



NA'AMAT Now!

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Winter 2020

NA'AMAT aids women seeking combat roles in top military units

By Sharon Sutker McGowan

In 1994, Alice Miller made history by successfully petitioning the Israeli Supreme Court for the right to take a qualification test for an aviation course in the Israel Defense Forces with the goal of becoming a combat pilot. Although Miller did not qualify for the course, she paved the way for many women who came after her.

"Of course women today are pilots, thanks to Alice Miller," said Gali Etzion, head of NA'AMAT's Legislation and Counseling Department. "Her cause was more than just litigation. We see it as the case that opened the skies for women."

In November, exactly 26 years after Miller's historic lawsuit, five young Israeli women petitioned the Supreme Court to allow them to apply for positions in top military units that are still off limits for women. When the young women approached NA'AMAT's legal department for support, Etzion eagerly agreed to file an amicus ("friend of the court") brief in the case.

NA'AMAT has been trying for many years to convince the Army that women need the right to apply for all combat roles, according to Etzion, who has been with the organization for almost 20 years. "We're asking to give them a fair trial, nothing more; no special treatment." Today, women can be in combat from the air or from the sea, but not on land.

In Israel, people's role in the army is very important to the rest of their lives. "If you're not an ex-head of the IDF or some big shot general your chances to become a great politician are



Left to right: Gali Zinger, attorney with the Israel Women's Network; Mor Lidany; Gali Nishri; Omer Saria; Gali Etzion; Mika Kliger.

slim. The nation's army — the army of the people — has a great influence after they are discharged," Etzion said. Nevertheless, there are strong forces in the country who don't want women in the army at all, let alone in combat roles.

NA'AMAT's interest in the case is consistent with its efforts to open doors to women in other areas, such as the Rabbinical Court. Etzion explained that women were unable to apply to become the head of the court because "you have to be certified to be a rabbi, and only men can do that in Israel," she said. "We are willing to be measured according to the regular rules; we just want an opportunity to try."

The four original petitioners, Mor Lidany, Gali Nishri, Omer Saria and Mika Kliger, consulted with NA'AMAT and the Israel Women's Network before filing their petition. "(These) are amazing young women who want to give their hearts, give everything they have to the country. And the Army is saying, 'Excuse me, no,'" said Etzion. A fifth woman has joined the petition, but the ruling would affect many more young women, who are watching with interest.

The case is being heard by a three-person panel of judges from Israel's High Court of Justice (Bagatz), including Esther Hayut, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. After the IDF suggested that a committee look into the women's petition, Hayut agreed, but required that the committee report back to the Su-

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Publicity

New logo leads marketing effort

By Susan Isaacs

VP, Publicity and Public Relations

If ever good PR was needed, now is that time! NA'AMAT members (along with the rest of the world) are still sheltering at home, connecting only through Zoom meetings. Meeting this way has one major benefit — we can now easily connect with other NA'AMAT members throughout the U.S. and the world. We have forged partnerships with NA'AMAT Canada and have planned some online events together.

Good PR must always be in the forefront as we keep promoting NA'AMAT's important work. During the last few months, we rolled out our new logo, which has revitalized our brand with new vibrant colors and the words "Enriching Lives" wrapped in a loving heart. Doesn't that tell our whole story? It's important to have a strong visual identity as we work toward growing our membership and improving our fundraising efforts.

We have expanded our marketing campaign with updated banners in the Suddenly65 newsletter (local to the Los Angeles area) and with The Forward (a national Jewish publication). Our goal is to increase membership. Along with our national Facebook campaign, we are happy to report that we are getting many "clicks" on our banners, which will hopefully convert into new members. Our message with this campaign is to prioritize friendship and camaraderie; we believe that fundraising will organically follow.

My team recently sent out a press release to more than 150 Jewish newspapers

and websites announcing the Virtual Gala event on March 7, 2021, honoring "Dr. Ruth" Westheimer, who is the recipient of the Golda Meir Humanitarian Award. We hope that the Jewish media will run with this story and it will attract new women to our organization.

Esther Friedberg and I are working on some new ideas for a "NA'AMAT CHALLENGE" in early 2021 – stay tuned.

Remember to always spread the good work we do at NA'AMAT and visit our website often!

Programs

Technology keeps us connected

By Judith Shamir

Program Committee Chair

As we continue to navigate our way through this unprecedented and challenging global pandemic, I am excited about how well our organization has adapted its work to the new realities.

