in accordance with the Ministries of Health and Welfare's guidelines. With the help of SHEKEL's Logistics Department, we equipped ourselves with long-distance thermometers, alcohol, facemasks, disposable gowns, and gloves. Also, clear signs with the health guidelines were hung in all apartments and employment centers.

Number of SHEKEL Apartment Residents in the Jerusalem Area	
Autism	69
Rehabilitation	81
Intellectual Development	91
Living in the Community Residents	241
Supported Independent Living Program	20
Intermediate Supported Independent Living Program	4
Total No. of Supported Independent Living	24
Total No. of Residents	265

Despite the special situation, We tried to preserve the programs' implementation as much as possible during the special situation. Once the first lockdown ceased, vocational programs continued in capsules. Meals were also held in capsules within the various departments, not in the cafeteria. We were very careful



to check participants' temperature and preserve hygiene and disinfection measures. We limited interaction among large groups as much as possible, and meetings with staff, parents, and therapists were held via Zoom.

Leisure activity was limited to the apartments themselves, implemented via activity kits produced by SHEKEL's Education, Culture, and Leisure Department. Most social meetings were held in capsules- each apartment among its residents. There were practically no shared activities, and those that were, were held outdoors in public parks or on the beach.

The Passover holiday was celebrated during one of the lockdowns, and therefore the Seder Night was indeed different from all other Seder Nights. Usually, most of our residents visit their families to celebrate with them and only a few remain in the apartments. This year, however, most residents remained for Seder Night in the apartments. Many apartment counselors stepped up and remained to join them. In order to create a festive atmosphere, we ordered catered festive meals for the residents, and Seder Plates and Haggadot were produced for the holiday. Residents and staff received holiday gifts, which heightened the realization of just how much planning was invested in order to turn the holiday into a joyous, experiential, and family event.

Throughout the coronavirus period, we strictly adhered to the Purple Ribbon health guidelines. Still, 31 residents contracted the coronavirus, over 200 were quarantined, and 16 vocational program participants were infected.

Following the coronavirus, all vocational programs returned to full capacity. The number of participants in each program is listed as follows:

Number of Vocational Program Participants in Jerusalem	
Day Centers	165
Employment Centers	45
Total No. of Vocational Rehabilitation	210
Independent Employment	80
Group Employment	51
Supported Employment	131
Transitional Employment	43
Total No. of Participants	384



Challenges and Success

Throughout this time, we dealt with many challenges, yet there was great support, cooperation, and well-organized teamwork between all SHEKEL departments. Daily Coronavirus Emergency Forum meetings, held via Zoom, significantly helped maintain professional work with staff, residents, and employees.

One great challenge we experienced was when nine nursing-care residents contracted coronavirus. Due to their complex medical situations and the need for special care, they were transferred, with the help of authorized Welfare Ministry staff, to hospitals where they remained until their recuperation. Even during their hospital stay, SHEKEL staff continued to accompany them throughout the day with great self-sacrifice while seeing to their needs and remaining in contact with their families and hospital staff. They eventually recuperated and returned to their apartments and daily routines.

Many staff members had to take a leave of absence for extended periods, as their children remained at home. In order to deal with this complicated situation, additional staff was recruited. Tremendous thanks and appreciation go out to our staff who exhibited extraordinary self-sacrifice during this time.

Our relationship with participants' families was maintained and strengthened via Zoom meetings, phone calls, and in-person meetings when possible. SHEKEL management released updates on the situation periodically.

Throughout the coronavirus, new applicants expressed interest in joining SHEKEL's housing program. Four new apartments were opened and we received 30 new residents. The demand for the program is still strongly felt and we are doing everything possible in order to fill this great demand by recruiting staff and resources.

Practically all residents, employees, and staff were vaccinated at a vaccination event organized by SHEKEL. Upon becoming vaccinated, we felt some of the burden lifted from our shoulders, as personal meetings with parents and friends became possible and we began a gradual return to normal activity.

Plans for 2021

We assume coronavirus restrictions will continue for at least several more months. However, because most apartment residents, employees, and staff have been vaccinated, we hope to return to nearly full capacity.

