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Design by Shelly Greenfield Elyakim

Tax-deductible contribution may be made through:

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Inspiring young women to pursue STEM studies

For generations it has been assumed that young women are not interested in the sciences – and research and statistics appeared to validate that premise. However, by providing female students with a broad perspective of possibilities and adapting methodology to suit their social and intellectual needs, Amal has shown that this stereotype can be shattered.

Long before Amal officially launched its Career Considerations curriculum, young women were already making their presence known in the Networks' four Entrepreneurship Centers where interest and involvement in STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – are a prerequisite. Today young women comprise almost half the students in Amal's cyber studies, computer programming, physics, electronics and robotics classes – and participation continues to grow.

The Career Considerations curriculum was designed to build on this success by strengthening teenage girls' belief in themselves and their potential through workshops that expose them to career prospects and academic opportunities.

In the academic year 2017-2018, the Career Considerations pilot program took place in nine Amal schools, offering special workshops to encourage young women to enroll in scientific classes and actively engage in STEM subjects. The workshops include site visits and meetings with role models, individual mentoring and special programs for mothers and daughters to introduce them to the program.

The Career Considerations pilot program is funded by a generous donation from Fred and Helaine Gould of New York and Florida.



ALL ABOUT AMAL



Stanley Black and his beloved wife, Joyce, of blessed memory

Fourth Entrepreneurship Center opens in Amal Comprehensive High School in Beersheva

Stanley Black and his family could not be at Amal's Comprehensive High School in Beersheva for the dedication of the new Center for Entrepreneurship that bears his name and that of his late wife, but their lifetime of commitment to educating Israel's young people was very much in evidence. So, too, was their dedication to encouraging students to explore new avenues, encounter new ideas.

Amal CEO Ravit Dom-Eini praised the Black family for understanding that "the assets of our country can be found here in the Entrepreneurship Center where it all begins. Beersheva's expertise as an international cyber center, Ben-Gurion University's strong support and the talented assistance of students from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in the new entrepreneurship center will give our students the tools to make the connection between entrepreneurship, cyber and design – the tools to build a better future."

"Every time I come into an Amal school, I realize that if we want to know about the future, we have to ask young people like these," said Beersheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich. "I see them as the managers of the future, going forward with belief, enthusiasm and a vision that will soon become a reality. Our job is to support and encourage them. When we invest in them, we know they will improve and change the world."

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EDUCATING FOR EXCELLENCE



Amal CEO Ravit Dom-Eini (left) and Amal Beersheva Principal Miri Bilu (right) with Beersheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich at the dedication; students at the new Center with some of their projects.

Fourth Entrepreneurship Center opens in Amal Comprehensive High School in Beersheva

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Presentations and exhibits of innovative and creative projects were on display for the dedication. Some physics students had researched the history of satellites and the Israeli satellite that had been launched earlier in the year, holding a competition for building the best model. Second-year architecture students showcased their design for a four-story residential building, along with actual blueprints of a model apartment, complete with appliances and furniture. The chemistry students' presentation involved an explanation of the properties of several minerals like graphite, diamonds and ice, which is considered a mineral when it occurs naturally – and a demonstration of the difference in their response to specific chemicals.

August 29, 2017
Ravit Dom-Eini, Esq. CEO, The Amal Group

Dear Ravit,
Warm greetings to everyone gathered for the dedication of the Stanley and Joyce Black Entrepreneurship Center in Beersheva. On behalf of our family, it is my pleasure to congratulate you on this incredible project.

We thank you for extending the opportunity to be involved with the Amal Group. Your organization has enlightened and inspired over 40,000 children, to improve their lives through education and have a better tomorrow.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to Ravit and the Amal Group for your continued efforts in helping children have fulfilling lives. I could not be more proud of your organization, you have done so much to improve and provide for the children of Israel. My late wife, Joyce, and I have always been committed to the people and the land of Israel. I hope to visit the Center in the near future.

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; train a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

**With warm regards,
Stanley Black and Family**

The Joyce and Stanley Black Family Amal Entrepreneurship Center

Open less than a year, it is obvious that interest and attendance have exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. "We now have almost 55 students involved in the Center and many more are considering becoming involved, even though it's an afterschool program," said Gil Azarzar, who heads the Joyce and Stanley Black Family Amal Entrepreneurship Center. "All the project ideas come from the students and all the projects require them to invest a great deal of time."

Describing some of the Center's activities, he explained that younger students – those in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades – are exploring the connection between design and entrepreneurship and beginning to work on innovative product designs.

Those in the tenth and eleventh grades are working with two graduate students from the Bezalel

Academy of Arts and Design, focusing on industrial design for imaginative solutions to agricultural issues. They envision an enclosed sphere that can be hung on the wall; it will have the capacity to be self-sustaining, literally making agriculture part of their homes and lives. They have already created a wall installation for urban farming and built a 3D model. Now they are working on the interior mechanism. This involves addressing issues of physics and chemistry before actually conducting experiments on the contents with the input of their biology teachers.