As we spend more and more time at home, I am pleased to note that our level of activities has not only increased, but we became, thanks to technology, a much more cohesive group. Zoom and other such platforms have virtually opened the world to us and brought us closer. We continue to engage our members in programs planned for, and by, various chapters, and at the same time present programs on the national level, inviting all members to attend. These new opportunities for furthering personal interests, staying informed, visiting Israel virtually and engaging with friends from across the country, Canada and Israel are very well attended.

The newly formed national Program Committee determines which proposed programs should be offered nationally and works to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Among the programs we present are weekly exercise sessions, art museum tours, virtual bus tours, conversations with leaders of NA'AMAT Israel, book clubs, game nights, author talks and more. Program-

ming has addressed Jewish holiday celebrations, the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Ethiopian Jewish Diaspora and the art of Zionism.

Please join us as often as you can for these interesting and inspiring programs. May we continue our work of enriching lives in Israel and locally.

Membership

Give the gift of membership

By Selma Roffman

VP, Membership

October was officially membership month in NA'AMAT. Since it is difficult to tell one month from the next, why not continue the campaign for new members regardless of the month? Why not galvanize our energies and reach out to family and friends to make a difference by recruiting for NA'AMAT?

This is the year when NA'AMAT groups organized Healthy Hummus Happenings, shared Heirloom Sessions, watched Israeli Cooking Demos and debated at Book Chats. From Los Angeles to Cleveland, from Palm Beach to Philly, from Long Island to Chicago and cities in between, we welcomed others to "join our family!"

During this particularly rough year, NA'AMAT Israel forged ahead despite obstacles, pursuing the mission to prevent domestic violence and maintain day care centers and youth villages.

January and February are good times to invite a daughter, a cousin, or leader in your community to join NA'AMAT. Think about how much being a member of NA'AMAT means to you and give the gift of membership to someone special you know. Share with them the attractive online activities highlighted in weekly emails. Put your Jewish values into action. Touch their lives by making them members of the "mishpacha."

All of us await your creative ideas to help us grow and thrive. May we soon drink "L'Chaim" together in 2021!

Update your contact information

If you have moved or changed your primary phone number or email address, please let us know by calling the national office at 818-431-2200 or emailing membership@naamat.org.

Message from the President



By Jan Gurvitch

Although it is still winter in my neck of the woods in New Jersey, Tu B'Shevat (Jan. 27-28) gives me a happy glimpse into the early days of spring. Yes, in Israel, flowering trees give testament to the end of winter with hopes of warmer days to come.

In many cultures, trees represent life, wisdom, power and prosperity. Philosophers regard trees as observers witnessing the evolution of humans and the planet around them. In our Tanakh, the first trees that are mentioned are the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. Both represent intrinsic values that have been treasured by

our Jewish community throughout the millennia.

In Israel, NA'AMAT continues to make education its No. 1 priority. Our daycare centers provide the ABCs of learning and socialization to approximately 17,000 children every year. Our 17 technological high schools provide alternative education opportunities for 3,200 students. And this year's 180 professional scholarship winners will study engineering, science and law. By offering scholarship support, the members of NA'AMAT USA ensure that these women can develop the skills that enable them to realize their dreams while making important contributions to Israeli society.

Please mark your calendar for March 7, and join us and keynote speaker Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer at our first Scholarship Gala. Hag Sameach!

'Dr. Ruth' to be keynote speaker at virtual NA'AMAT gala

March 2021 is shaping up to be an important month for NA'AMAT USA as we partner with NA'AMAT Canada for our first virtual gala, featuring Dr. Ruth Westheimer as the keynote speaker.

Timed to coincide with International Women's Day, the March 7 online event will focus on women's education and empowerment in Israel. The latest recipients of NA'AMAT's Professional Scholarship Program will be recognized at the gala.

Dr. Ruth, the nation's foremost and most beloved sex therapist, was awarded the Golda Meir Humanitarian award in September. She has demonstrated a lifelong passion for edu-

cation and commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality, coupled with a love of Israel.

The prestigious award was last presented to the late Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in 2016 at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Westheimer speaks glowingly of NA'AMAT USA. "Bravo to the women of NA'AMAT," she said, "because a long time ago, they already realized that getting together gives them strength, and that volunteering was very important for self-confidence and for socialization. I am delighted to be part of NA'AMAT!"

NA'AMAT recently dedicated "The Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer Scholarship for Gender Studies" in her name.

