



THE volunteer CONNECTION

What's Inside:

VFI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
PAGE 1

BOOMING TOURISM IN ISRAEL
PAGE 1

THE SITUATION ROOM
PAGE 2

MELANIE'S EXPERIENCE
WITH SAR-EL
PAGE 3

THE MACHAL
PAGE 4

VFI REGIONAL
ALUMNI MEETINGS
PAGE 5

VFI STORE
PAGE 6

PROGRAM SCHEDULES
BACK COVER

Israel & VFI Need You Now!

We have received an URGENT call for volunteers to work on special non-combat projects in northern and southern Israel, supporting the IDF. Jobs may include working alongside soldiers, building fortifications and fences, and assisting in logistics. These special projects continue through 2008; however, all the bases have plenty of vital work this winter and spring.



**And we need more
volunteers now.**

For more than 25 years, VFI volunteers have provided much-needed manpower and moral-boosting support. You can sign on for 1 to 3 weeks, and the program provides free lodging and kosher meals on the bases.

***If you can't volunteer now,
please tell others.***

New 1-Week Programs for Working People

To accommodate volunteers with constraints on their time but not their dedication to Israel, four special 1-WEEK programs are scheduled during 2008.

They are: February 10-14, April 13-17, May 18-22, and October 26-30.

If your available time is tight, the 1-WEEK program is for you. If you have been delaying your participation for a more favorable time, it is here now.

If you want to try the program, here is your opportunity.

A unique feature of the 1-WEEK program, in addition to being shorter than the typical 2- or 3-week program, is the need to be at Ben Gurion Airport at 8:00 a.m. on the program start date. That typically requires a very early arrival or an arrival prior to the start date.

Volunteers for Israel Mission Statement

The mission of Volunteers for Israel is to connect Americans to Israel through volunteer service. We achieve this goal by partnering with military and civilian organizations that enable volunteers to work side-by-side with Israelis. We promote solidarity and good will among Israelis, American Jews, and other friends of Israel.



VFI National President's Message

Vade's View

Friends, you recently might have contemplated going to Israel as a volunteer with VFI or perhaps you have actually signed on but for some reason had to cancel. I am asking you to consider going to Israel in 2008 as a volunteer with VFI.

This year, 2008, is Israel's 60th Birthday. It's a great year to go! Plus, worker volunteers are needed more than ever right now for urgent projects underway in both in the South and North of Israel. For those limited in the amount of time you can commit, there are now four special one-week programs in the 2008 schedule.

Please visit the VFI web site at www.vfi-usa.org, and read the exciting stories and see the pictures of recent volunteers. Many people report going as an experience that changed their lives. Also, you might want to check with the travel agent that is on the VFI web site for help in finding a plane ticket with a good price.

You can reach us at 866.514.1948 or e-mail me directly at vadebolton@comcast.net.

Vade Bolton, National President

Booming Tourism in Israel

Tsrail's battered tourism industry is on the path to recovery, thanks to increased visitors from France and the United States, and an \$11 million advertising campaign in the United States. Israel expected to welcome some 525,000 American tourists in 2007, a new record. Sixty percent more Americans visited this past August than the prior year.

After a record 2.3 million people in 2007, Israel expects to welcome some 2.6 million tourists in 2008. This sector employs around 100,000 people and adds \$600 million to the GDP. The ambitious target of 5 million tourists in 2012; however, must await more hotel rooms, most notably in Jerusalem. Israel's total population is about 7 million.

Donations Received by VFI

(October 1 – December 31, 2007)

In Honor of Hope Pecullan: Michael Pecullan

In Honor of Lorraine Fishoff's 80th Birthday: Michael Pecullan

In Memory of Len Ellinport: Gladys Ellinport

Jewish National Fund Specific Donations planted trees for the following:

In Honor of N. Rosenberg: Josef Herz

In Honor of Aaron Littman's 70th Birthday:

Marc Littman and Family

In Honor of Shayna Beckerman's 1st Birthday:

Alan and Phoebe Weiner

In Memory of Coon On Lee, American Veteran: Joel Weiner

In Memory of Josephine Malkowski: Maria G. Medina

In Memory of Michael Ludwig: Emily Furlong

In Memory of Rosaline Millman: Board of Directors, VFI

In Memory of Henny Blankstein: Dolores Vitulli

In Memory of Lea Bulkovshiteyn: Dmitry and Mariya Gofshteyn

In Memory of Emily Yaffee: Molly and Michael Garvey

TOURIST OR ADVENTURER COLOR POSTER

A new colorful "Tourist or Adventurer" poster is available from the New York office. The 11" x 17" poster shows a photo montage of typical volunteer activities.





