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Where your dollars go

This monthly series will highlight mission-based programs and projects that are supported by The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee. Funding for these initiatives is derived from the Annual Campaign and the Women's Giving Circle. The series will feature local projects, including partnerships with local organizations and overseas programs that support the social and humanitarian needs of Jews living in Sarasota-Manatee, Israel and around the world.

Supporting those on Israel's front lines

By Amanda Emory, Mimi and Joseph J. Edlin Journalism Intern

Each year, The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee's Overseas Grant Program empowers nonprofit organizations around the world that support Jewish people in need. In 2018, this program granted \$250,000 to 15 organizations. The granting committee consists of 14 people who learn about each organization so that they can make informed decisions. The committee then decides which organizations will receive grants based on which has the largest impact on their community and if they are responding to the needs of a vulnerable population.



Amanda Emory

Jeremy Lisitza, director of the Federation's Innovation and Volunteer Engagement, coordinates the program. He says that the committee "reviews each organization from a global perspective. We consider which organizations will have the largest impact while ensuring we have a diverse group of beneficiaries, serving different populations and addressing a wide variety of societal needs to Jews globally."

One of the organizations that has received a grant from the Federation is Yashar LaChayal. Since its inception in 2006, Yashar LaChayal has provided basic needs for Israeli soldiers serving their country. What started with one family in Miami Beach gathering volunteers to create care packages for soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), soon became a full-fledged nonprofit organization with 10 diverse projects that serve to improve the lives of IDF soldiers and their families.

According to Yashar LaChayal, nearly 20 percent of the soldiers in the IDF come from financially distressed families who lack the resources to provide their children with necessities, including blankets, undergarments and toiletries. There are also soldiers who come from families that lack such basic household goods as a refrigerator or enough beds for each family member. Yashar LaChayal's Needy Soldier Project provides these supplies to soldiers on bases in the Galilee and Negev regions of Israel in what is called a "supply closet." The Federation has directed monies to this program since 2016, granting \$19,500 this year. Over the past two years, this grant has impacted nearly 5,000 soldiers.

Amichai Bacharach, program manager for Yashar LaChayal, spoke about the impact that the program has on the IDF soldiers. "There is no one more deserving of our support than the young

men and women who put their lives on the line for the State of Israel," he said. "This goes double for those who come from impoverished families. We not only want to help them in practical ways, but to let them know that as far away as Florida is, there are wonderful people who support and love them."

Bacharach expressed that the primary needs of the soldiers who receive assistance include basic toiletries, clothing, food for the holidays, and replacements of broken and missing furniture and appliances. At the end of the day, he said, no soldier will go without a toothbrush or a pair of socks or a Passover meal.

Avital (her name is changed for privacy) is a young soldier who serves on the Michve Alon base in Israel. Like



Golani Training Base

a number of IDF soldiers, she comes from a family that struggles financially. Before the supply closets were created, she often felt guilty asking her parents for money to buy things she needed. Now that she has access to the supply closet, Avital can focus more on her responsibilities without worrying about how she will get a new pair of socks or toothpaste. Avital expressed her gratitude to the people in our community who made the supply closet possible. "I want to thank you so much for all your support. You have no idea how something that seems small to you can make such a significant difference in our lives."

For more information about Yashar LaChayal and The Needy Soldier Project, visit <https://www.yasharlachayal.org/project/needy-soldier-fund/>. To see a video sent to the Federation from the soldiers who have been benefited from the Federation's Overseas Grant program, visit <https://jfedsrq.org/overseas-grants>.

To learn more about the Federation's Overseas Grant Program, contact Jeremy Lisitza at jlisitza@jfedsrq.org or 941.343.2113.

Amanda Emory is a recipient of the Joseph J. Edlin Journalism Intern Scholarship, a program funded by the late Miriam Edlin in memory of her husband. Amanda is pursuing a bachelor's degree in communications with a concentration in public relations at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers.



Michve Alon Training Base