During 2021, we plan to open four additional apartments. We are also about to open two additional apartments for National Servicewomen together with the Bat Ami Organization.



We are working to open additional social business initiatives for vocational rehabilitation program participants.

As stated in the beginning, this year was indeed unique and challenging. Looking back, despite the difficulties and challenges, or perhaps in their merit, we have advanced and learned a great deal. We have all grown closer to one another- staff residents, and the SHEKEL family as a whole.

Zehavit Edelstein



Welcome to the Day Center



Central Israel



SHEKEL runs the following programs in Central Israel:

independent housing, vocational centers, and extended school day programs in special educational schools for approximately 300 children and adults with disabilities in Petach Tikva, Ramat Gan, Bnei Brak, Givatayim, and Tel Aviv.

Activity during the Coronavirus

This year was particularly challenging due to the coronavirus pandemic and the hurdles it posed. We had to adjust to the new reality and maintained ongoing contact in order to respond accordingly to its shifting challenges. Despite the coronavirus, SHEKEL's long-term development in the area continued and its scope of activities even expanded.

Employment

The vocational centers experienced uncertainty during the first months of the pandemic due to lockdowns and restrictions. The Sigaliyot, Segula, and Shiluvim Day Centers remained open throughout this period except during brief lockdowns and quarantines. During the first months of the pandemic, we were instructed by the Welfare Ministry to suspend activities at the Multi-Disability Center. The Kfar Ganim Day Center for People on the Autism Spectrum was also closed due to the parents' decision not to send their children.

We prepared for the new "coronavirus routine" which meant dividing participants into capsules, utilizing activity rooms for ongoing vocational rehabilitation, and providing protective equipment for participants and staff. Thanks to the rapid implement of these changes, we managed to keep the number of people infected to a minimum. To the best of our knowledge, no infection occurred at SHEKEL's centers, reflecting how the guidelines and hygiene standards were strictly safeguarded. Still, a number of capsules were required to be quarantined due to participants' or staff members' exposure to people who tested positive for coronavirus.



Number of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants at SHEKEL's Employment Centers in Central Israel:

Center	Population	No. of Participants
The Segula Day Center	Nursing Care, Intellectual Development Disability	78
The Sigalot Day Center	Elderly Intellectual Development Disability	19
The Kfar Ganim Day Center	Autism	17
The Shiluvim Day Center	Intellectual Development Disability	11
The Segula Multi-Disability Center	Rehabilitation, Intellectual Development Disability	80
Supported Employment	Rehabilitation, Intellectual Development Disability	30
Total		235

Living in the Community

Fifty-five apartment residents currently reside in the Living in the Community and supported housing programs, in Ramat Gan, Givatayim, Petach Tikva, and Bnei Brak.

Residents had to remain in the apartments in order to limit transition between their apartments and parents' homes, preventing infection. We took great steps in order to maintain ongoing contact between the residents and their families. Interaction among large groups was limited as much as possible. Meetings with staff, parents, and caregiving bodies were held via Zoom. Leisure activity was minimized. Social gatherings were held in capsules, each apartment separately, and shared activities were held in open areas such as at public parks and beaches.

I would like to mention how satisfying it was to see the great cooperation between staff, the families, and the residents. The full preservation of the health and hygiene guidelines, social distancing, and Purple Ribbon restrictions prevented infection.



Special Education

Extended school day programs in the afternoons in the Nofar Preschools in Petach Tikva were held in accordance with the Education Ministry's morning activities. The program was closed at the onset of the pandemic. Only following changes in the guidelines did they reopen and strengthen throughout the year. Only once throughout the entire period were there children in quarantine.



Purim Party at SHEKEL Petach Tikva

Unique Challenges during the Coronavirus Pandemic

During the coronavirus period, we dealt with multiple challenges. The main ones were as follows:

Staff - Many staff members often had to take a leave of absence because their children were home due to the lockdowns of schools and kindergartens. In order to compensate, additional staff were recruited and some staff were transferred. These changes enabled us to overcome the lack of staff. Nevertheless, they had to deal with a heavy nonstop workload and exhibit great self-sacrifice. Great appreciation and thanks go out to them.