Editor's Corner

Paid Advertising

The *Volunteer Connection* is now accepting paid color advertising and provides national exposure. If interested, please contact the editor at 610.358.5366 or steveplotkin@erols.com for a rate card and details.

We are seeking your personal story, which will be read by countless others down through the ages. *The Volunteer*

Connection is dedicated to your rich personal and life-changing experience as a volunteer in Israel. The deadline for the next issue is April 1, 2008.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FREE UPON REQUEST to 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.

Steve Plotkin, Editor

steveplotkin@erols.com, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073, 610.358.5366, Fax 610.361.8896.

Improving VFI's E-Mail Lists

We aim to improve the quality of our communications with volunteers via e-mail. This requires us to continually update your e-mail address. To accomplish this goal, we request you mail us a copy of the list of volunteers

with e-mail addresses that was given to you at the end of your program. This will help us be current. Please mail them to Steve Plotkin, Editor, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073.

The Situation Room – Sderot

Sderot (pronounced stay-ROTE) is a working-class town of 17,000 people, mainly North African immigrants, and 14 schools. It is in the western Negev and 6/10ths of a mile from the Gaza Strip.

Sderot seems at first like other Israeli towns with the shawarma and falafel shops, the same supermarkets, the same traffic circles, the same palm trees, and the same twice a week market.

Sderot's notoriety is due to constant bombardment since 2000 from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Over the past 4 years alone, some 2,000 Qassam rockets of improving range, frequency, and explosive power have landed. To date, eight Sderot civilians have been killed by the rockets and many are terrorized. The first Qassam rockets that hit were turned into a city sculpture. The therapists are very busy providing therapy and tranquilizers.

For many Israelis, Sderot is the model outcome of pulling back from occupied land, as they did from all of Gaza more than 2 years ago. They feel the returned land simply becomes a vicious launching platform for attacks by extremist Palestinians undeterred by any peace treaty.

The army installed a warning system for incoming rockets. Frequently, sunny Sderot hears the tinny loudspeakers, alerting, "Tseva Adom," or "Color Red." People's lives now revolve around that vital alert, which offers merely 20 seconds to find shelter. Many, but not all people, have a safe room or bomb shelter, a concrete cocoon with a steel door. The

government has been reinforcing schools and building shelters and began a survey to provide every home a safe room.

Lives have changed as people don't sleep in upstairs bedrooms and also stay away from public places at peak Qassam times. And when the alert sounds, everyone runs to one of the square concrete shelters that dot the town. They immediately pull out their phones and check on their children. Those who can no longer endure this harrowing lifestyle move, selling their homes at bargain prices.

Sderot's situation is at the heart of Israel's security concerns with Gaza run by Hamas which is considered a terrorist group by everyone. Also, negotiations with the Palestinian president, Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas, has

no impact on Hamas controlled Gaza.

In one stroke, on Jan. 23, Hamas breached much of Gaza's border with Egypt and this changed old equations. Initially Egypt abandoned the border and their responsibility and for a period doubled Gaza's size. If Israel can export Gaza to Egypt, some thought, maybe they can finally and completely disengage?

However, Israel is still left with three major options to deal with cross-border rocket attacks on its civilians:

- A large-scale ground operation and reoccupation of Gaza;
- Negotiate a cease fire with Hamas; and/or
- Keep up the economic and other pressure on Hamas.

This situation is just beginning. Stay tuned.

—Steve Plotkin



Melanie's Experience with the Sar-El Program

Ill begin with a good ending. Throughout our three weeks on the VFI/Sar-El program we felt that the work we performed helped Israel and was an effective show of support. Without a doubt, the fabulous memories we have of our experience and the new friends we made rewarded us far more richly than what we gave.

Our base assignment was a medical equipment center near Tel Aviv. Soldiers are in charge of checking, selecting, packing, and shipping medical supplies for military, domestic, and international emergency use. Packing up the chemical warfare first responder kits is very sobering. All the volunteers agreed that we would like to return and repack the expired, unopened, unused medicine and equipment. The supervisors are great to work under and the soldiers are a delight to work beside.

We quickly adapted to the simplicity of base life. Breakfast is followed by flag-raising, a short news report then off to work assignments. By far, our shortest ever work commutes. The mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks are nice. Lunch with the soldiers is a fun culinary and social experience. Between work and supper is down time or Ulpan. After supper is a political, cultural, or fun evening activity. Remember, in the army, time is everything.