In Memoriam

NA'AMAT USA mourns the recent deaths of Deborah Troy-Stewart and Estelle Balfour.



Deborah
Troy-Stewart

Ms. Troy-Stewart, 66, a former national board member and Eastern Area Coordinator died unexpectedly in New Jersey, where she was a real estate broker and owner of Shelanu Realty LLC., as well as a retired educator. She was known for her loving bright smile, generous heart and compassionate creative spirit. She loved Israel with all her heart. She is survived by her husband, Wayne Stewart Jr., two children, Marcie and Orli Lombardi, and a granddaughter, Sydney.

Ms. Balfour, of Silver Spring, Maryland, served on the Washington D.C. Council and the national board, where she was Eastern Area Coordinator. She was known as a committed NA'AMAT member who often visited the clubs in the area and kept in touch with members. Ms. Balfour was enthusiastic and knowledgeable about NA'AMAT and dedicated to women's causes. She loved traveling and said her best trip was to Israel for a NA'AMAT convention. She was moved by the country's beauty and proud to be part of NA'AMAT. She is survived by three children and six grandchildren.

May their memories be for a blessing.



Estelle Balfour



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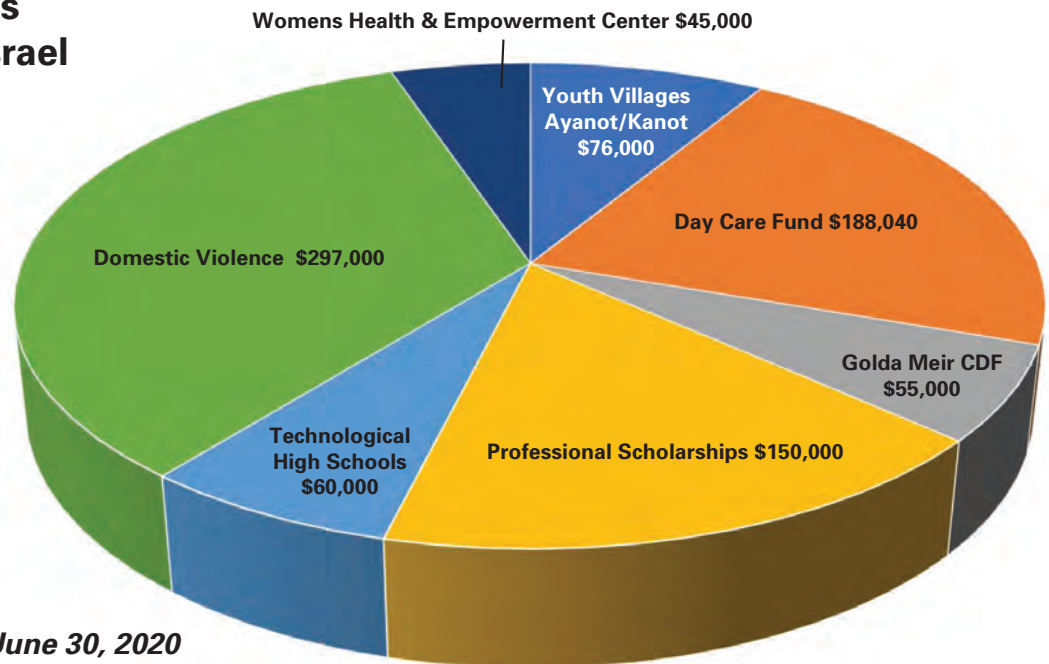
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Women seeking combat roles

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preme Court in six months.

Etzion sees this as a positive step. "We knew we wouldn't get a decision approving the petition right now," she said. "They could have dismissed the whole case...It's not a bad situation." She points out that the situation is similar to the Rabbinical Court case, in that the Supreme Court is giving the IDF a chance to change the situation themselves. "If nothing will change, they will change it." Women can now apply to become head of the Rabbinical Court.

Etzion said she was impressed that the young women came

forward to challenge the status quo. "I was very proud as an attorney, and as a mother I was full of hope," said Etzion, who has four children, the youngest of whom is about to enter the army. "I really felt proud to be part of it, no matter what the outcome will be," she said.

Added Hagit Pe'er, president of NA'AMAT Israel, "Every struggle such as this one paves the way for other women and brings society one step closer to gender equality."

Did You Know?

... that NA'AMAT's Kanot Youth Village has a horse therapy program for at-risk youth?