The Families - Residents' families cooperated by allowing their children to remain in their apartments. They kept to the guidelines and resisted frontal meetings as much as possible. In the vocational rehabilitation



program, we noticed that some parents and family members (particularly when one of the family members was at a higher risk) hesitated to send their children away. During the onset of the coronavirus, few parents sent their children to their vocational frameworks, yet eventually conceded despite the great concerns. This situation strengthened contact with the families. Many Zoom meetings were held with family members as well as phone calls and in-person meetings when possible.

Development of New Programs - Throughout the coronavirus period, new applicants requested independent housing. Therefore, in the span of just five months, we opened four new apartments with twenty new residents. The great demand for additional apartments motivates us to do whatever is necessary regarding staff recruitment and resources in order to respond to this high demand.

Highlights

- Cooperation, collaboration, and the quick response we received from both Welfare Ministry and municipal representatives
- Cooperation, and the ability to withstand restrictions and changing demands vis-à-vis the families
- In January 2021, we organized a Vaccination Event in which almost all apartment residents and housing staff, as well as many of the vocational rehabilitation participants and vocational staff – were vaccinated. Once we received a Vaccination Certificate, we felt somewhat relieved and were then able to allow in-person meetings with parents and friends, and gradually began returning to normal activity.

Plans for 2021

- The opening of four additional apartments in Ramat Gan
- The opening of SHEKEL's first three apartments in Petach Tikva
- Progress in purchasing privately-owned apartments for supported housing residents
- The opening of a multi-disability center in Tel Aviv
- The opening of a program for people with low to moderate functioning in Petach Tikva
- Continued recruitment, preservation, and advancement of high-quality staff

Netanel Miller



Southern Israel and Shfela



The Southern and Shfela Region is characterized by small frameworks within the wider community. The year 2020 was a unique and challenging one in providing independent living, employment, and social frameworks, as these had to be implemented in accordance with the Health Ministry's coronavirus guidelines.

During the first lockdown, SHEKEL residents remained in their apartments for long periods without going to their families in order to prevent the residents' need to travel back and forth to their families. All of them returned to their families for Seder Night, except for an apartment in Shoham for male residents in which they held their own Seder. Afterwards, we returned to our former routine in which residents visit their families periodically.

Activity during the Coronavirus

Living in the Community

Housing frameworks include four apartments in kibbutzim (two in Kevutzat Yavne, one in Masu'ot Yitzchak, one in Alumim) and two apartments in Shoham, altogether 32 residents. We incorporated the Health Ministry's and Welfare Ministry's guidelines, and equipped ourselves with all necessary equipment in order to preserve safety precautions: thermometer, facemasks, alcohol, gloves, and disposable gowns. Clear guidelines were hung in all apartments. During the year, two residents lightly contracted the virus while visiting their families, as well as four staff members (two counselors and two national servicewomen). A small number of apartment residents were quarantined—some in their homes, some in the apartments. This usually was a result of someone testing positive for COVID within their families or at their place of work. The apartment in Masu'ot Yitzchak temporarily closed down due to an outbreak among staff and the infection of two residents. Following their recuperation and thorough cleaning of the apartment, activities returned in full swing.

We tried to return to our routine as much as possible despite the difficulty. Leisure activity was held outdoors. Social club activities opened once the Welfare Ministry approved activity in capsules, each capsule holding two days of activity in rotation. Many activities in the kibbutzim ceased completely,



including kibbutz meetings, shared dining in the dining room, and prayer services in the synagogue. Nevertheless, we found creative solutions: meals took place in the apartments, Shabbat and Holiday prayers were held at a neighborhood location, and most social meetings were held via phone or Zoom.

In light of the situation, special activities were held, such as the following: tiyulim in the area (when possible), classes for apartment residents (without additional participants), individual sports activities, activities via kits prepared by SHEKEL's Leisure Department, meetings via Zoom, and a parents' evening event. These activities were all made possible thanks to the staff and national servicewomen's hard work.

Social Club

Social Club activities are held three afternoons a week. Due to the coronavirus, all physical gatherings ceased for an entire month. Instead, we ran activities virtually or via visits to friends' homes. Eventually the club was allowed to re-open in accordance with the safety precautions and all participants returned in small capsules without volunteers, and most activity was held outdoors.