Volunteers are clothed, housed, and fed by the IDF. Our shelters are army barracks with cots and are just adequate. Volunteer uniforms are clean and well patched, good enough. Regarding food, lunch is great — a delicious hot meat meal (with vegetarian options) with plenty of fruit and veggies. Breakfasts and suppers are cold dairy meals consisting of the standard tomato and cucumber salad, various types of cheeses, and eggs in one form or another.

Having previously served on a Sar-El program, we knew to pack as though going to summer camp. Packing light and planning to do laundry are essential. However, the most important things to take don't require a suitcase. These are an open mind and a sense of humor. Armed with these items, everyone returns from a Sar-El program a changed-for-the-better person.

— Melanie Doctor



Purim — Mishloach Manot Project

that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor”

Book of Esther 9:22

On Purim, March 20, 2008, Jewish tradition requires us to send two items of food to at least one person, praiseworthy for more than one. Based on the Book of Esther, this celebrates the deliverance of the Jews.

Last year, on very short notice, with help from people like you, VFI raised \$3,000 for Mishloach Manot packages that went to IDF soldiers in Israel. This year, we want to do even more. Here's how you can help:

- **Consider donating \$18 or multiples of \$18. Please be generous!**
- All of the money donated will go to Israel for the project. Your donation is tax deductible; your cancelled check will be your receipt.

- We will purchase as many packages in Israel as we can.
- Please send in your donation by March 3, 2008.

To donate by check, use the multipurpose form on page 6. Note that it is for the “Mishloach Manot Project.” To donate by credit card via PayPal, visit the donate page at www.vfi-usa.org/donate.html.

IDF Soldiers appreciate your letters and notes.

Your notes are equally important as your donations. Since your donation may purchase several packages, consider writing a couple of appreciation notes to the IDF soldiers.

If you are connected to a congregation, a school, a senior residence home, etc., please encourage them to write also. The more, the better!

Send notes to: Volunteers for Israel, Mishloach Manot Project, 330 W. 42nd Street, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10036, or via e-mail to purim@vfi-usa.org.

Volunteers in Israel

You can volunteer for the Special Mishloach Manot Project, March 16-28, 2008, and help deliver the Mishloach Manot packages in Israel. Then, do regular volunteer work on a base. We need a minimum of 15 volunteers.

— Josef Herz

The Machal

It was the summer of 1982. General Aharon Davidi put out the call for U.S. volunteers to relieve the critical manpower shortage in Israel during the Peace for Galilee Operation (the first Lebanon War). More than 600 volunteers responded. Volunteers for Israel have been answering that call ever since.

As we prepare to celebrate the 60th Independence Day of the State of Israel, we should stop to remember the 3,500 volunteers from outside Israel—the Mitnadvei Chutz L'aretz (the Machal)—who answered that same call to service between 1947 and 1948. These valiant volunteers fought in the Israel Defense Forces alongside the Palmach and the Haganah and after the state was declared.

“They came to us when we most needed them.”

—YITZCHAK RABIN

Records indicate that about 1,000 came from the United States and another 250 from Canada. All together, these men and women, Jews and non-Jews, came from more than 40 countries as diverse

as Norway, Nicaragua, Switzerland, and Spanish Morocco to assist Israel in her time of greatest need.

The Machalniks, as these volunteers came to be known, were motivated by many factors. Most had been soldiers in their native countries during World War II and wanted to express their solidarity with the nascent State by sharing their military expertise. Others were motivated by the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. Still others sensed the West's need for a strong democracy in a strategic region. And there were some who were motivated simply by a sense of adventure.



The English-speaking volunteers or “Anglo-Saxim” as the Israelis called them formed the core of the new Air Force as combat pilots for the first Fighter and Bomber Wings. North American pilots, air and ground crews, created the Air Transport Command that ferried the Messerschmitts and weapons from an air base near Prague to Tel Nof Air Base in Israel. In addition, the first naval commanders, the first radar technicians, the first heavy artillery gunners, the first tank commanders, and the first surgeons for eye wounds and burns were all from the Machal.

The War of Independence would be Israel's costliest and the Machal were no exception. One hundred nineteen Machalniks were killed in action, and 19 of the 33 flyers who died in the war were volunteers. After the war, about 500 of these volunteers stayed in Israel or made aliyah soon after.

Today, Israel has a memorial dedicated to these brave volunteers in the Jerusalem hills at the intersection of Burma and Jeep Roads, a site that was at the center of some of the most intense and brutal fighting during the war.

Please honor the Machalniks by making 2008 the year you volunteer in Israel.