After announcing that "I brush every morning and evening and still have cavities," one student came up with the idea of putting a camera in a toothbrush and tracking its progress in the mouth to collect data on tooth brushing. The group believes they will ultimately be able to transfer the information from the

camera directly to their dentists. At the moment, they are analyzing the concept and researching the electronics involved.

Amal's commitment to community involvement led another group to design special running shoes for people with limited or no vision so they could jog and run along with the sighted population, using sensors in the shoes to guide them.

In the Center's main room – a large open space furnished with attractive seating arrangements and intimate workspaces – the students' excitement and enthusiasm seems to generate a unique creative current. As they exchange ideas and examine options, they know that in the adjoining Fabrications Lab, they will be able to construct prototypes, build models and work out the complicated steps involved in bringing their ideas to fruition.



EDUCATING FOR EXCELLENCE

Supporting students with exceptional potential

Throughout the Amal Network, especially in schools in outlying areas, providing outstanding students with the skills and knowledge to develop their talents is an inherent part of the curriculum. Amal's Amirim High School in Ofakim, a city in the northern Negev, attests to its impact on the students.

The school is part of the national Outstanding Excellence program, which identifies young people with exceptional potential and helps them achieve outstanding matriculation scores and personal skills that will enable them to pursue academic studies, especially in the fields of exact sciences and engineering.

The young people in the Amirim's afterschool robotics group, the Desert Eagles, are outstanding examples. In January, they were engaged in confronting the challenge posed by the FIRST LEGO® League Competition and figuring out how to fulfill its requirements within the allotted six-week period. This international competition is designed to encourage students to use robots to demonstrate innovative solutions to real-world problems. Last year the group took first place in the off-season competition. This year their goal is to qualify for the international competition in Detroit. Although the group had only received the challenge the evening before, "we think we really have a chance," said Shir Abutbul, who works on the project's software programming.

Some members of the robotics group were part of the Outstanding Excellence scientific delegation to Switzerland in 2017. As part of the visit, they learned about the Blue Brain Project, a collaborative effort of a Swiss-Israeli



From left: Shir Abutbul; Nehoray Saddeh; Ran Swissa; Aviv Asraf; and Shir Boxafker with their award-winning robot.



Amal CEO Ravit Dom-Eini (left) and Amal Ofakim Principal Efrat Bohadana, with Ofakim Mayor Itzik Danino in the Ofakim school's Center of the Excellence.

team to create a precise copy of the human brain and simulate how it functions within a computer.

For Aviv Asraf, "the particle accelerator they took us to see was the crowning glory." He said he had always wanted to study mechanical engineering, but only with the help of the program did he understand the practical aspect of the studies. He is one of the three Amirim students currently studying mechanical engineering at Ben-Gurion University, in addition to their high school studies – and their current preoccupation with building the robot to their satisfaction.

Students from Amal's Jewish and Arab schools are working together to build a stronger society

Amal's Comprehensive High School in Taibeh and Amal's Lady Davis High School in north Tel Aviv are less than 20 miles apart and have much in common. Both boast outstanding educational curricula and award-winning students; both promote creative programs and projects that enrich the learning experience. But until two resourceful teachers put together a unique curriculum, there was little chance that the teens would meet and interact, even less that they would come to understand and appreciate the individual and particular worlds their peers inhabited.

After meeting with Dr. Ronit Ashkenazi, Amal's Pedagogical Director, it took Amos Saban, a history teacher at Lady Davis, and Abba Hajyhia, a civics teacher in Taibeh, almost a year to put together

a syllabus that would fulfill their personal goal of breaking down the barriers between Taibeh's Arab students and Lady Davis' Jewish ones. It was a learning experience for the educators as well. "It was the first time I had the opportunity to build a curriculum together with an Arab woman teacher," Mr. Raban said, voicing his admiration and appreciation of his partner in this undertaking.

Their pilot project involves 30 boys and girls from each school. In the beginning, the two teachers exchanged roles, traveling to the other's classroom, presenting their students with information and knowledge about their two societies – the history and religion; customs and characteristics; norms and values.

In regular classroom sessions, Ms. Hajyhia teaches her students about Israeli Jews and Mr. Raban teaches his about Israeli Arabs. Each of them augments their knowledge with professional input. Mr. Raban has a mentor from Tel Aviv University; Ms. Hajyhia works with a Reform rabbi.

"This is more than a coexistence project," Mr. Raban says. "This is about creating a civic society that encompasses Israeli Arabs and

Israeli Jews, who know and understand each other." He noted that most Jewish schools allocate four hours to explaining Arab society. Their project devotes 20 hours, along with six hours on Islam.