Employment

Supported Independent Employment - Two groups of employees in the Supported Employment program operated in Airport City in the Modi'in Region, altogether 15 employees. The group working at the Diplomat factory was given leave of absence and later reopened with new participants. The Novolog factory's group worked nonstop, due to its special classification as a crucial operation.

Kibbutzim and Shoham Area – Most places of work closed down, including kindergartens, daycare centers for elderly, and shops. We found a solution for individuals with chronic illness who could not be incorporated in the rehabilitative vocational programs by bringing their work supplies to their apartments. This way we were able to make sure everyone remained working.

SHEKEL's Open Space Farm – The day center for people with low-functioning autism is located on a horse ranch in moshav Kfar Shmuel. It has about 20 participants and operated continuously. We tried to keep activities outdoors, except during inclement weather. With much hard work, we were able to accustom most employees to wear a facemask and preserve hygiene. Of course, staff adamantly safeguarded the guidelines. Volunteers stopped coming and only in 2021 did the social work students return. There were two quarantines in Kfar Shmuel. These periods were very difficult for the families



and staff remained in contact with the participants and their families via Zoom meetings. They also provided guidance for SHEKEL's professional staff. With much persistence, we were able to keep the program running when some of our staff were quarantined.

Plans for 2021

We hope to return to almost full capacity in accordance with the new guidelines during the coming year, as all apartment residents, employees, and staff have been given Green Passports.

We plan to open additional apartments in kibbutzim, Shoham, and Modi'in. In January, an apartment for male residents opened in Modi'in, and another apartment for female residents in Shoham.

Referrals from kibbutzim and municipalities in the southern region are being perused in order to possibly open permanent housing or an employment location for people with disabilities, including participation in the JDC's Supported Independent Living program.

Dafi Liber



Kvutzat Yavne residents in a field of lupines



Administration

Resource Development
and Public Relations

Dr. Erez Ezrachi

Logistics

Eliraz Hajaj

Finance

Natali Gill Cohen

Human Resources

Orly Mizrachy

Program Evaluation

Dr. Meir Hovav



SHEKEL's Vaccination Campaign



Resource Development and Public Relations



Donations during Coronavirus

Due to the coronavirus crisis and SHEKEL's necessary organizational changes, we had to immediately raise funds in order to guarantee continuous activity while upholding quality standards for the maximum number of residents, vocational rehabilitation participants and other beneficiaries. We turned to central bodies for donations, however our requests were declined during the first few weeks of the crisis. Overseas foundations and federations who had helped us in the past turned us down, as their efforts were focused on their local affiliates who were also hurt from the global pandemic.

Nevertheless, we continued to approach sources in Israel and abroad. After a while, we began receiving impressive support from businesses and major foundations who donated generously and relatively quickly.

The Supported Independent Living program required immediate support, as it operated nonstop during the lockdowns, requiring reorganization and boosted activity. Operational expenses increased due to added manpower and equipment for preserving hygiene. Among the first to lend a hand was the **Azrieli Foundation** who contributed generously to the independent living program, and **Mobileye** who contributed to developing solutions for leisure activity among residents during the lockdowns.

The second program in which we concentrated our fundraising efforts was for SHEKEL's Therapeutic Centers- the Toni Eliashar Therapeutic Center in Jerusalem and SHEKEL's Therapeutic Center in Beersheva. At the onset of the crisis, the Toni Eliashar Therapeutic Center initiated and operated an emotional crisis hotline in order to immediately respond to the temporary break in frontal therapeutic counseling sessions due to the Health Ministry's guidelines, as well as the higher sense of distress and need for emotional assistance among people with disabilities and their families. The hotline operated with the support of the **Jerusalem Foundation** and the **International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ)**. In addition, we recruited substantial contributions during the year for the Beersheva Therapeutic Center from the **Ted Arison Family Foundation**, the **Schusterman Family Foundation**, and the **Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation**.



