

Report of Activities PEF AVIsrael 2016

March 2017

Dear Geoffrey and our friends at PEF-

We are writing you this note on Purim. We have just completed the most successful Mishloach Manot fundraising campaign ever- selling 13,000 packages for schools, kindergartens, communities, businesses, and individual families throughout the country (with some sold in Belgium too!) While the income from this drive is most welcome, the knowledge that thousands of people have been exposed to the AVIsrael message is most gratifying.

AVIsrael is literally on the move. Thanks greatly to the funding of Israel's National Insurance Agency, the renovation of our new offices in the Yad Sarah building are in full swing. The new center opens up many new possibilities for reaching new populations and expanding our services. We are hoping to settle in right after Passover. We invite you to come and see our new home on your next trip to Jerusalem.

The support of PEF in 2016 allowed us to continue our professional training program which included the following:

📍 International LSLS Certification

Two of our staff members completed the third and final year of the LSLS (Listening and Spoken Language Specialists) certification program of the AGBell Academy and are preparing for the certification exam this summer. The support from the Irma Hamberger Fund allowed us to offer our staff in the LSLS process the required instruction and guidance of a certified LSLS mentor. Mrs. Miriam Cohen, AVIsrael's professional director, is the only qualified LSLS mentor in Israel. While she meets weekly with all of our staff for professional guidance, she offers more indepth instruction for our professionals in the LSLS certification process. Mentoring these professionals involves in depth assessment of their therapy sessions with written evaluations and suggestions for improvement. In 2017, two of our staff members joined the LSLS certification program.

We are committed to having all of our senior staff members hold LSLS certification.

AVIsrael is the ONLY center in Israel engaged in this international certification process.

An additional component of the LSLS process is the need for continuing education hours. Throughout 2016, we hosted 20 hours of CE hours in lectures and workshops that were recognized by the AGBell to be applied to the LSLS certification process.

📍 Professional Training

At AVIsrael, we see ourselves as a center of knowledge in addition to being a service provider. This is why we train new therapists in courses, supervise students to expose them at the beginning of their careers to the AV approach.

In the fall of 2016, we completed our fourth 40 hour course on AV Principles for licensed professionals.

We continue to train new professionals in all areas of service- audiology, cochlear implant mapping and auditory-verbal speech therapy. Part of the role of our experienced staff





members is to train and guide these new young professionals towards integrating them into the field.

Student Supervision

In 2016, we hosted 39 students from four academic programs: Kiryat Ono regular and haredi programs, Hadassah College. (2 students on a rotating observation roster and two students for a semester each at our cochlear implant program and in our pediatric audiology program in addition to the weekly visits by second year students) . The investment in hosting these students is an investment in the future of the field- these young people are eager to continue their association with AV as they are impressed by the quality of our program and the excellent results of our clients!

We thank PEF for being our partners in our vision to make the lives of deaf children as rich and abundant as they can be. We hope that you will be pleased by what you read in the coming pages about AVIsrael's activities and will continue to support our work on behalf of children with hearing loss in Israel.

Best wishes from Jerusalem-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Elaine Matlow Tal-El'.

Elaine Matlow Tal-El,
Executive Director

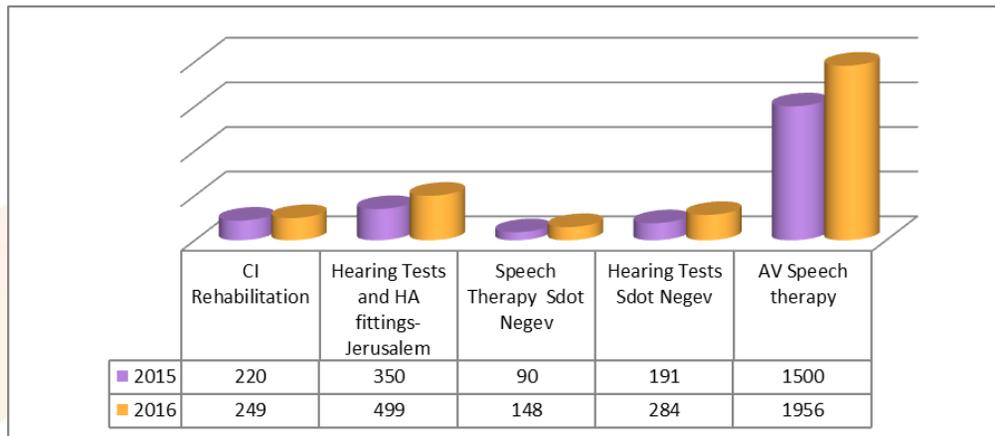
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jason Rogoff'.