—Beverly Cohen

VFI & Facebook.com

Do you use Facebook?

VFI has launched a Facebook group called “Volunteers for Israel®/Sar-El Program Alumni & Friends.” Facebook is an important social networking site with 80 million members. VFI has always grown through social networks, every time you discuss VFI with a group. We aim to engage current volunteers and reach other people who may want to join our volunteer program.

If you have a Facebook account – YOU CAN HELP US!

- Become a “Friend” of the VFI Group – at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6461698750
- Tell your Friends about us – by pointing them to us.
- If you are a regular Facebook user we can use your advice and help with our VFI Facebook initiative.

Please contact Josef Herz

jahertz@vfi-usa.org.

HELP WANTED

Seeking a few good volunteers with expertise in grant writing, fundraising, and marketing, to assist VFI at the national level.

Contact vadebolton@comcast.net.

2008 VFI Officers and Board Members

Officers:

Vade Bolton, National President, VA, 703.860.0504, vadebolton@comcast.net

Larry Feldman, Vice President, MD, 410.486.6876, lf730@aol.com

Marian Sacks, Treasurer, MD, 301.603.9099, mbsacks@vfi-usa.org

Ed Kohl, National Coordinator, MI, 248.788.0551, michigan@vfi-usa.org

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Shop the VFI Amazon Store and Support VFI

When you shop the VFI Amazon Store you can get some neat stuff while supporting VFI.

The VFI Amazon Store carries an interesting assortment of travel, Israeli, and Jewish centric products.



Check it out at

www.vfi-usa.org/vfiamazonstore.html

Annual VFI Photo Contest

Images may be of any VFI-related subject, from any location. The image must be the original work of the entrant who may be of any age and who retains all rights and consents to VFI's use of the image for publicity purposes.

The winners will be featured in *The Volunteer Connection*, and all entries will be displayed at VFI Headquarters in New York City. Only color and black and white prints, not exceeding

8x10 inches, with titles will be accepted. Images will be judged for technique, interest, and composition. Extreme manipulation of images will be rejected. The decision of the judges is final.

Entries are being accepted, with a \$5 entry fee, by Steve Plotkin, Editor, 1340 Brighton Way, Newtown Square, PA 19073, by the deadline of March 31, 2008.

VFI REGIONAL ALUMNI MEETINGS

Atlanta Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Alan Mintz at agmintz@mindspring.com.

Chicago/Midwest Region — We are seeking volunteers to pass out literature at the 60th Birthday for Israel events in May sponsored by the Jewish United Fund, and for the Walk with Israel.

Sunday June 15th at the Jewish Folk Festival, VFI will have a table and needs volunteers to help from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. We are also looking for leaders to run our open meetings three times a year. Would you like to speak about your VFI experience? Interview upcoming Volunteers?

All satisfying opportunities! Please call 888.246.3037 to help out!

Great Lakes Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Ed Kohl at 248.788.0551 or eskohl@comcast.net.

Las Vegas News — For further information and schedule update, please contact Fran and Jerry Goldberg at 702.914.6863.

Long Island Region — As a prelude to initiating activities in our region in 2008, we performed a range of organization and marketing activities. We have identified a number of recruiting areas and are seeking volunteers to help kick them off. To help, please call Eric Steinberg, Regional Ambassador at esteinb173@aol.com or 631.588.7438.

Los Angeles Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Carol and Isaac Hananel at 866.345.3352.

Metro New York — For further information and schedule update, please contact Jaclyn Mishal at the VFI NYC office at jaclynm@jafi.org or 212.643.4848.

Mid-Atlantic Region — VFI will participate in the Israel @ 60 Celebration to be held on the Mall in Washington, DC on June 1, 2008. We need booth volunteers on that day. For further information and schedule update, please contact Marian Sacks at 301.603.9099 or

Vade Bolton at 703.860.0504 or vadebolton@comcast.net.

Philadelphia — At our Jan. 9th meeting, attended by 45 members, Joanna Moss of the National Museum of Jewish History discussed plans for the museum's new building and showed the film, "It's Your Story," highlighting 350 years of American Jewish history. Future meetings will be March 19 and May 7 at the Klein Branch JCC, Red Lion Rd. and Jamison Ave. in Philadelphia. Call Jeanne Schachter at 610.647.4048 for more schedule details.

To date, over 30 volunteers (from 5 states and Canada) have joined the PHILLY GROUP to participate in the April 27 Sar-El program. They will celebrate Israel's 60th Independence Day in Israel. For additional information, get in touch with Beverly Cohen at bevcohen@comcast.net or 610.584.0468.

