



# THE volunteer CONNECTION

## New VFI Initiatives for 2007

### Hebrew Anyone? The Ulpan-Chik Option

**V**FI's goal is to connect people to Israel and strengthen the bond via interpersonal contact and contribution of physical labor.

Most of our volunteers do not speak Hebrew. In many cases, that limits interactions with the Israelis they encounter. Previously Sar-El had an Ulpan (course in Hebrew) that required a 3-month commitment; however, it was eliminated due to tight budgets.

During the summer of 2006, VFI undertook a trial of the Ulpan-chik option. By all accounts, it was a success with our volunteers. We plan to offer this as a regular feature starting with the February 11/12, 2007 program.

Some features of this option:

- Focused on practical Hebrew (aleph level) that you can use on the base and on the street.
- You will be in a language immersion environment.
- Classes will be held on the base in the evenings.
- Minimum required participation is 10 people, maximum 14.  
We must reach the minimum, so bring a friend!
- Two sessions a week of 2 hours each.
- We offer a 2-week plan totaling 8 class hours for \$40 USD.
- We offer a 3-week plan totaling 12 class hours for \$50 USD.
- VFI collects the money up front to pay for the teacher and materials.

Send your payment as a separate check to "Volunteers for Israel" with your application fee. Should the class not be held you will receive a refund. For additional questions about the class, contact VFI at 212.643.4848 or 866.514.1948 or e-mail to [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org).

### Tools for Army Bases

**V**olunteers are frequently assigned tasks that require a variety of small hand tools: wrenches, chisels, hammers, screwdrivers, etc. Sometimes tools are in short supply in the workshops, or in poor condition, or there aren't enough to go around. So we use the wrong tool or cobble together something that would work. This tool shortage is the outcome of the tight budgets that face IDF and cuts into the productivity of motivated volunteers.

A group of VFI volunteers has devised a way to provide help while showing our support for the soldiers. On a pilot basis, they have collected modest funds, purchased hand tools, packed them and are in the process of transporting them to Israel. VFI and Sar-El are helping distribute these tool boxes, each the size of a large shoe box. We are seeking others to participate in this small but meaningful gesture to improve the quality of our work.

We hope this initiative grows. That depends on all of you. There are many ways to help support this effort: donate funds, purchase and pack the tools, or carry them over for hand-off to Sar-El. Perhaps you can suggest a base where we can supplement their tools.

The tool boxes aren't too large and they aren't too heavy, but they say a lot about our commitment to the incredible VFI program. If you're interested in helping out, contact Howie Mischel at [hmischel1@aol.com](mailto:hmischel1@aol.com).

(continued on inside)

עברית  
Ivrit

## Sar-El Announcement for U.S. Volunteers

January 3, 2007

Sar-El announces the recruitment and processing procedure of U.S. resident volunteers for the Sar-El program in Israel.

1. Sar-El will rely on VFI's Ambassador Program to process applications for Sar-El's program in Israel.
2. NEW volunteers should submit their paperwork and application fees to VFI.
3. RETURNING volunteers, Associates, and VFI volunteers, are encouraged to submit their paperwork and application fees directly to VFI for processing.

VFI welcomes the opportunity and is looking forward to working with Sar-El Associates in the United States. VFI can be reached via e-mail: [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org) OR [ambassador@vfi-usa.org](mailto:ambassador@vfi-usa.org). Telephone: 866.514.1948. Website: [www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org).

# VFI Regional Alumni Meetings

**Atlanta** – A 25th birthday party and reunion for VFI supporters and volunteers is being planned. Leon Rechtman, Alan Mintz and Amy Brownstein are spearheading the event. The tentative date is Sunday, April 15 at 4:30 at the local AJCC. The Israel Consulate has agreed to provide a speaker. For further info and schedule update, please contact Leon Rechtman at [leon2579@mindspring.com](mailto:leon2579@mindspring.com).