Additional large donations were received from the **Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation** in 2020, which helped purchase a new Living in the Community apartment in Jerusalem, and another contribution towards the end of 2020 for emergency assistance during the coronavirus, via the **Round Up** organization. We also received final installments from previous pledges, including from **Mr. Oded Eliashar** via the **Jerusalem Foundation** for the Toni Eliashar Therapeutic Center, and from the **Matanel Foundation** for the Therapeutic Day Center for Elderly with Disabilities.

Other contributions that stood out included the following: **The Cindy and Slomo Silvian Foundation** for the Hettena School for Children with Severe Disabilities; the **Wendepunkt Foundation** via the Jerusalem Foundation for renovating the outdoor perimeter of the Ramat Shlomo Day Center for People with Autism, the **Cherna Moskowitz Foundation** and the **Iranian American Jewish Federation** for special-needs individuals at the Vocational Rehabilitation Center in Jerusalem, the **Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Phoenix** for the extended school day program at the Hettena School, **The American Center Jerusalem, United States Embassy** for SHEKEL College's Israel Integrative Orchestra project, the **Axel Springer Stiftung** for adding an elevator to the Hametzion store in Ramat Gan, the **Ashtrom Construction Group** and the Shoham Municipality for the Bayit Leahayim Permanent Housing Project in Shoham, the **Menachem Brown Estate** and other foundations and individuals.

During the year, we received commemorative donations from bequests and estates, including from the Oppenheimer Family in memory of **Rafi Oppenheimer z"l**, a donation from the Samett Family in memory of **Elimelech Samett z"l**, and a donation in memory of **Eliyahu Helba z"l**. We also received a donation of drawings as well as funds for arranging their exhibition from the Estate of **Rami Zemah z"l**, which we are planning to arrange in 2021.

The Department's Activity

The Department's activity strengthened public awareness in Israel for SHEKEL as a leading organization for inclusion for people with disabilities in the community, promoting rights, and developing appropriate frameworks for people with disabilities within the wider community.

Online donations increased by about 80% this year in comparison to last year. Most contributions were for general operating expenses; some were from pinpointed campaigns, such as the new Day Center for People on the Autistic Spectrum in Ramat Rachel, and the Learnathon during the Shavuot Holiday.



We ran direct mailing campaigns to thousands of recipients prior to Passover and Rosh Hashana, featuring moving stories from SHEKEL's activity. These campaigns brought in donations via return mail. Also, prior to Passover we ran a special campaign via the money transfer apps Paybox and Pepper Pay in order to fund festive meals for our independent living program residents.

SHEKEL's social media exposure resonates well within the wider community, bringing active participation in SHEKEL's activities. The amount of "Round Up" donors to SHEKEL, the amount of monthly donations, and community awareness have continued to rise. Also, thanks to the "Round Up" initiative, we were able to receive an emergency coronavirus grant from the Weinberg Foundation.

During the year, SHEKEL's activity was mentioned in multiple publications in local and nationwide newspapers and on television, such as through a series of segments on high-functioning autism on Kan News.



Premier screening of the film "The Specials" at the Lev Cinema



Routine Activity

- Donor retention: initiated connections in order to maintain relationships with veteran donors and initiation of new connections in response to our inquiries
- Grant writing to philanthropic foundations, including HR and corporate public relations directors
- Responding to RFPs for grants, awards, and honors
- Utilizing crowd-funding websites for fundraising and efficient online donation interfacing
- Fundraising campaigns in conjunction with apartment residents' parents and families, as well as SHEKEL vocational rehabilitation participants and other beneficiaries.
- Marketing activity and ads preparation, announcements etc.
- Improving SHEKEL's donor management database together with SHEKEL's Finance Department
- Expanding our mailing list and sending newsletters with routine updates on SHEKEL's activity
- Operating SHEKEL's website, updating its content and enriching relevant information in accordance with target audiences. Regular updating of the online shopping website for SHEKEL's gift shop.
- Assisting the gift shop's marketing campaigns featuring gifts such as coronavirus facemasks manufactured by SHEKEL's sewing workshop, and Passover Haggadot designed by SHEKEL's Bein Hashurot graphic design studio.
- Advice for building SHEKEL's Accessible Tourism Website for the Israel Accessibility Center.
- Assistance in preparing SHEKEL's 2019 Activity Report, including the English-language edition.

