

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."