San Francisco Region — For further information and schedule update, please contact Kay Warren at 510.339.0183 or vfi5000@hotmail.com.



Help Plant YOUR Trees in Israel

VFI is your direct link to the Jewish National Fund's trees for Israel. Memorialize your life-cycle events with a present to Israel's future. Just go to www.vfi-usa.org and follow the links to the order form. Send it to me with your check for \$18.00 per tree, and we will take care of the rest.

Alternatively, you may use our multi-purpose coupon below. We need to know your name and to whom the donation certificates should be sent.

Renee G. Bassell, 3029 Risdon Drive, Union City, CA 94587

Did you know that Israel constitutes 0.002 of the area of Arab lands?

THE VFI STORE

Several VFI logo items are available.

VFI Travel Journal	\$15.
Army green baseball cap with VFI logo	\$20.
Green fleece vest, sleeveless with 2 zipper pockets and black collar	\$50.
Small carry-on bag (duffle) with shoulder straps	\$60.



Prices include tax and shipping within U.S. Use our multipurpose coupon below to order.

VFI MEMBERSHIP, DONATIONS, AND ORDER FORM

Please check your desired membership level, order items, and quantities.

Mail to Marian Sacks, Treasurer, 13801 Bonsal Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20906, with your check payable to "Volunteers for Israel."

VFI MEMBERSHIP:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ben-Gurion (\$500 and above) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dayan (\$250) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharon (\$100) | <input type="checkbox"/> Meir (\$50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chai (\$18) | |

OTHER:

- | | Price | Quantity | Total |
|--|---------|----------|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> JNF Trees
also, to whom certificates be sent | \$18.00 | _____ | = \$_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purim – Mishloach Manot Project | | | \$_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Donations | | | \$_____ |

VFI STORE ITEMS (includes tax & shipping):

	Price	Quantity	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> VFI Travel Journal	\$15.00	_____	= \$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> VFI Army Green Baseball Cap	\$20.00	_____	= \$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> VFI Green Fleece Vest, sleeveless with two zipper pockets and black collar	\$50.00	_____	= \$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> VFI Small Carry-on Duffel Bag with Shoulder Straps	\$60.00	_____	= \$_____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$_____

E-MAIL: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

FIRST NAME: _____ LAST NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

Volunteer Program Schedule for 2008

Programs start only on the Sunday and/or Monday shown below. Volunteers can join for 1, 2, 3, or more weeks. Programs projected to offer the Ulpan Option are designated.

2008 SCHEDULE — 26th Anniversary Year

Feb. 10-14, 1-week program	June 29/30-July 17, *Ulpan*
Feb. 10/11-Feb. 28, *Ulpan*	June 29-July 17, International Youth Program
Mar. 2/3-Mar. 20, *Ulpan*	July 20/21-Aug. 7, *Ulpan*
Mar. 16/17-28, Special Purim Project	July 20-Aug. 7, International Youth Program
Mar. 23/24-April 10, *Ulpan*	Aug. 10/11-Aug. 28, *Ulpan*
April 13-17, 1-week program	Aug. 31/Sept. 1-Sept. 11, 2-week Program, *Ulpan*
April 27/28-May 15, *Ulpan*	Sept. 14/15-Sept. 25, 2-week Program, *Ulpan*
May 18-22, 1-week program	Oct. 5/6-Oct. 23, Bases closed during the holidays
May 8 - Yom HaAtzmaut, 60th Independence Day	Oct. 26-30, 1-week program
May 18/19-June 5, *Ulpan*	Oct. 26/27-Nov. 13, *Ulpan*
May 18-22, 1-week program	Nov. 16/17-Dec. 4, *Ulpan*
June 10-June 26, begins Tues., *Ulpan*	Dec. 7/8-Dec. 25, *Ulpan*
	Dec. 28/29-Jan. 15, 2009, *Ulpan*

The Ulpan Beginning Hebrew Option

Ulpan is a voluntary beginners practical Hebrew class (Aleph level) for English speakers offered in conjunction with volunteer service. Classes are held on the base in the evenings and feature a language immersion environment. Classes meet 2 nights per week and require a minimum participation of 10 members and a maximum of 15 members, so bring a friend.

Taught by experienced professionals, the one-time fee of \$50 covers up to 3 weeks of classes. If you are interested in this opportunity, sign up at the time of your volunteer registration.

Please visit our web site at www.vfi-usa.org for frequent special programs.

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—Steve Plotkin, Editor, steveplotkin@erols.com

—Barbara Abbott, Copy Editor

—Regina Stinger, Graphic Designer

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