



Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program Activity Report 2011–2012



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
The Community Action Department



lillian and larry goodman
open apartments program



Professor Rivka Carmi,
President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev by

For nearly four decades, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Community Action Department has been running programs designed to reduce social inequality in the Negev. In recognition of the magnanimity of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Foundations, USA, the Department's flagship program was recently named the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. Providing students with rent-free habitation in exchange for a wide range of enhancement programs, including after-school tutoring, holiday celebrations, an annual Passover house painting campaign and a range of summer activities for the residents of Beer-Sheva's poorest neighborhoods, the Goodman Open Apartments Program touches the lives of countless families. BGU is extremely proud of this unique aspect of student activity. We thank all our friends from around the world who support it and invite you to come and get a closer look at what we do on your next visit to Israel.



Vered Sarusi Katz',
Director of the Community Action Department

Another year of activities at the Goodman Open Apartments Program has just ended. This has been an exceptionally exciting year and we would like to share some of our experiences with you, our dear friends. The Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program at the Community Action Department is a hugely successful venture that helps us implement our belief in mutual responsibility. This special program is a flagship of BGU, a University that welcomes all people of the Negev and is a beacon of light and an empowering force to the region. By helping a child struggling with his homework, encouraging a lonely senior citizen, or by counseling a confused adult, our students touch people's lives. The students' interactions with their neighbors make them better human beings and they are grateful to the local residents for welcoming them into their homes and into their hearts. The Goodman Open Apartments Program is a complex human tapestry of many people partnering together to make a change: students eager to reach out to the Beer-Sheva community, supported by BGU and the Community Action Department, and the many devoted donors who have accompanied us throughout the years. You help make this program possible. We thank you wholeheartedly for your support and commitment and for giving us the power to continue our mission. We look forward to our fruitful partnership for many years to come.

Just open the door...

In this program, the students don't just stop by to say hello. They live in the neighborhoods, working there day in and day out, striving hand in hand to create a better community. They enrich the lives of neighborhood residents with activities they could not otherwise engage in, and strengthen the bond between BGU and residents of Beer-Sheva. They reach out and touch their next door neighbors, get involved in their lives, and bring them joy, hope and love.

Our students open their apartment doors and open up their hearts.

So go ahead. No need to knock. Open the door, walk right in and see how it's done...

General background

The Community Action Department at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev runs community programs, offering educational, social, and community services to neighborhood residents.

The Goodman Open Apartments Program is a shining example of BGU's strong involvement in the community. This special program has been operating for the past 33 years, and is well-known both in the neighborhoods where it is run and in the region. Universities abroad approach us for guidance in adopting this successful model themselves. We are, of course, delighted to help.

The Goodman Open Apartments Program's guiding principle is simple: the students live in rent-free apartments located in socio-economically challenged neighborhoods of Beer-Sheva. In exchange, they share their personal expertise and academic skills with neighborhood residents.

There are 63 apartments in the program, all located in the older areas of Beer-Sheva: the Dalet neighborhoods (north, center and east), the Gimmel neighborhood and the Yud-Aleph neighborhood. Each year, approximately 100 students participate in the program.

Program Structure

Student activities are divided into three areas: leading recreational clubs and classes, adopting families and running community events. Each student volunteers for eight hours a week.

A. Recreational Clubs and Classes

The clubs and classes are open to residents of all ages: children, young, adults and senior citizens participate in the wide range of activities offered. 90 clubs and classes are conducted in a variety of areas: homework help, art, music, sports and other enrichment activities, meeting in the neighborhoods twice a week throughout the academic year.

B. Adopting a Family

The program offers neighborhood residents personal counseling and support. Each student "adopts" a family, and spends two hours a week with them. This close personal connection leads to meaningful relationships between students and families and ultimately generates a positive change for neighborhood residents.

C. Community Events

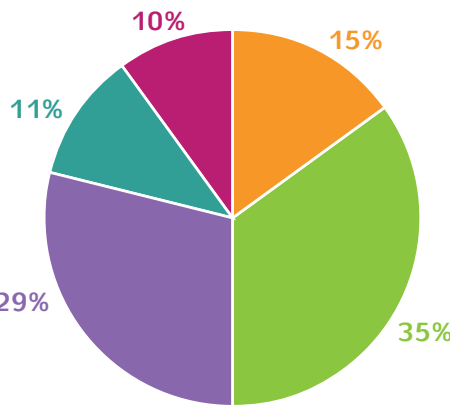
The students run large-scale events to celebrate the holidays, including activities for Hanukkah, Tu B'Shvat, and Purim, clean-up and painting days held throughout the year and especially towards Passover, book and clothing fairs, field trips, swim days, and more. In addition, the program runs activity days for children during summer vacation.