Events

Due to the coronavirus restrictions, mass events were not held this year, including our traditional events such as: the "Fundraising Event", the "All Rights Reserved" event, outstanding employee awards in memory of Gideon Drori z"l, the "Run with SHEKEL" event at the Jerusalem Marathon, the SHEKEL International Film Festival - Changing the Concept of Disability, and the like.



Events held prior to the restrictions in 2020 included the following:

- a dedication ceremony for the Sigalot Day Center for Elderly with Disabilities in Petach Tikva.
- a seminar for SHEKEL's program directors and managers entitled "Organizational Marketing Uniformity", and visits to SHEKEL's Jerusalem Headquarters.
- premier screening of the film "The Specials" at the Lev Cinema.
- the play "Luzville" by SHEKEL's Shoham Community Theater Group.

Events Held during the Corona:

- Cornerstone-laying ceremony for the Bayit Lahayim Permanent Housing Complex, with the participation of the Minister of Labor and Welfare MK Itzik Shmuli, Shoham Mayor Eitan Petigro, and donor Yossi Sheinfeld.
- Coordination of a virtual toast via Zoom with apartment residents' and vocational rehabilitation participants' parents and families.



Minister of Social Affairs Itzik Shmuli at the Bayit Lahayim cornerstone laying ceremony





Summary and Plans for 2021

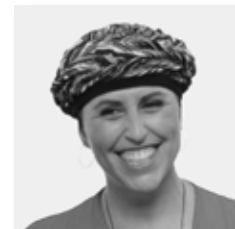
I thank the staff, SHEKEL participants, and our loyal and generous donors who have continued to support SHEKEL's activity during this difficult time. Without these special efforts and the help of the wider community, SHEKEL would not have succeeded in overcoming this difficult and challenging year.

Financially, 2021 is perceived to be no less challenging, as we notice difficult hurdles in fundraising while we deal with the aftermath of increased expenses due to the pandemic.

We hope to quickly return to holding SHEKEL events for fundraising and building awareness, hosting tours at SHEKEL, promoting involvement in SHEKEL's activities, and continuing all other Department activities.

Dr. Erez Ezrachi





Logistics

SHEKEL's Logistics Department was added this year.

The Department provides solutions in the following fields: logistics, maintenance, computerization, and inventory. In order to establish the Department, we altered the logistics apparatus regarding SHEKEL's apartments.

Activity during the Coronavirus

Activity during the Coronavirus Period required efficacy, creativity, and an immediate response for various issues in all SHEKEL programs. Sometimes solutions were required within a matter of hours.

Living in the Community

Following a long delay in opening new apartments on the part of the Welfare Ministry, a month-long window of opportunity was opened. We exploited this window to the fullest and opened six new apartments (three in Jerusalem and three in Ramat Gan). This required locating suitable apartments regarding both accessibility standards and the apartments' physical characteristics. Operating the apartment required signing a contract and arranging all the logistics involved, including all necessary equipment (furniture, computers, and electrical appliances). Also, during the year, living conditions were improved in five veteran SHEKEL apartments. In addition, two apartments were added in the framework of the supported living program in Jerusalem. Two apartments were opened for quarantined residents, and equipment was provided for them as well as for standard apartments. An additional apartment was prepared to be used by infected patients if the need would arise.

Inventory and Operations

- Massive amounts of coronavirus protective gear was purchased and distributed, and professional disinfection was implemented in all employment and independent living buildings requiring decontamination.
- The Priority software program was introduced, providing direct interface with SHEKEL's Finance Department.
- Upgrading SHEKEL's headquarters on Yad Harutzim St. in Jerusalem was completed, including implementation of acoustic and inventory solutions while preserving the building's pleasant atmosphere.
- Equipment was purchased and incorporated at SHEKEL's Sigaliyot Day Center for Elderly with Disabilities in Petach Tikva, while preserving the Center's warm and homely atmosphere.
- Purchasing and incorporating equipment at the Day Center for Elderly with Disabilities in Jerusalem