**Illinois** – The Chicago/Midwest Region has monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of every month, at 8:00 p.m., at 8610 Niles Center Rd, Skokie, IL. For more information, call 847.677.3817.

**Los Angeles** – The Los Angeles chapter is saddened by the death of Estelle Shaffer after a struggle with cancer. For alumni reunion meeting schedule, call Louis Goldowitz at 323.661.7898.

**Mid-Atlantic Region** – The Greater Washington, DC, area of the Mid-Atlantic Region is starting a local alumni group to help promote VFI. To participate, please contact Marian Sacks at 301.603.9099 or [mbsacks31@hotmail.com](mailto:mbsacks31@hotmail.com), or Vade Bolton at 703.860.0504 or [vadebolton@comcast.net](mailto:vadebolton@comcast.net).

**Philadelphia** – Our December alumni meeting was attended by 50 people and featured an inspirational presentation on “The Early Days of Yiddish Theater in America.” Our Spring meeting is Wednesday, March 14, 2007. For more information, call 610.617.4048.



Philadelphia Meeting

**San Francisco Region** - held a Pot Luck Reunion on January 21. The lunch was followed by a presentation by Eugene Zauber and other Russian-speaking VFI volunteers who recently served together in Israel as a special interest group. Renee Bassell and guest speaker Leah Garrick, founder of the San Francisco VFI, spoke about the early days. For future activities contact 866.380.6464 or [vfi5000@hotmail.com](mailto:vfi5000@hotmail.com).

# VFI National President's Message

## 2006 Was a Tough Year for Israel



A change in government due to Arik Sharon's stroke. Disengagement from Gaza. The kidnapping of IDF soldiers. The war with Hezbollah where thousands of missiles rained down on northern Israel. Hundreds of Qassam rockets from Gaza. Continued threats from Syria, Iran, and Hamas.

For the past 24 years of the VFI and Sar-El programs, people like YOU showed up to do your part to support Israel in a very direct way. During 2006, VFI showed progress in several areas:

- We had a 70-percent increase over 2005 in the number of volunteers going on the program.
- VFI sent about 600 volunteers of which two-thirds went for their first time.
- Our national quarterly newsletter was mailed to our database of over 10,000 people.
- The Ambassador program was inaugurated to support volunteer efforts to promote the program, while providing useful guidance and materials.
- Our membership drive solidified the connection with our volunteers and raised much needed funds for us to expand our efforts.
- We have increased service levels and contacts with volunteers embarking on the program.
- We are offering two new options to our volunteers and working on more:
  - An inexpensive health insurance option while in Israel.
  - An opportunity to learn Hebrew – the Ulpan-chik option.

VFI is an all-volunteer organization and operates within a very modest budget. So we rely on volunteers like YOU to help promote and operate the organization. I encourage you to get INVOLVED – roll up your sleeves and volunteer – as you have done in the past.

If you cannot put in the “sweat equity” with VFI, I hope that you will consider supporting us financially. NOW is the Time. YOU are the Difference.

— **Josef Herz**, National President

*“Israel can neither be broken by adversity nor demoralized by success. It carries the shield of democracy and it honors the sword of freedom.”*

— **JOHN F. KENNEDY**

## Join VFI as a Full Member

VFI membership is growing with over 200 volunteers recognizing the benefit of formal membership. Membership includes a free, 1-year subscription to *Moment Magazine*, VFI business cards, membership card, this newsletter, and other benefits, together with premiums that depend on the level of your membership.

Basic annual membership contribution at the Chai level for \$18 provides the above items. The Meir level membership at \$50 also includes VFI luggage tags. At the Sharon level of \$100,

you receive a tee shirt. The Dayan level is at \$250 and adds a duffle bag to the Chai level benefits. The Ben-Gurion level is at \$500 and above and provides you with a jacket. Join our growing VFI chaverim community. Become a VFI Member now!

Also, we'd like your ideas about better connecting with your fellow volunteers, such as an online Member's Forum, special Member's Events, etc. Send your suggestions to [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org).

### VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Please check your desired level and return registration form, with your check payable to: “Volunteers For Israel,” to Marian Sacks, Treasurer, 13801 Bonsal Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20906

Ben-Gurion (\$500 and above)  Dayan (\$250)  Sharon (\$100)  Meir (\$50)  Chai (\$18)

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

VFI Respects Your Privacy and will not share your information with other organizations.

# New VFI Initiatives *(continued from front page)*

## Help Feed Israel's Needy with Nutritious Food

**R**egrettably, some people in Israel live below the poverty level and they are hungry. *Table to Table* is an initiative to fight hunger in Israel. Since 2003, this food rescue organization collects high quality, excess food, which would otherwise be discarded, from catered events, corporate cafeterias, restaurants, factories, army bases, and farms. The food is subsequently delivered to over 90 organizations serving Israel's needy.

*Table to Table* is recruiting participation in Project Leket, where volunteer groups, with the support of farmers, pick fruit and vegetables that were not collected at the end of a particular season's harvest. Thousands of pounds of high quality food can be salvaged each year. Typically volunteers pick fruit or vegetables for several hours.

*Table to Table* distributes collected produce to organizations serving people in need to ensure that all Israelis have access to nutritious food. The spirit of Project Leket is based on Deuteronomy 24:19: "When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your G-d may bless you in all your undertakings."

VFI works with volunteers to integrate this Project Leket option with the Sar-El work program. Volunteers are needed on Fridays to help gather food. There is no participation fee. If you are interested, speak with your VFI Regional contacts or call 212.643.4848, 866.514.1948 or e-mail us at [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org). See [www.tabletotable.org.il](http://www.tabletotable.org.il).

## Leave a Part of YOURSELF in Israel – Donate Blood!

**M**agen David Adom (MDA) is reporting a blood shortage in Israel. Next time you are on the program or just visiting Israel, if you are healthy and are willing to donate blood, please do so. MDA is particularly seeking type "O" blood.

VFI is working with MDA and Sar-El to get MDA mobile donation units to come to the bases. Meanwhile you can donate blood during your weekend off the bases. VFI can provide you with a list of all MDA blood collection centers in Israel and their hours of operation.

## VFI Handbook and the VFI Travel Journal

**T**he updated VFI Handbook and the new VFI Travel Journal are in preparation and will soon be available to members. More information in the next issue.

### Dayanu

If you contribute to your synagogue and UJA, that would be sufficient.

If you visited Israel, that would be sufficient.

If you volunteered to assist the IDF to prepare for the next war, that would be sufficient.

If you worked, slept, and ate with soldiers, that would be sufficient.

If you toured and learned about Israel, that would be sufficient.

If you return home and encourage others to follow your path, that would be sufficient.

Dayanu

## Editor's Corner

### Preparing the Reserves for the Next War

**I**srael's defense strategy relies heavily on the reserves. The standing forces are designed to handle the initial 24 hours of a conflict. The reserves are capable of achieving full strength within 48 hours.

Following a conflict, resupplying the reserve units is a vital project and VFI volunteers help with this effort. The work is performed at forward reserve bases and includes resupply of maps, restocking food rations, organizing work uniforms, protective packaging for gear such as armor vests, and general refurbishing of equipment. There is plenty of meaningful work to be done here realizing the next time they are deployed, it is probably not for a company picnic.

VFI's national newsletter is dedicated to your life-changing experience as a volunteer in Israel. SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE UPON REQUEST to [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org) or toll free 866.514.1948. To receive e-mails updating you on VFI activities, just send an e-mail to [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org).

—**Steve Plotkin**, Editor, [steveplotkin@erols.com](mailto:steveplotkin@erols.com), 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073, 610.358.5366, Fax 610.361.8896.

## Barrie Kirshner, VFI Ambassador



**Barrie is VFI's national third ranked "frequent volunteer" and retired member of the VFI Board.**

**I** originally learned of VFI from an ad in a Nashville Jewish Newspaper. On my 25th volunteer tour I was joined by my granddaughter and started a new family tradition.