Goodman Fellows

Our students began the program in five neighborhood activity centers, located in the North Dalet, Central Dalet, East Dalet, Gimmel and Yud-Aleph neighborhoods. Most are undergraduates, except for five who are studying for their Masters degrees. The students hail from all faculties, as illustrated in the graph below.

Chart no. 1
Division according to areas of study areas

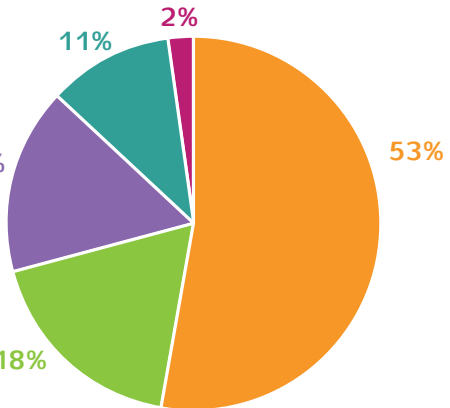
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Engineering Sciences
- Faculty of Natural Sciences
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of Management Sciences



This year, 44 new Goodman Fellows joined our veteran students. The division of students according to year of activity in program is indicated in graph #2.

Chart no. 2
Year of activity in program

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Fourth year
- Fifth year

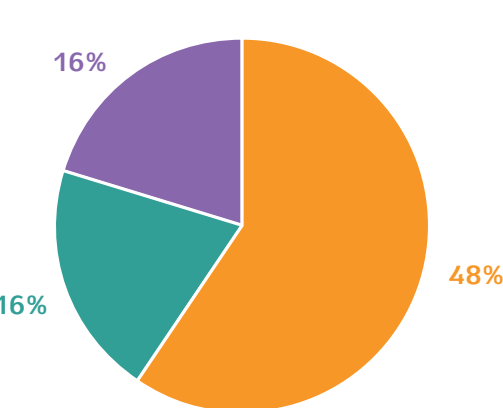


Clubs and Classes

This year, we ran 90 clubs for neighborhood residents of all ages. The clubs are primarily run out of the students’ apartments or in clubhouses and bomb shelters run by the program. A few of the clubs are held in neighborhood community centers. The clubs meet for four hours a week, and in most cases, each is led by a single student. Most of the clubs are for children. The segmentation according to target population is indicated in graph #3.

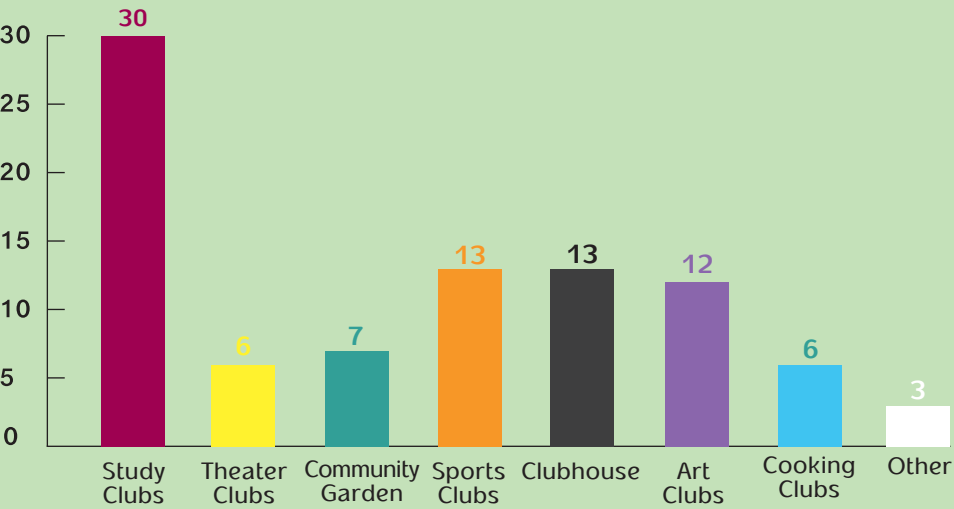
Chart no. 3
Distribution by target audience