- Completing accumulated equipment needs for SHEKEL's apartment residents from the past few years. This new equipment presents a particularly high standard for the independent living program apartments.
- We began renovations of the building's outdoor perimeter and purchased equipment for SHEKEL's Day Center for People with Autism in Ramat Shlomo, including therapeutic equipment. All equipment is suited to the workers' needs and with much forethought.
- Developing contacts with strategic vendors who stood by us and gave their time and money to help during difficult periods throughout the year

Computerization

- Web cameras were purchased and internet capacity was expanded in order to provide communication during the lockdowns
- The Synel salary software program was incorporated into the HR Department.
- Improvement in utilization of the Netiv program in the independent living and employment programs, its continued adaptation to suit the unique needs of the employment programs, and developing a channel for collecting payment in the framework of the Finance Department
- Adapting the Priority software program and its incorporation in the Inventory Department
- Incorporating a program for the Leisure Department, enabling flexibility and creative thinking, as well as accessibility, for all its users
- Switching SHEKEL's printer system
- Application of the Comptroller Report's recommendations for SHEKEL's IT Department. This included a recommendation to provide backup for the computer servers.

In Conclusion – On a Personal Note

This year brought many moving stories and made me proud to be involved with SHEKEL. One such story left a big impression on me and characterized SHEKEL's capacity.

Finding apartments funded in conjunction with the JDC had taken much time and required creativity and open-mindedness among all parties involved in order to succeed in purchasing a proper and suitable apartment for each resident.

I have no words to describe the moment in which one couple received the keys to their apartment, knowing they're beginning a new life of independence. I saw the tears in their parents' eyes as I tried to sense, even if just a little, the weight being lifted from their shoulders and their great hope for their children's independence and success.



Finance



The Finance Department's responsibilities include recording SHEKEL's financial activity (bookkeeping), preparation of the Financial Statement, financial management vis-à-vis banks and financing institutions, implementation of payments, ongoing expenses, and handling vendors, managing financial dealings with clients and donors (issuing receipts, managing client records, and collection), salary management, managing minor accounts, and financial supervision regarding clients, vendors, SHEKEL activity units, and projects.

The year 2020, the year of the Coronavirus, was full of hurdles. We had to be in close and constant contact with the Welfare Ministry in order to receive necessary resources during this period for arranging an apartment for quarantined residents, purchasing special equipment, hiring additional staff etc. Funding for these special expenses also came from donations, the National Insurance Institute/Bituach Leumi, and SHEKEL's operating funds. Another challenge was the Salary Department's need to deal with employees' absence due to the closing of certain employment training units in order to help out as much as possible while preventing a budgetary deficit.

Beyond the challenges presented by the coronavirus, several large projects were implemented in 2020 that required financial treatment and supervision, including renovation and equipment for the Ramat Shlomo Day Center, the vocational centers' renovation at SHEKEL's headquarters, and the opening of six new apartments in Jerusalem and Ramat Gan.

Activity in 2020

Implementation of organizational changes, including changes in staff and defining work roles; embedding the "Harmony" computerized salary program; full embedding of the "Priority" computer program, particularly for incorporating vendors for purchasing inventory, and preparation of SHEKEL's Financial Statements for 2019.

Work Plan for 2021

Incorporation of the "Priority" donor management computer program (instead of Salesforce), budget management via Priority in order to make it an applicable management tool for department directors, handing of the Jerusalem Municipality's property tax fees, collection of past payables, improvement of supervision procedures, creation of a financial investment model and preparation of the 2020 Financial Statements.

Natali Gill Cohen



Human Resources



The Human Resources Department manages SHEKEL's employees and freelancers. By the end of 2020, there were 576 employees, including 30 with disabilities, and about another 100 freelancers, specialists, and professionals.

The Coronavirus Period

The Coronavirus pandemic brought many challenges in managing SHEKEL's manpower. At the onset of the crisis in March 2020, due to the closing of certain programs and other limitations on SHEKEL's employment training, leisure, and extended school day programs, we had to put approximately 220 employees on unpaid leave. This was done in conjunction with the regional and department directors, and we provided maximum assistance in preparing the required forms and transferring them to the National Insurance Institute/Bituach Leumi. We gave individual attention and assistance to each employee. From the coronavirus' outbreak until the end of 2020, hundreds of employees were periodically quarantined, and about 50 contracted the virus. We followed up on their situations and registered every occurrence in order to ensure that each employee received his or her compensation, and we simultaneously provided daily reports to supervisors on the situation of quarantined or ill employees.

