



OU ISRAEL'S YOUTH CENTERS

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OU Israel Around the Country: Spotlight on Shaping the Lives of Youth in Ariel

After almost six months of virtual programming due to Covid-19, the OU Israel Youth Center in Ariel prepares to welcome its kids back in a new and improved way.

Many of the participants that attend OU Israel's Youth Centers come from challenging backgrounds. They look up to their counselors and often refer to them as the "big brother" or "big sister" that cares about them and takes care of them. This week we'd like to highlight counselor Rivka Riklin-Hazan for taking it upon herself to renovate the Youth Center in Ariel so the youth have a nice, comfortable place to come to relax, learn and grow.

The primary goal of the OU Israel Youth Centers is to help these youth become proud, contributing members of Israeli society. We work with them, often from 6th grade through high school to instill within them Jewish values, self-confidence and Zionist pride. "The aim of the youth centers is to make members feel as comfortable at the club as they do at home so that they see the club as their second home. But that was not what the club felt like, being neglected, unattractive, and not very nice, We needed to brighten it up." said Rivka.

Thanks to Rivka's initiative, the youth participants themselves are renovating the club alongside their counselors. So far they have whitewashed and repainted the club house and the club members and staff have turned their focus on repairing and improving the club exterior.

Rivka's husband', Omer Hazan, is an alumnus of the club in Ariel and works in the field. Together they created



the renovation plans. They began with a visit to the club, where they went through everything that needed renovation, drew up a detailed work plan with scheduling and discussed how the work would be done.



“Rivka poured all of her energy into the club and the club members, staff, and OU management were swept along by her enthusiasm,” said Ariel Branch Director Yaden Cohen. “It was incredible how she simply got everyone involved. Thanks to her and her husband, the club building is so much better and the club atmosphere has really improved and that’s just the first step towards making the club a much nicer, attractive, and welcoming place.”

OU Director of Programs Chaim Pelzner said “It is heartwarming to see the young people and staff working so hard to improve the OU Youth Center in Ariel. It

always makes us happy to see this and we embrace all initiatives from the field, especially in these complex times, since the corona virus limits the opportunities of Israeli youth to find work and limits the available cultural and leisure activities.” ■

OU Israel operates a network of youth centers in 21 cities in Israel, which cultivate young community leadership and provide a social, experiential, value-based environment where youth can grow and develop. OU Israel does this by employing professional youth counselors who organize a wide range of activities including, experiential and value-based activities, growth and personal strengths workshops, field trips, bar/bat-mitzvah programs, volunteering, chag preparations, etc.

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