- Children’s clubs
- Teenage clubs
- Adult clubs and classes



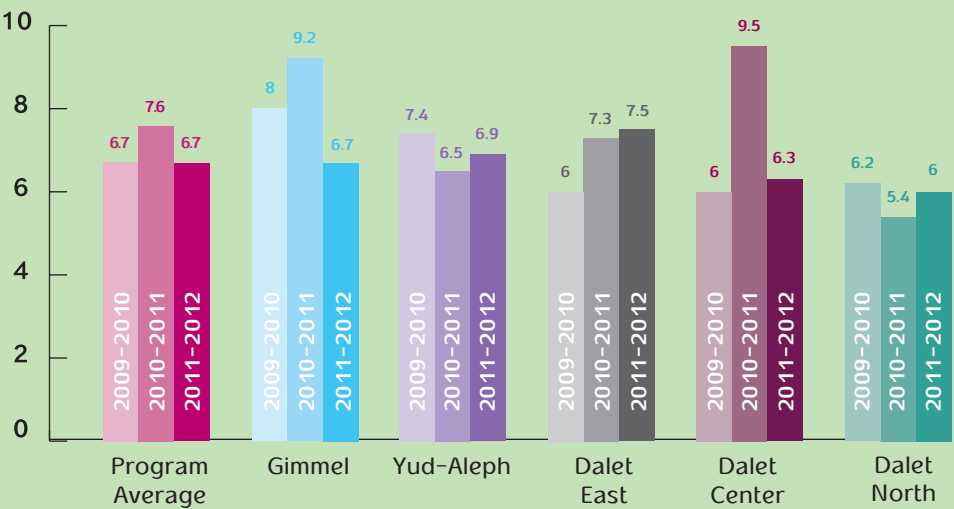
Based on the students’ relative advantage in teaching and studies, most of the clubs are study clubs. However, we also run a good number of clubs in art, sports, and theater, as indicated in graph #4.

Chart no. 4
Distribution of clubs according to topic



Every month, almost 500 neighborhood residents – children, teenagers and adults – take part in the 90 clubs run by the program. This year has seen an increase in the average number of participants in many of the clubs across neighborhoods. The segmentation of the averages of participants according to centers is indicated in graph #5.

Chart no. 5
Average number of participants in clubs and classes



So What's New?

The Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program:

Last year, the Open Apartments Program was named the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments. This is a great honor for the University and an excellent opportunity for us to work together with Mr. Larry Goodman, who was one of the founders of this program and has supported it generously throughout the years. The strong partnership of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Foundations and the Goodman family has greatly empowered the program



and enables us to further expand and develop. Thanks to this wonderful involvement, we will be able to soon establish a new center in the Gimmel neighborhood. An additional 10 apartments will be added, and 20 new Goodman Fellows will join the program. We are thrilled about this progress and are certain that the Goodman Open Apartments Program

will be a major force in leading the social action endeavors of BGU and helping us to achieve important changes in the neighborhoods of Beer-Sheva.

Sandy's Place:

This year, Sandy's Place was opened in the North Dalet neighborhood in tribute to the memory of Mrs. Sandy Breslauer, a beloved friend of the program and an exceptional human being. A local activity center was renovated thanks to donations from Sandy's family and friends, and redecorated to reflect Sandy's cheerful and upbeat personality. It was repainted in friendly colors, furnished with throw pillows,



bean bags and welcoming sitting areas, and equipped with a sophisticated computer room. Sandy's Place now serves as an after-school club for children and teenagers of the neighborhood, running programs in science, art and crafts, homework study and story time activities. It has contributed greatly to the neighborhood and will be a central component

of the North Dalet activities next year. We plan to run computer clubs and activities for parents and senior citizens there as well.

Community Theater:

This year, we ran 6 community theater groups. The students underwent training and were accompanied by stage and drama professionals. They recruited children, teenagers and adults, including senior citizens, to join the groups. Each group wrote and performed a play that focused on their daily lives. The neighborhood residents presented ideas and materials for the play, and together with the Goodman Fellows, they adapted the



materials to produce a play. Towards the end of the year, a community theater event was held on BGU's Marcus Family campus in Beer-Sheva. The groups performed in front of packed audiences, filled with their excited families, friends and students. The project was a smash success and will continue to run next year.

Library for Children and Teenagers:

BGU student Dana Berman, a Goodman Fellow in the Yud-Aleph neighborhood, identified a need for a community center – a place to meet, read and study.

She decided to create a library for children and teenagers, and took action – meeting with associations and community centers, locating a suitable space, and together with her team members, recruited book donations. The team even won an entrepreneurship prize from BGU's Student Association!

They used the money to complete the



project: buying new books and bookshelves, and posting advertisements around the neighborhood to promote the new center. In March 2012, the library officially opened. Since then, it has quickly become a drawing point for neighborhood youth and radiates positive energy and inspiration in the community.

Health Promotion Event:

Every year, Goodman Fellows in each of the neighborhoods hold "theme weeks", conducting workshops, lectures and special events based on a chosen subject. This year, the students in the Central Dalet neighborhood decided to focus on health. They solicited donations and received funding from the Beer-Sheva Municipality, Teva Company and the National Health Fund. Almost 300 residents participated, visiting the various booths and receiving explanations and demonstrations on oral hygiene, good nutrition, the importance of physical fitness. Health food booths, fun activities for kids and



great music made the event a huge success! Wish you were there!