During 2020, we were required to modify many employees' work patterns, particularly those working in the apartments, in accordance with the health guidelines and restrictions. During the lockdowns, residents had to stay home throughout the day, requiring round-the-clock working shifts. Employees had to work harder and adjust to the new situation. In accordance with the guidelines, SHEKEL had to purchase protective gear and disinfectant for employees (disposable gowns, facemasks, gloves, alcogel, and thermometers). Similarly, we had to organize special transportation for them due to limited or canceled public transportation. All activities were implemented in capsules, and a sign was posted on each room specifying the maximum number of people allowed at one time, in accordance with the Purple Ribbon regulations.

As part of efforts to boost morale among employees, we sent gifts on two occasions to show appreciation for their hard work and outstanding self-sacrifice. As we prepared to return to standard working conditions, a huge sign was hung on SHEKEL's headquarters to express our thanks and appreciation for the employees' special efforts during this difficult time.



Annual Activities

New Employees' Orientation: New employees attend lectures and receive materials acquainting them with SHEKEL and its activities, workers' privileges etc. The purpose of the orientation is to familiarize new employees with SHEKEL's activities. Also, the new employees listen to lectures delivered by professionals, as well as personal stories by beneficiaries and their parents, in order to familiarize the employee with the "other side of the coin". This year, due to the special situation, orientation days were not held.

Participation in the Committee for Choosing Outstanding Employees in Memory of Gideon Drori z"l: The ceremony was scheduled to take place in March. Due to crowding restrictions, the ceremony was postponed and later cancelled. The winners received the prize without a public ceremony.

Gifts were distributed to employees prior to Rosh Hashana and Passover and on their birthdays.

In Conclusion, on a Personal Note

The past year was challenging from both a personal and professional perspective. We had to deal with complex dilemmas regarding issuing leave of absence and sometimes dismissing employees due to the restrictions. New guidelines were issued daily, requiring us to change work patterns. Still, the employees came together and were ready to help in every way, resulting in very moving personal anecdotes during the crisis: employees who donated their special government allocation to other employees who needed money; employees who came to volunteer after-hours with nursing-care residents who contracted coronavirus and were hospitalized, without any monetary compensation; employees who volunteered to celebrate the Passover Seder together with the residents, despite the fact that their work hours did not include work on holidays.

The concepts "emergency employee" and "human capital" were fully realized during the corona crisis. SHEKEL's human capital is vital, rare, and very special. The human fabric – the concern, self-sacrifice, and volunteerism – are all worthy of great appreciation. We have overcome the coronavirus in the best way possible thanks to our employees.

Orly Mizrachy



Program Evaluation



This unique year saw a decline in consultations and evaluations activity due to the lockdowns and limited gatherings in SHEKEL's offices and in the field.

Activity

- Preparation of the 2019 Activity Summary, and its publication together with Dr. Erez Ezrachi
- Consultations with senior employees, some of whom by telephone due to the lockdowns
- Participation in the "A Matter of Approach" magazine. Due to the situation, only one publication was produced this year.
- Financial assistance for SHEKEL residents affiliated with the Ne'emanim Organization
- Participation in the committee that dealt with the passing of a resident due to medical issues
- Publication of the book Social Services Development in a Changing Society – A Personal Journey which contains information on SHEKEL and its activities.

Plans for 2021

We anticipate limited activity in 2021 in light of the coronavirus and its regulations, but the following will continue nonetheless:

- Preparation of SHEKEL's Activity Report for the Coronavirus Year
- Updating management procedures as necessary
- Consultation and guidance for SHEKEL program directors
- Counseling for SHEKEL residents in the framework of the Ne'emanim Organization

Dr. Meir Hovav



Thank You!



Billboard thanking SHEKEL staff's outstanding devotion during the coronavirus per