What keeps me coming back? Well it's not the food, not the accommodations, not the weather, and not the transportation. It's the country and the people. Israel is a unique country that found a place deep in my heart and continues to beckon me to "return."

VFI became my entree for continued involvement in Israel. I feel good when I am there and always look forward to returning with the end of each trip. Some of my best memories as a volunteer in the program are:

- The bus drivers wishing me a "Shabbat Shalom" on Friday evenings.
- The camp fires on the beach and singing songs with fellow volunteers as the sun sets on the Mediterranean.
- Planting a tree in the Sar-El forest knowing it would grow as Israel has grown.
- The observance of holidays celebrated as national as well as religious holidays.
- The feeling of quietness and serenity when I was stationed in the desert, the feeling of oneness with G-d.
- Learning as a volunteer that modesty is left at the airport as bunking is four or five to a room with minimum storage and amenities.
- The incredible friends (Israelis and Americans) that I have made over the years who have enriched my life beyond measure. Most of them have become family to me, rather than just friends.

VFI opened my eyes and my heart to a new world. My experiences have inspired my feelings towards Israel and those who love her as much as I do. I am fortunate to have served on the VFI Board and in some small way encourage others to go to Israel on the program and be a part of a lifetime of eye-opening wonderful experiences.

— **BARRIE KIRSHNER**

# Volunteer Program Schedules for 2007

Programs start only on the specific Sunday and/or Monday shown below. Volunteers can join for 2, 3, or more weeks.

## Year 2007 —

### 25th Anniversary Year

Feb. 11 - Mar. 1 (Ulpan option)  
 Feb. 18 - 22 ~ 1-week group  
 Mar. 4 - 22, Mar. 18 - 29  
 Apr. 15 - May 3

May 6 - 22, May 6 - 10 ~ 1-week group  
 May 27 - June 14  
 June 17 - July 5  
 June 24 - July 12 ~ International Youth Program  
 July 8 - 26  
 July 15 - Aug. 2 ~ International Youth Program

July 29 - Aug. 16  
 Aug. 9 ~ 25th Anniversary Celebration Party  
 Aug. 19 - Sept. 6  
 Sept. 16 - 26  
 Oct. 7 - 25

Oct. 28 - Nov. 15  
 Nov. 18 - Dec. 6  
 Dec. 9 - Jan. 3

See our web site at  
[www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org)  
 for frequent special programs.



**The SAR-EL work program includes:**

- FREE accommodations, plus**
- FREE kosher meals, plus**
- FREE military work uniforms, plus**
- FREE lectures, possibly guided trips, and immense personal satisfaction.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

## VFI Officers and Board for 2007

**Josef Herz**, National President, WA, 425.235.8280, [jaherz@vfi-usa.org](mailto:jaherz@vfi-usa.org)  
**George Iversen**, Vice President, NJ, 973.761.0549, [george@vfi-usa.org](mailto:george@vfi-usa.org)  
**Marian Sacks**, Treasurer, MD, 301.603.9099, [mbsacks@vfi-usa.org](mailto:mbsacks@vfi-usa.org)  
**Ed Kohl**, National Coordinator, MI, 248.788.0551, [eskohl@vfi-usa.org](mailto:eskohl@vfi-usa.org)  
**Vade Bolton**, Recording Secretary, VA, 703.860.0504, [vbolton@vfi-usa.org](mailto:vbolton@vfi-usa.org)

### Board Members:

Renee G. Bassell, CA	David Liebman, MD	Carol Stein, PA
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—Steve Plotkin, Editor, [steveplotkin@erols.com](mailto:steveplotkin@erols.com)

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—IDF Base Volunteer—  
 "The bathroom is how far away?  
 You're kidding right?"

For unique adventure, the travel chance of a lifetime,  
 and a frugal way to sample Israel, join the VFI Program.  
 Get an insider's view of Israeli life, and make a difference.

THE VOLUNTEER CONNECTION  
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