Dr. Jason Rogoff
Chairperson

Summary of AVIsrael program activities 2016

When we compare our services from 2015 with those of this past year, we see growth in every area. Overall, AVIsrael provided **3136 services in 2016!**

AVIsrael Services: 2015-2016



Expansion of services

By looking at the numbers of services provided in 2016, we can see a substantial growth which translates into an increase in the number of children and families we are serving.

In 2016, 41 new families joined our core programs- AV speech therapy, hearing aid fittings and the rehabilitation following cochlear implant rehabilitation. There is an organic connection between these areas of activity- this is a unique feature of the AVIsrael program. We have had families come for hearing tests and hearing aid fittings and then decide to join our therapy program. A number of children in therapy at AVIsrael have received cochlear implants in order to maximize their learning potential- choosing our program at Shaare Zedek. As a holistic program, we connect the dots for many of our families and help them get all of the services they need.

Our cochlear implant program at Shaare Zedek has also grown this past year as families follow the reputation of the program, of the surgeon and of the staff. The numbers speak for themselves.

In 2016, we continued to expand and deepen both of our projects in Sdot Negev. We began the year with our Jerusalem therapist going weekly to provide AV speech therapy services to families in the south. In March, we began a training program from a recent graduate of our AVPrinciples course who lives in the area. She began by observing the lessons of our experienced therapist. In July, after observing lessons with our experienced therapist for 4 months, she began to work independently with the local families, with the continued guidance and mentoring of our experienced therapist .our AV .

In 2016, our pediatric audiology program at Sdot Negev took off- thanks to the excellent reputation of the quality of the program that was supported by local pediatricians and educators alongside the unacceptably long waiting list for hearing tests of children (10 months to a year!). In 2015, our staff performed 190 hearing tests in the south. In 2016, that number grew to 284 **which translates into seeing over 275 children (as most come for this service only once a year)! We are still only working one day a week because of the difficult logistics (and cost) of sending down our senior audiologist from Jerusalem weekly.**



In 2016 we began to explore bringing AV services to the north through an association with the new cochlear implant surgeon at the Rambam Medical Center in Haifa. We met with Dr. Mauricio Cohen and found in him a real partner and colleague who is interested in bringing AV to the north-offering speech therapy services, mapping as we do in our Shaare Zedek program, supporting parents and educating professionals in the north. To date, there is no AV presence in the north although there is a need! This will hopefully be our next frontier!

Exciting Breakthroughs

Thanks to the encouragement of the Weinberg Foundation, AVIsrael orchestrated a national survey through the National Insurance Agency (Bituach Leumi) and the Ministry of Welfare comparing outcomes of AV graduates (ages 15- 29) with graduates of other programs. The parameters of the survey included: communication strategies, academic achievement, use of technology, social integration.

The outcomes are astounding, indicating that AV graduates have reached higher levels of academic achievement (94% having full matriculation vs 53 % from the non AV group), verbal communication skills (97% using verbal communication only at school vs 62 % among non AV graduates) and by far using more hearing technology (85% bilateral technology vs 45% among the non AV group). A full report is being prepared by the National Insurance Agency. The first official presentation of this survey took place on February 14th at the ISHLA Speech Pathology Conference. The chief speech pathologist of the Ministry of Welfare presented the results of the survey. Her presentation stirred up passions among the attending audience of professionals. Interestingly, the negative reaction to the presentation was from the older generation of professionals.

The results of the survey have raised issues for the Ministry of Welfare that they are going to pursue in further research. It appears that there was a negative correlation between attending the special pre-school programs supported by the Ministry and the academic results of the graduates. AV children who did **not** attend these preschool programs reached higher levels of academic attainment than their non AV peers. This is a concern for the Ministry. If AVIsrael has helped to shine a light on this fact that forces a reassessment of the rehabilitation of deaf children towards supporting AV strategies, then we have succeeded. If as a bi-product of this survey, AVIsrael will receive government support for training professionals in AV strategies and also support for parents who choose this approach- we have made a difference.