"Amos and I did the right thing," Ms. Hajyhia says. "I believe educators can change perceptions, teach students to become better citizens, more tolerant, more democratic. I know that the moment you meet and understand a person, views change, things become different."

They began the project last September by exchanging videos of New Year greetings in the appropriate language. Since then the two groups have met quite a few times in each other's schools. Like the message the course conveys, their initial interaction was face to face, not electronic. Despite some teenage awkwardness and preconceived concepts, "the kids really connected," the two teachers reported.

Next year they plan to bring the two classrooms together in a different format – with Jewish and Arab students engaged in a joint project, possibly learning how a law comes into being and monitoring how it is enforced.



Fun and games enhance the challenging interactive effort



EDUCATING FOR EXCELLENCE

Amal schools in Taibeh boast principals with strong principles

The two Amal high schools in Taibeh bracket this Arab city in central Israel like bookends. Both are headed by principals who believe in educating for excellence, in focusing on every student and trying help each of them forge a meaningful future. Their populations and problems are dramatically different but their dedication and determination remarkably similar. Both are unwavering in their commitment to their students.

On one side of town, Dr. Fawaz Mansour heads Amal's Vocational High School with 405 predominantly male students from disadvantaged homes and problematic backgrounds. It is his first year in the position. A graduate of Tel Aviv University, he received his M.A. and Ph.D. in the United States, where he taught for quite a few years. He returned to Israel "because I was homesick" and spent the last decade teaching at Tel Aviv University before deciding that he could best realize his educational philosophy in a high-school environment.

"I came to Amal because I wanted to help needy students and give them a future. I chose this school, I know these students and I know their problems. Providing them with a profession and a purpose is good for our society and good for our country."

"I want to inspire the young men to stay in school and become specialists in skills that will provide them with an income. I want to establish new courses to open up new opportunities for the 50 young women here, who are basically studying hairdressing." Actually, he says, "I want to create an educational revolution."

Across town, Hilal Masarwa, Principal of Amal's Comprehensive High School, serves 2,130 students in junior and

senior high school, providing them with a broad spectrum of courses, with a heavy concentration on the sciences. He also believes that his position "makes it possible to do great things," even with such a large student body. "There are outstanding students in this school and outstanding teachers, but we have to support all the students. Every student is a world unto himself. We have to provide each and every one



Dr. Fawaz Mansour



Hilal Masarwa

of them with the best possible framework for their capabilities."

Although he taught computer engineering for ten years, he would like to expand the science curriculum, add courses that would encourage young women to consider careers in high-tech and provide new directions for the students in general.

After four years as principal, Hilal Masarwa has formulated other opinions as well. He believes that "education has to walk hand-in-hand with cultural activities," like the project they are doing with the Petach Tikvah Museum of Art and the school's award-winning debating team. Most of all, he supports teaching students to become responsible citizens who are involved with the community.



Photos by: Ilanit Solomonovich Habot; Mark Di Ionno, Newark Star Ledger

Entrepreneurship creates common language for American and Israeli teens

When the six students from Amal's Comprehensive High School in Hadera arrived at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, New Jersey, a host of students and Headmaster Father Edwin Leahy were there to welcome them. In many ways, it was like a reunion of old friends. After several months of internet conversation on the app they were developing with their six American counterparts, they were already at ease with one another.

From their first day at this all-male predominantly Catholic high school until their departure ten days later,

the young people bolstered their friendships over shared entrepreneurial interests, cemented by a host of extracurricular activities, such as sightseeing in nearby New York City, a few evenings "out with the boys," a New Jersey Devils hockey game and a festive Chanukah and Christmas party at the Jewish Community Center MetroWest in West Orange, NJ.

In March, the St. Benedict's students made their first trip to Israel, combining their work on the app at Hadera's Entrepreneurship Center with a healthy dose of sightseeing and a taste of Israeli teenage fun.

Amal CEO Ravit Dom-Eini and Father Ed initiated the exchange program during a previous visit of Amal students to the school and Father Ed's subsequent trip to Israel where he toured the Amal Educational Network, addressed 100 high school principals and met with

students at Amal's Entrepreneurship Center on the Hadera campus.

Headmaster Leahy became known as Father Ed to millions of people after he and St. Benedict's Prep captivated America on the CBS-TV "60 Minutes" program, which detailed how the school achieved a near-perfect graduation rate despite being an inner-city school with many immigrants.

Their visit attracted some local New Jersey media attention. It is available online from:

The Newark Star Ledger:

[http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2017/12/from_newark_to_israel_kids_speak_an_international.html]

And the New Jersey Jewish News:

[<http://njewishnews.com/article/36464/developing-an-app-bridges-cultural-geographic-divide#.WmRA1zeYOK8>]