Hosting Students from Overseas:

This year, in collaboration with Prof. Richard Isralowitz from the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social

Work, an international academic and social cooperation project was launched with Rutgers University of New Jersey (USA). Eight Rutgers students and their advisor took part in the program. In the mornings, they studied with Prof. Isralowitz and his team, meeting with organizations that focus on the rights of children in Beer-Sheva and the Negev. In the afternoons, they joined students of the Goodman Open Apartments Program and witnessed what they do in the community firsthand. The foreign students also lived in the Open Apartments for three days. Although Beer-Sheva was under missile attack during the week of their stay, the program was carried out as scheduled.

Joey, a Rutgers student who took part in the program, says:

"These days have been amazing, not only have I had the most fun of any school experience ever, I was astounded by the quality of the presenters. I take from this experience a better understanding of Israeli society and great new friends!"

The Rutgers students and Goodman Fellows bonded immediately and learned a lot from each other. We are presently working on Part Two of this program – a return visit of the Israeli students to their American colleagues, and hosting a second cycle of Rutgers students during the coming academic year.

Meet the
Goodman Fellows!



Name: Rotem Leibowitz
From: Netanya
Age: 24
Studies: Third year student at the Department of Education and Art History.
Status: Second year in the program
Taking action: She’s a coordinator for the Central Dalet neighborhood. Last year, she led an arts and crafts club for girls.

“Before Passover, one of the longtime residents of the neighborhood, a single mom, told me she just can’t afford to put together a Passover Seder. The students and I got together and collected donations, and then we went food shopping and bought everything she needed. When we brought the groceries to her door, she burst out in tears. She said that thanks to us, she’ll be able to have a wonderful Seder with her children, just like she wanted. It gave us a terrific feeling, knowing that we helped her celebrate the holiday.”



Name: Daniel Feldman
From: Jerusalem
Age: 23
Studies: First year student at the Department of Behavioral Sciences.
Status: First year in the program
Taking action: Leads a theater club.

“Before we put on our first play, the lead actor came up to me and said “Now I know what stage fright is!” and practically refused to get on stage. Luckily, I managed to convince him to perform. The play was a great success, and when it was over, he ran up to me and shouted: “Well, when’s the next performance?!”



Name: Shira Gabay
From: Afula
Age: 21
Studies: Second year student at the Department of Life Sciences
Status: First year in the program
Taking action: She leads a science, nature and arts club.

“After the Passover break, when I had been visiting my family, I came back to my apartment and two seconds later, eight kids were knocking at my door and others were waiting outside. They said they missed me and wanted to know when the club was meeting again. I told them next week, but they insisted we do something right now! So we walked over to the park and made bird food. It really moves me to see I’ve become a part of their lives. Our connection has enriched my life too.”



Name: Shai Balachsan
From: Holon
Age: 28
Studies: Fourth year student at the Department of Life Sciences.
Status: First year year in the program
Taking action: He leads a computer club called “Internet Spies”.

“I’ve always believed that anyone can be Bill Gates! Anything’s possible! When I started a computer club in the neighborhood, I met a lot of smart, funny kids with high aspirations. The only problem was that a lot of them had stopped believing in themselves. From my point of view, besides teaching computers, the more important goal of our club is to create a supportive social base and teach kids to believe in themselves so they can succeed in whatever they do in their lives, regardless of where they were born. On my visits to their school, I could see that the club gave the kids a sense of pride and also gave their grades a big boost. Today, a year later, I am about to start a new chapter in my own life, but know that “my kids” have started a new chapter, too. They’re on their way to something better.”



Name: Mirit Aharon
From: Moshav Bitcha
Age: 25
Studies: First year student at the Department of Health Systems Management.
Status: Third year in the program
Taking action: She leads a homework club.

“I “adopted” an amazing ninth-grader named Stav. At the beginning of the year, Stav’s grades were really low. Together with her mom, we decided that this year she was going to turn things around. We started studying together every chance we got. Very soon, her grades started improving. The best part was when she came back from school with a big smile on her face, and showed me her great report card. When she told me that her homeroom teacher praised her in front of the entire class, I was so proud! That’s the most incredible feeling for Open Apartment students – to know that your work gets results!”



Summary

Every year, over 2,000 people take part in the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. Goodman Fellows continue initiating new projects in efforts to respond to the immediate and ongoing needs of each neighborhood.

The Community Action Department in general and the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program in particular invest a great deal of effort and resources in cultivating, promoting and empowering our student activists, who we see as the future leaders of the State of Israel. Our students receive professional training and counseling to hone and develop their social action skills.

We look forward to opening our hearts and homes to the community for many years and more to come.



Thanks to the strong support of our devoted friends from the United States, the Netherlands and Argentina and the Swiss friends of PEF, we are able to run this outstanding program for the people of Beer-Sheva. By empowering this venture, our donors around the world send an important message of love and encouragement to communities of the Negev and the State of Israel.

For more information on how you can get involved, contact the Department of Donor and Associates Affairs at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
www.bgu.ac.il/associates