We at AVIsrael are planning to use these results to further our organizational agenda as well as for raising general awareness among the public. We are preparing to produce new PR/educational materials which will highlight these results so that parents can make informed decisions based on their hopes for their deaf child.

NEW AREA OF ACTIVITY in 2016/17 : Evidence-Based Research

Translating our hands on experience into evidence based research has become a new goal of our organization. In 2016, some exciting headway was made in this area:

- ② Our research project on **“Using FM Personal Amplification on Babies and Toddlers at Home”** was presented at the first Pediatric Audiology Conference of Sonova held in September 2016. This is a controversial subject in Israel while our research was received with great interest. An expanded version of this research with a follow up component was presented on February 13th at the annual national ISHLA conference for Israeli Speech Therapists and was very well received.



- 📍 The article on the findings of this research project on FM use at home will be published this year in the Volta Voices Journal, a highly reputable publication of the AGBell Association for the Deaf.
- 📍 In June 2017, a member of our staff will be presenting the case study at the AGBell Annual Convention in Washington DC of one of our clients, a five year old child, the first **ABI (Auditory-brainstem implant)** recipient being taught to listen and to speak through AV strategies.

Financial Sustainability:

In 2016, we received support from the Ministry of Welfare for the hiring of a new social worker to serve the needs of our families and of our professionals. However, it has become clear over the years that government funding of our project will never cover the majority of our expenses. In September 2016 we raised our prices for speech therapy by 10% and instituted a more stringent cancellation policy. Presented as part of the entire service program for the school year, this went over smoothly. There were no new families that requested support of our fund for the disadvantaged as a result of this change. The Health Plans continue to remunerate families for a good portion of the cost while the 10% increase in prices and payment for unjustified cancelled sessions added to our own revenue.

We continue to apply to foundations, individuals, local regional councils and municipalities and government ministries for funding alongside our own fundraising initiatives.

In 2017, following our move into Yad Sarah and after hiring local professionals in the south, we hope to expand our programs and offer more services, which will translate into more revenue for the organization.

Lobbying and Strategic Planning with Goren Amir:

In January of 2016 we had our first meeting with the lobbying and strategic development firm Goren Amir that is providing us with *pro bono* support and direction. We have had meetings with MK's and have participated in forums on changing the law for rehabilitation preschools which would allow parents to choose to attend regular preschools yet receive the financial support needed that would have been available had they chosen to attend Micha or Shema Koleinu, the recognized and government supported programs.

Directions for the future: Raising Awareness and Changing Policy-

We recently received a call from a soon to be dad who had just received the results of genetic testing indicating that he and his wife both shared the Connexin 26 gene and had a 50% chance of having a deaf child. He called to ask us what he needs to do to prepare. Not understanding his question, I asked that our speech therapist responsible for the intake of new families return his call to address his question. In their conversation, he asked if he and his wife should begin to learn sign language!

We were flabbergasted!

How is it that in 2017, the stereotype of deaf people communicating in sign language is the default image of the deaf? Research results show that with early diagnosis (universal newborn screening covered by law in Israel), early fitting of technology (cochlear implants before the age of one year are covered by Israel's health plan) and appropriate intervention (good AV rehabilitation)- **a child with ANY hearing loss can reach normative speech and language levels!!****

While it is crucial that parents have access to this information, it is becoming apparent that in order to really effect change, we must reach physicians and other medical professionals who interface with families of children who are deaf immediately after the diagnosis.

That is why we are now preparing to add a campaign to reach professionals, parents and policy makers through education, public relations and marketing, using the results of the Bituach Leumi survey.

The object of this campaign is to assure that ALL parents of children with hearing less will have the opportunity to raise their child to true independence and inclusion and not have to experience the sense of helplessness that we heard in the voice of that soon to be father just a few weeks ago.



** ("Listening: The building block for language and literacy. Aleisha David, MSLP, Cert LSLs, Findings of the Shepherd Center in Australia, May 2016).