

Community Education

Contributed by Administrator

• Haifa-Boston Fellows

Dr. Dr. Ayala Ronen-Samuels facilitated together with Ms. Sigal Dabach, who coordinated, the Haifa-Boston Fellows program, a joint project of the Boston-Haifa Partnership and the Center of Jewish Education. This program was designed to inspire talented young adults ages (25-40) to take volunteer leadership roles in the partnership between the Boston and Haifa Jewish communities in particular and in Israel-Diaspora and Haifa community organizations more generally. It was based on the belief that a strengthened Jewish identity, and a closer relationship with the Jewish Diaspora, will provide a solid basis for the creation of a leadership group that will initiate programs for the welfare of the community. The goal was to provide a group of young leaders with the tools and motivation that they needed in order to voluntarily participate in, initiate, and lead, community projects.

Specifically, this program had five central goals:

- To create a group of qualified young (age 25-40) leaders among the citizens of Haifa, referred to as the "Haifa Fellows";
- To build and enhance the relationship between the Haifa Fellows and the Boston leadership group.
- To strengthen participants' connection with their Jewish tradition and identity.
- To empower participants to make a positive difference in their community by increasing their sense of personal responsibility, social awareness, and voluntary sprit.
- To encourage participants to engage in long term, voluntary, community activities.

The program included an intensive series of bi-monthly meetings which combined lectures, workshops, a communal Shabbat in Jerusalem, video conferences with their Bostonian counterparts, meetings with steering committee members of the Boston-Haifa Connection and finally a trip to Boston in May 2005.

The cohesive nature of the group succeeded in creating a commitment to continue meeting, which holds a strong potential for ongoing community activity. Furthermore, these young professionals - commonly defined as "secular" in Israel - began to consider their heritage and how it reflects onto their contribution to the country they live in and more specifically, their immediate community. Ties were in fact strengthened between a significant Jewish community in the Diaspora and its' sister community here in Israel as succinctly described by one of the programs graduates after returning home from the trip to Boston; "I feel as if this trip has answered for me many questions, but has also revealed new ones. I do know for sure I have now a better grasp of my commitment to the society I live in, and the role I play as a young Jewish - Israeli woman in the future of my country."